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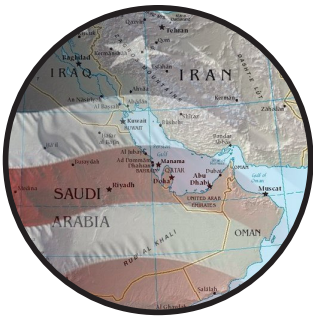
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Note on contributors

Matthew O. Cleveland

Matthew Cleveland received his PhD from the English Studies Department at the University of New South Wales, Australia in 2001. He is currently Assistant Professor of English at St. Cloud State University, Minnesota, USA. He teaches courses in 19th and 20th Century American and British literature, film and literature, gender and race issues in literature, critical theory, and rhetoric. He has a number of published works in the fields of psychoanalysis, cultural studies, film studies, popular culture, and postcolonialism. His *Beyond Left and Right: the Ethical Potentiality of the Masochistic Impulse in "Fight Club"* is currently in circulation. In his contribution to Nebula, Cleveland attempts to reconfigure the concepts of resistance, revolution and crime in a world (media) dominated by the rhetoric and ideological filters of the now world famous "War on Terror."

John Hyland

John Hyland graduated from the University of Maine with an MA in English in 2003. He is currently teaching at Merrimack College. His scholarly interests include the intersection of text and image, modernist and contemporary poetry and poetics, and postcoloniality. In his opus on the use of Gesture by two key modernist artists, Hyland treads the boards of high theories of linguistics and provides a semiology-based reading, which resonates much with the modernist style and density of the texts he examines. "It is quite easy to become lost inside the particulars of the text," writes Hyland on Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, and interestingly, this is precisely the feeling his extended essay seems to evoke in itself.

John Jefferson

John Jefferson received his Masters in History from Rutgers University this year and his Bachelor of Arts from New Jersey City University in 2002. He has also received a host of Graduate Certificates in subjects such as American History from the American Military University (2004) and Advanced Paralegal Studies from California State University (2003). He has recently published his first book *The Ambitious Gentlemen: An Examination of Negative Campaigning and the Quest for the American Presidency, 1932-1948*, with Café Press. He is currently a review editor for *H-USA*. In this article, Jefferson provides insight into the question of the possibility of "Laws in History." The ultimate question begging: Can the study of history, through the cultivation of sound analytical tools, become a predictive science, can it find an intersection between the natural and social sciences?

Ron Large

Ron Large is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Gonzaga University, Spokane WA, USA. His area of specialization is Christian Ethics with an emphasis in Christian Social Ethics. Dr. Large took his Bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia where he majored in Religious Studies. He received his Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary with a focus on violence and nonviolence as methods of social change. He received his doctorate from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA and did his dissertation on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi.

In addition to articles on King and Gandhi, Dr. Large has published articles on the films Shane, Death Wish, Platoon, and Heartbreak Ridge. He teaches classes in Christian Morality, Death and Dying, Sexual Morality, Religion and Film, and the Vietnam War. In his contribution to this issue, Ron provides a close and thorough examination of Martin Luther King Jr's evolving theology, encountering and exploring ancient notions and concepts, which have been of great relevance and intrigue to thinking beings throughout the ages.

Luke O'Callaghan

Luke O'Callaghan (aka Red Star) was born in Galway, Ireland in 1980. As well as being a native Irish speaker, O'Callaghan is fluent in English, Russian and French. He has recently acted as a research student under federal scholarship at the University of Oslo, Norway. He received his BA in Russian and Classical Civilisation from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, in 2002. His interests are not exclusively academic and he has acted as an interpreter, editor and freelance (sports) journalist. His clients have included the Government of Kazakhstan, the IRFU, the Health Board, the Georgian Rugby Union and the Federation of Rugby of Kazakhstan. In this article on the "War of Words" O'Callaghan explores the intimate relationship between nation, nationalism and language assimilation in Kazakhstan. He sees both similarities and potential differences between the present situation in Kazakhstan and the continued Anglophone assimilation of greater Ireland.

Tom O'Connor

Tom O'Connor received the AWP Intro Award in poetry from Binghamton University (NY, USA) in 2001. He has had poems accepted by *Dánta*, *The Bend*, *Burnside Review*, *Mankato Poetry Review*, *No Exit*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Soul Fountain*, and *Skidrow Penthouse*. His scholarly articles have been accepted by *The Disability Studies Quarterly* and *Social Semiotics*. He has recently been awarded a PhD from Binghamton University for his critical dissertation on the "intersection between poetry and new media." His poems published in this issue, share a similar process of simultaneously dealing with the famous, infamous and widely known as well as the intimate, secretive and the hidden. His poem "Nietzsche's Mother" for example is not only ironic but also remarkably true.

Babak Rahimi

Babak Rahimi received his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Political Science at the University of California, San Diego and his Masters in Philosophy at the University of Nottingham. He recently defended his dissertation on the Iranian public sphere in the Safavid period, 1564-1590, in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence. Recent academic articles were published in *Middle Eastern Review of International Affairs* (Nov. 2004) and *Iranian Studies* (Sept. 2004). In Part Three of *Ishraqat*, Rahimi weaves a polemic vision of the dead ends to which the trajectory of current US foreign policy seems to be inevitably leading. His writing possesses a chilling prophetic and self-evident quality.

Russell Richards

Russell Richards (aka Morphy) is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Media and Visual Arts, Faculty of Media Arts and Society at Southampton Institute, UK. He has participated in numerous projects both online and in real time, promoting Digital Art and his work. His most recent conference paper *Synergetic Complexity: The Bringing Together of Schools of Thought* was delivered at the Faculty of Media, Arts and Society's *Advanced Scholarship Day Conference*, at Southampton Institute in May this year. His article *An Aesthetic or Anaesthetic: Developing a Digital Aesthetics of Production* is currently in press with the *Journal of Media Practice*. In his contribution to Nebula^{1,3} Richards introduces us to the world of Generative Art and to the ways that computer science can be used for innovative art productions even during our most menial engagements with the almighty computer! Richards responded to Nebula's CFP as a result of what he has (rightly) termed in his article as "a positive synchronicity." He provides a glossary of terms for the non-specialist reader. In order to view his recent work on computer-generated "nebulae" visit http://www.user-production.co.uk/nebula/nebula_001.html but take note that shockwave software needs to be installed on your computer and that your computer must also be able to support 32 bit colour capabilities.

Semra Somersan

Semra Somersan is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Bilgi University (Istanbul). She was awarded a Fulbright scholarship for graduate work in the US where she

received an MA in Social Psychology in 1974, and a PhD in anthropology in 1981, both from Ohio State University. She is currently living and working in Turkey. She has recently published a book on *Race and Ethnicity in the Social Sciences* (Istanbul Bilgi University Press: 2004). Her earlier work, *Politics and the Environment in Turkey* was published in 1993 by Metis Publishing House in Istanbul. In her article on the North as a global monstrosity, Somersan unveils the thin film, which disguises the equal opportunity policies that are quickly replacing affirmative action style recruitment.

Tangirala, Sri Rama Chandra Murthy

Having secured a bachelor of science followed by a postgraduate bachelor of Journalism from Osmania University in Hyderabad in the 1970's, Murthy returned to Osmania to secure a Masters degree in philosophy in 1997. He is currently enrolled in pursuit of his doctorate on "Noam Chomsky's contributions to the Philosophy of Language" at Venkateswara University in Tirupati. Murthy's thirty-year career in journalism has seen him work in half a dozen English- Indian newspapers and this, together with his numerous dissertations, has no doubt contributed to his lyrical and sophisticated prose. Murthy is currently living in Ahmedabad where he is now working for Sristi, a non-government organization. In his third contribution to Nebula Murthy evokes a number of thought experiments in a dense treatment of the question of language and cognition, oftentimes reminiscent of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Courtney Thomas

Courtney Thomas is currently completing her Masters in history at the University of Alberta, Canada, where she is exploring “Denmark’s role in early modern English Court politics and cultural development: 1603-1619.” She is currently a Teaching Assistant in the Department of History and Classics at the same university. She has received a number of grants and scholarships including the SSHRC Master’s grant. In 2003 she was awarded first place at the Western Canadian Undergraduate Historical Conference, in the senior written category. In her article on the intersection of morality and historiography, Thomas explores the concepts at play and analyses both their logic and illogic through literature review, she arrives at a conclusion that is all but conclusive, opting instead for an open ending and the potentialities that this implies.

How to Avoid the Global Monster of the North: Affirmative Action for the New Global Age.

By Semra Somersan

If ultranationalism, fraternalism and militarism can take hold, unidentified among the descendants of slaves, they can enter anywhere. Past victimization affords no protection against the allure of automatic, prepolitical uniformity.¹

Keywords: global underdogs, global lords, globalization, global equality post 9-11, color blind policies, positive discrimination, affirmative action, second modernity, reflexive cosmopolitanization.

Stephen Steinberg (1995) has described poignantly “the liberal retreat from race” and its implications in the US context. Here I will extend his argument to the world-wide scene, arguing for affirmative action and positive discrimination not only within nation-states, but as well, in international economic and political relations between and among them.

For many, however, not only affirmative action but all policies of positive discrimination pose “equality” problems, of intellectual, political and/or economic nature. Still the prolonged and bitter debate on positive versus reverse discrimination continues. So why go back to a seemingly irresolvable old squabble that started in the US back in the 1960s, and which, may well be, more a concern of social policy than of social theory?

Several immediate answers: 1-The necessity to bring the discussion up to the date in the context of globalization, deindustrialization and the aftermath of 9-11. 2- The intellectual poverty of the extant socio-cultural literature related to affirmative action and reverse discrimination. 3-The lack of affirmative action policies at large, where they are needed most, in the mid to low income countries of the South where extremely large disparities in income levels prevail. 4- To introduce the concepts of preferential treatment, quotas and positive discrimination to country-wise bilateral, multilateral and international relations.

Thus a dialogic system of ever changing affirmative action policies (inequality) has to be more equal than

a “consensus” of the status quo which “permanently” establishes its own criteria of justice and equality, depending on who holds power. Quotas and positive discrimination have to become the Truth and Reconciliative measures of the newly dawning cosmopolitan age, covertly or overtly discriminating on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and/or class, both within a nation state, and across countries in international political and economic relations.

I will argue here that *color-blind*, “*equal*” *opportunity* policies adopted in early modernity (first modernity) to compensate for past slavery, discrimination and colonization no longer suffice in the new global age, or the second modern age of “reflexive cosmopolitanization.”² Without preferential treatment inclusive of quotas and positive discrimination both within a nation- state, and across countries in bilateral and multilateral relations, there can be no real equality of opportunity in the world at large.

1/Rationale and justification

Regardless of where one is located in relation to heated debates on globalization,³ one is hard pressed to argue that the process is working to narrow the economic chasm separating the affluent from the impoverished, both within a nation-state, and in country-wise comparisons. The same can be said with regard to socio-political history, concerning effects of past repression, oppression, slavery, and colonization: the powerful are more so than ever, while the powerless are increasingly losing whatever control they may have had over their own destiny.

Affirmative action, preferential treatment and positive discrimination, in other words, cannot solely consist of crucial policies to be implemented within a country, but must as well be applied to international trade and other international economic and political relations. Given the high probability of, who knows how many more, civil, local, regional, and interregional wars, more high-tech nuclear, chemical and biological arms, global warming, the rise in the level of seas, and great differentials in income levels, six billion of humankind can not all be delivered across troubled waters to some sheltered shore. A few will make it, but many won't. The cause will not simply be, risk society⁴, the impact of which, in comparison to other factors separating and dividing humanity, is perhaps slightly less important.

Some would say “this is the law of survival; we cannot forsake what we have for the benefit of others, those at the bottom, the down and under.” I would argue however, that as creators and reproducers of culture, humans must not, cannot accept biological evolutionary laws of survival, even if those laws beat everything else in the long run.

Globalization has increased the prevailing inequalities within and across societies geometrically. The rich have come to resemble each other more all over the world than their poor countrymen living in the same environs. Perhaps those in the high-income countries of the North are less aware of such economic discrepancies than their counterparts in the low and middle- income countries who have to face dire poverty

on a day-to-day basis rather than the intermediary of the media and hearsay. Events and repercussions of 9-11 (2001) have shown, however, that as long as the vast gulf between the powerful-affluent and the underprivileged-dispossessed prevail, no one is protected no individual, no nation, no region.

As C. Wright Mills⁵ has so aptly shown, power and affluence concur, at least in the American scene, but as well, elsewhere. Mills came up with the lasting contribution that in the US, the upper classes hold, not only the bulk of society's wealth, but also political power. He writes that "...the leading men in each of the three domains of power- the warlords, the corporation chieftains, the political directorate- tend to come together, to form the power elite of America."⁶ Thus the power elite is made up of the super-rich who own and control the lion's share of the economy. Such families are broadly linked through business dealings as well as marriage, and are able to turn the national agenda to their own interest. Based on this research, Mills was able to claim that such elites circulate from one sector to another, consolidating their power as they go, challenging the notion that the US is a political democracy; the concentration of wealth and power is too great for the average person's voice to be heard. The power elite notion also challenges the idea that different sources of power serve as checks and balances on one another, arguing that those at the top encounter no real opposition.

Sociologist Saskia Sassen who views the cataclysmic event of 9-11 as "a message from the global south" argues that:

...markets cannot take care of everything. Governments will have to govern more... The violence of hunger and poverty; the destruction of once fertile lands; the oppression of weaker states by highly militarized ones; persecution- all these feed a complex, slow, but relentless movement towards the North. The North creates much of the damage and the North has the resources to redress some of it. Part of the challenge is to recognize the interconnectedness of forms of violence that we do not view as being connected or even, as forms of violence. We are suffering from a translation problem. The language of poverty and misery is unclear and uncomfortable... There are now about 50 countries that are hyper-indebted and unable to redress the situation. It is no longer a matter of loan repayment but a fundamental new structural condition... Debt to GNP ratios are especially high in Africa, where they stood at 123%, compared with 42% in Latin America and 28% in Asia.⁷

The planet's resources must be shared more equitably than has been the case in human history, at the least because the divisions between the haves and the have-nots are sharper than ever; poverty and hunger kill some, while riches spoil the others, and this makes the world an insecure, uneasy place to live in for all. That is on the economic side; on the socio-political side, past history of oppression and persecution must be redressed by providing the subaltern not only with sustainable economic resources, but as well with abundant sustainable socio-political-cultural means and opportunities which will result in their definite release from social-exclusion and "vulnerability to scapegoating," to borrow a phrase from Tariq Modood⁸, and, in making them equal partners with the affluent.

2/ A snapshot of the global scene vis. affirmative action

Affirmative action, generally defined as a set of public policies and initiatives designed to help eliminate past and present discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, religion, sex or national origin⁹ covers a wide range in implementation. At the more conservative end, it includes color blind policies, equal opportunity, fair employment; at the more radical end, it covers positive discrimination, establishing minority ombudsman institutions, minority, and/or subaltern quotas for groups considered to have been economically depressed and/or politically oppressed. All affirmative action programs seek to remedy past discrimination, economic, political and otherwise, by increasing recruitment, promotion, retention and on-the-job training opportunities in employment and by removing barriers to admission in educational institutions; the rationale being embedded, in the attempt to counter the long history of negative discrimination.

Following The Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the US, which endorsed the use of racial preferences in hiring or contracting staff in organizations doing business with the government, civil rights programs were enacted to help Afro-Americans become full citizens of the US. The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution made slavery and involuntary servitude illegal, while the 14th Amendment guaranteed equal protection under the law to all races and sexes, but applies only to public institutions.

Ironically though, in spite of its over four decades of recent history, not even the discussion of affirmative action has filtered down to the ‘global underdogs’¹⁰ - where policy makers continue implementing their centuries old ideas of some sort of feudal justice and authoritarian administration, under the name of equality and democracy, coupled with dictates from the IMF and the World Bank toward privatization of the economy. In the, now, mid to low income countries of the South, affirmative action policies are almost totally lacking. Just the suggestion of preferential treatment, in fact, meets with raised eyebrows, not only from the conservative right, but from the more equality oriented left as well. Both end up impoverishing and disempowering the poor while equipping the rich.

Positive discrimination is, as the founder of the Cultural Studies discipline, Stuart Hall said of multiculturalism “contested by the right, by individual libertarians, and modernizers. It is contested by the left.”¹¹ It is also contested by high theoreticians such as Zizek¹², Bourdieu and Wacquant¹³ as well. In an article published three years before his death, Pierre Bourdieu together with Loic Wacquant viewed it as “an American conspiracy on unwitting Europeans.”¹⁴

Its interpretation sometimes takes on a strange twist among non- Western countries. In Malaysia, for instance, politicians speak of quotas and ‘positive discrimination’ as a preference in favor of the ruling Moslem majority (60 percent of the population); one of the rare places in the world where the policy is defined as giving special opportunities to the powerful group, en bloc, at the expense of the Chinese (nearly 30%) and Indian ethnic minorities!¹⁵

In Nigeria, affirmative action in favor of the majority tribes in all 36 states means that, in the words of the writer Chinua Achebe: “It would be difficult to point to one important job held by the most competent person we have”.¹⁶ In Turkey, on the other hand, the Grand National Assembly made up of 550 parliamentarians has only a four percent (22 of them altogether) minority of women, where quotas would make a world of difference. Furthermore, there is not even a single parliamentarian from the officially recognized minorities of Turkey.¹⁷

All is not gloomy however: In India, the University Grants Commission imposed penalties against universities which failed to comply with its policy of positive discrimination in favor of lower-caste teachers.¹⁸

In the affluent North, on the other hand, among EU member countries as well as the USA, the once popular quotas, have now, gone out of fashion along with the trend toward a more conservative global economy and political outlook in general, in tandem with the dismantling of “the welfare society.” Even Hall has voiced his doubt concerning positive discrimination. Addressing a plenary session on multiculturalism at the 3rd Crossroads in International Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in 2000 he said, “I have gone backwards and forwards on the question of quotas. We must disaggregate what is being represented.”¹⁹ For many, not only quotas but all policies of positive discrimination pose “equality” problems of intellectual, political, economic and social nature. Yet the debate on positive versus reverse discrimination will not cease. It cannot cease because the global underdogs omnipresent in all corners, in deepest recesses of the world will not shut up.

Nor will the global lords: In 1995, the all-male European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that the use of quotas is sex discrimination against men and is, therefore unlawful under the equal treatment directive.²⁰ This landmark ruling threw into doubt all the systems of positive action giving priority to job applications from women that are favored by many European states, particularly Germany.

3/ Against the tides

Is not most social theory drawn from social life and action, receiving a good part of its initial inspiration from it? The tides, today, in other words, are against affirmative action. The fact that positive discrimination is no longer in vogue in the West, however, is no reason, why it cannot be resuscitated there, nor reincarnated elsewhere, perhaps in the South, among the global underdogs. For that to materialize, however, what is needed is a good push from the more radical social scientists, new theoretical argumentation, conceptual frameworks taking into account globalization and cosmopolitanization. The more so, because, in spite of the enthusiasm of the transformationalists and hyperglobalists,²¹ the tides of the new age have so far, simultaneously discriminated in favor of the powerful/affluent and against the disenfranchised and dispossessed, both within and across countries.

Sociologist Stephen Steinberg, whose piercing book, *Turning Back* (1995) has been influential in putting

me to work on this article, has struck me, by the force of his arguments and the material he brought together from the American political scene, supported intellectually by the social science establishment, to make his point concerning the “liberal retreat from race” in the US. One paragraph has stuck in my mind to this day: “A common refrain from the right is that advocates of affirmative action are guilty of the very thing that they say they are against –namely treating blacks as a separate class. This reasoning is upside-down and inside-out. The truth is that, it is the refusal to see race - the willful color blindness of the liberal camp - that acquiesces to the racial status quo, and does so by consigning blacks to a twilight zone where they are politically invisible. In this way, elements of the left unwittingly join the right in evading any reckoning with America’s greatest crime –slavery - and its legacy in the present.”²²

The fact that Steinberg is referring to the US cultural context matters little; almost every society in the world has some parallel of national guilt and other historical processes resulting in inequalities among various groups of its population, some, obviously, much more excruciating than others.

4/Ending notes

I have argued here that it is critical for the affluent-powerful to sacrifice some of their relatively high average income and giant share of the world’s economic and political resources in favor of the impoverished- powerless, those historically persecuted and economically downtrodden. I have furthermore contended that this is absolutely essential not only within a country, locally, but also, across countries, in bilateral and multilateral relations, i.e., internationally, economic, political and otherwise.

These, I have maintained are absolutely essential for several reasons:

1. Globalization has vastly increased the gulf separating the haves from the have-nots, the disenfranchised from the sovereign.
2. Deindustrialization and the onset of the weightless knowledge economy, has put out of commission a mass of individuals formerly in the working classes in industry without educating them in higher level skills befitting the new age. More and more, the labouring class of the early modern era is coming to join the underclasses, and the informal economy. We are moving, as an economist once commented, towards the ghettoization of employment.
3. The underclasses, on the other hand, in addition to having become relatively even poorer, are more socially excluded than ever.
4. Since the events of 9-11 certain ethnic/religious groups living in, but also out of the North and certain countries representing “the axis of evil” named by the US president in 2001, have been put under “pan-opticon” surveillance by the “watchdogs” of the world, the affluent power elite and their multifarious

security forces.

5. Whatever welfare systems that may have existed within nation-states are being dismantled both in the affluent North, but as well among the poor and middle income countries of the world under joint IMF-World Bank policies, and following the trends toward a liberal, hands-off capitalist economy.
6. The fall of the socialist system in East Europe and the Soviet Union, on the other hand, has created a large class of economically insecure and unemployed people there, who now, having all the consumer luxuries of the West at their feet, must, many times, sell “their own household goods in order to buy food.”²³

Thus a dynamic system of ever changing inequality has to be more equal than a static “consensus” establishment equality of the status quo. Without positive discrimination there is no justice, no way of redressing past wrongs, and, a relatively more equitable distribution of today’s cultural, and politico-economic resources, but also, no other means of addressing the injustices and inequalities of the past. Quotas and positive discrimination are also the means by which the vast poverty gap among different classes in, and in-between societies can be somewhat narrowed down. There is no other means of even “slightly” narrowing the cumulated gulf between the underprivileged and the possessed, short of a quantum leap by revolution. Quotas, positive discrimination and all-purpose ombudsmen for subaltern minorities and the global underdogs, should, they *must* become the Truth and Reconciliative measures of the global age. To avoid The Global Monster of the North, measures of preferential treatment, positive discrimination and quotas should, they *must*, also be used in international trade and other economic transactions to bridge the vast poverty gap between the core and the periphery, and for redressing international wrongs, unjust wars, past colonization, and current neo-colonization.

And finally, equality of opportunity is not enough, what is urgently needed is equality of results.

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Notes

¹ Paul Gilroy, 2000, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ Press, p.8.

² Beck, Ulrich (2000). “The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity”,

British Journal of Sociology, 51 (1): 79-105.

³ For a classification of the views held on globalization see: David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton (1999). *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Polity, Cambridge, UK, pp. 1-14.

⁴ Beck's terminology: Ulrich Beck (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. Sage: London.

⁵ C. Wright Mills (1956). *The Power Elite*. Oxford Univ Press, London.

⁶ C. Wright Mills (1956). *The Power Elite*.: Oxford Univ. Press, London, , p.9.

⁷ Saskia Sassen (2001). "A Message From The Global South: Special Report: Terrorism in the US", *Guardian*, Sept 12, 2001. www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/article .

⁸ Tariq Modood (2001). "Muslims in the West: Muslim diasporas can play a positive role in challenging the dangerous clash of civilizations thesis" *The Observer*, Sept. 30, 2001. www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story

⁹ This definition has been taken from Marquita Sykes (1995). www.now.org

¹⁰ I have borrowed the term from Ulrich Beck, who uses it in general to refer to the South. Ulrich Beck (2000). "The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity", *British Journal of Sociology*, 51 (1): 79-105.

¹¹ Stuart Hall (2000). 3rd Crossroads in Cultural Studies, 21-25 June 2000, Birmingham, UK.

¹² Slavoj Žižek (1997). "Multiculturalism or the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism", *New Left Review*, No. 225, pp.28-51.

¹³ Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic Wacquant. (1999). "On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason", *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 16, No.1, pp.41-58.

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant (1999). "On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason", *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 16, No.1, pp.41-58. (London: Sage)

¹⁵ David Cohen (2000). "At Colleges in Malaysia Chinese Need Not Apply", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 16 2000, Vol 46. No. 47, p.A47 (Ebscohost).

¹⁶ "Don't Discriminate". *The Economist*, Sept.1, 2001, vol 360. No. 8237, p.10 (Database:MasterFILEPremier)

¹⁷ According to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, signed between the Allies and the Republic of Turkey,

Greeks, Jews and Armenians are officially recognized as minorities, while the Kurds, Georgians, and Nusayris, Romas and 40 other ethnic groups, being neither Christian nor Jewish, are not considered minorities.

¹⁸ Suroor, Hasan, (1997). “Delhi Faces Penalties over Caste”, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, June 27 1997, No. 1286, p.11.

¹⁹ Stuart Hall, 2000, Plenary Lecture “Multiculturalism”, *3rd International Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference*, Birmingham University, UK, 21-25 June 2000.

²⁰ Stephen Overell, (1995). *People Managment*, “ECJ Takes Negative View of Positive Discrimination”, Nov. 02, 1995, Vol. 1, No. 22, p.13.

²¹ See David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton’s classification of views on globalization: (1999). *Global Transformation” Politics, Economics and Culture*. Cambridge, UK:Polity, pp. 1-14.

²² Stephen Steinberg (1995). *Turning Back*. New York: Beacon Press, p. 135-136.

²³ John J. Macionis and Ken Plummer (2002). *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. 2nd ed., New York: Prentice-Hall, p. 186.

Toward Laws in History: Carl G. Hempel and the Evidence Dilemma.

By John Jefferson

In high school chemistry, students learn that there are certain experiments that can be repeated if we recreate the exact set of circumstances as the original experiment. Being in the realm of natural science, chemistry deals primarily with movable evidence and verifiable laws. In the realm of history, a member of the social science family, we historians deal primarily with sociological observations more so than finite statements that can apply to more than one situation or event. Or do we? Historians are trained to think that due to the nature of individual persons, events are not repeatable. Things just never seem to happen the same way twice. The justification for which has always been this: No two people are built the exact same way. Therefore, no two people do things the exact same way, and any verifiable evidence would be deficient and any experiment would be flawed because we are not dealing with the same circumstances.

The primary aim of this discussion is to investigate further the possibility that movable evidence and verifiable, general laws exist in history. Our approach, given our historical nature, will be through the historical lens and not through a natural science lens. Much of our discussion will take place in the abstract relationship between philosophy and history although we must prove our propositions in the field of history with concrete evidence. First, we must address concerns of language. Movable evidence shall be taken to mean a set or sets of circumstances and actions that can be moved from place to place or time to time in history. General laws shall be taken to mean verifiable statements that can be proven to apply to more than one historical event or act

The concept of laws in the field of history has more in common with abstract thinking than the observant nature of sociology. Our cast of characters deals not with statesmen or war heroes but with philosophers, thinkers, and historians who are relatively unknown outside the research community. Carl G. Hempel is the prime example. As a philosopher and natural scientist, his work remains relatively untouched by historians because he does not have the appearance of being a social scientist or someone interested in the propagation of history. However, Hempel's career is compatible to historians and social scientists since his theories and philosophies regarding laws in the field of history possess the power to completely redefine

the way people and scholars have viewed history for the past few centuries.

Regarding the concept, Fischer has written: “Some extraordinarily ingenious arguments have been invented, but the enterprise is, at bottom, absurd.”¹ In contrast, Bender explains: “The historian needs to be a cosmopolitan. For that to happen, both historiography and the historian have to restore some sense of strangeness, of unfamiliarity, to American historical experience.”² The nature of laws in history as strange and unfamiliar as that may seem is, as we will see, entirely understandable. Laws are necessary, as Hart has shown us, because “history has limitations as a guiding signpost... for although it can show us the right direction, it does not give detailed information about the road conditions.”³ When a historian is researching a topic, s/he must narrow the locations in which s/he will pursue information. S/He does not always know where s/he will go but s/he must know how to get there and that aim is accomplished by general laws. Atkinson supports this contention by stating: “human knowledge. . . is an orderly and systematic whole; and . . . if what we acquire is to serve any purpose, either of utility or discipline, the main question in regard to it is the question of order and method.”⁴

As he explains in “The Function of General Laws in History,” Hempel does not take the term “law” to connote exactly the same as we view other laws. A law in the field of history does not have any relation at all to a law created by a legislature or judge. Nor is it the same as a theory in biology or chemistry, such as Newton’s theory of motion. Rather, a general law in history is “a statement of universal conditional form which is capable of being confirmed by suitable empirical findings,” best explained as a statement explaining a cause and a directly related effect.⁵ Further, the term “law” suggests that the available evidence relevant to an issue provides confirmation of some kind to the statement explained in the text of the law. Hempel finds that to be rather “irrelevant,” preferring to use the term “hypothesis of universal form” or “universal hypothesis,” as those terms point toward a cause and effect explained as a “regularity of the following type: In every case where an event of a specified kind *C* occurs at a certain place and time, an event of a specified kind *E* will occur at a place and time which is related in a specified manner to the place and time of the occurrence of the first event.”⁶

Hempel explains that history and natural sciences are similar in that “both can give an account of their subject-matter only in terms of general concepts, and history can ‘grasp the unique individuality’ of its objects of study no more and no less than can physics or chemistry.”⁷ Gallie provides a supplement in stating that a historian is not unlike a chemist: “Frequently, in order to get his available generalizations to apply at all, an historian has to suppose the existence of some unobserved or at least unrecorded factor in the situation that he is seeking to explain. In this respect, his position seems at first not unlike that which often faces a chemist, for example, when he is trying to apply general physical formulae in some highly complex physical situation.”⁸ Due to the nature of experiments and the fact that historical events cannot be reproduced in any experiment exactly as it occurred, Gallie intimates that the “historian’s suppositions... must inevitably seem[,] to any critic trained in the natural sciences[,] to be of a dangerously *ad hoc* character.”⁹ However, an examination of Hempel’s ideas reveal that the creation of general laws is not *ad hoc* at all. Rather, general laws must serve a definite purpose if they are to be relevant to any historian.

Possessing a universal hypothesis, or general law, enables the user to perform what is known as scientific prediction. Naturally, if the statement relates a cause to an effect, then that effect is guaranteed. However, due to the ever-changing nature of circumstances in which humans live and the changing nature of human activity, if a statement relating a cause to an effect in history is to be true at all, it must be general and not specific. Creating a general law does not diminish or lessen the validity of specific behavior but, instead, seeks to view history in a synthetic viewer on a larger scale. Martin further explains that the actual job of a historian is to connect details to each other and the only way to accomplish such a task is to establish some sort of generalization as it “serves to show that the assertion of a particular detail is connectible with another. For its effect is to subsume the particularized assertion, as a special case, under a general assertion of appropriateness.”¹⁰ Cronin furthers Martin’s point by stating that “In history proper, one seeks to establish a linear connection among events in order to constitute the meaning of the object under investigation.”¹¹ Such a process of connecting events is absolutely essential to establish laws.

One example of a specific law of history following Hempel’s direction would be “each radical change in policy on the part of an American president has a long-lasting, negative effect on the economic well being of the people it affects both directly and indirectly.” Such a statement requires application of a narrow, limited statement to the wide range of history. The exact opposite must be done to accomplish our goals. One example of a general law would be “assassinations of major American leaders are followed by investigations conducted by major

groups.” Not only is the cause expressed in general terms, the effect is explained in that same manner. Specific statements cannot be proven across the board because the nature of human behavior is simply too much of a variable that cannot be entirely defined and replicated naturally and subconsciously. That view has been held for centuries. However, if we narrow the group referring the cause and expand the effect, we will find a general law that is provable. We know that the first statement, being specific, is not true in every application. We also know that the second statement, being general, is true in every case.

Hempel writes that, using the Dust Bowl as an analogy and taking into consideration the uniqueness of humans and human behavior, we may be limited to statements indicative of a more global action.¹² The Dust Bowl caused farmers in the Midwest to migrate to California in their quest for better living conditions. Though there might not be another example of that same set of causes and effects in history, we may create, with reasonable certainty, the general statement “unfavorable living conditions will cause those living in the unfavorable setting to seek out a more favorable location to move.” For the purposes of truth, we need not be concerned with whether or not those affected actually pursue a new location, only that they consider leaving the unfavorable one. Hempel writes that the fact that the historian attempts to put himself in the shoes of the figure in history about whom he inquires serves only as “a heuristic device” which will enable the historian to better understand, in an empathic fashion, why a historical act occurred.¹³ That act on the historian’s part does not have any relevance toward a general statement naturally because it focuses upon a single, singular event.

The relationship between laws and history is not without precedent. Hempel also explains that history

and historians repeatedly employ the use of laws from other fields, frequently in the natural sciences, so the prospect of having general laws relating to history is not completely foreign. In order to determine the date of fossils, we use a technique known as carbon dating. We know that a prolonged lack of supplies will lead to negative outcomes in military situations because we understand the biological relationship between humans and the need for sustenance. An army with no food and no way to find food in the wilderness will absolutely starve.

The precise nature of history, existing solely in the past, forces historians to invent ways to examine past events indirectly, including laws. In order to form and create a deeper and more thorough understanding of the past, historians rely upon generalizations that we may take as laws. Hempel explains that laws in history are culled from other sciences such as economics, sociology, biology, and psychology, among others, and, as such, these laws have no specific tie to history alone. Wang and Iggers explain further:

The science of history, whose ideal was objectivity and whose main aim was to develop a strictly defined methodology, was fully developed as historicism. Based on methodological tools of philology and a hermeneutic approach to history, German historians made the critique of sources, (Quellenkritik) the basis of their research, and emancipated the writing of history from the philosophical synthesis of history in Kant and Hegel.¹⁴

Due to the crossover between the natural sciences (given the biological factors in humans) and social sciences (given the observable behaviors), historians may be better suited to remove the distinctions of natural and social, and simply lump each branch together under the heading “science” - as Hempel points out: all branches share “the methodological unity of empirical science.”¹⁵ Iggers and Parker concur and state that the “the satisfactory explanation of any event—the *explanandum*,” when it is “logically deducible from a set of empirical laws, together with statements asserting the initial and boundary conditions referred to in the laws; the laws of statements and initial conditions together constitute the *explanans*” which is a testament to the unity between all sciences regardless of affectation toward natural or social.¹⁶

Criticism of the issue of laws in the field of history is often misplaced and disjointed. Wilkins criticizes Hempel’s covering law by stating “Two other objections to the covering law model need noting: (1) that covering laws explain kinds of events, not particular events, and (2) that probability laws or hypotheses cannot explain particular events since such laws only make the occurrence of certain kinds of events seem likely or probable rather than necessary.”¹⁷ What needs noting here is that the second statement is redundant as it is given that probability laws cannot explain particular events. Both of Wilkins’ statements suggest that he had misread Hempel’s intentions. Further, Verene writes: “It is dangerous in matters of history to claim to have discovered the origin of something, because it is the nature of historical investigation to uncover precedents.”¹⁸ Verene’s logic here is fatally flawed as precedents are *de facto* origins. Again, Hempel’s suggestion is that historians employ the use of general laws to investigate origins.

Aydelotte, conversely, takes a view similar to Hempel:

...generalizations should be suggestive rather than demonstrable and that they should appeal to the imagination rather than to the external facts. Such a position does not, as I mean it, imply that the historian should fail to examine the evidence, disregard it, or openly flout it. The case is rather that, in view of the difficulties of adequate proof and the impossibility of final proof, the key to understanding the past is not the pedestrian pursuit of documentation but imagination and vision.¹⁹

Such vision and imagination could only come through a detailed examination of the available evidence, which, as Gray points out, is limited. “Only a small proportion of all the things that happen leaves any permanent record.”²⁰ However, a detailed examination of available evidence requires generalizations made by the historian. As such, the vision and imagination created by the historian in the final product are a direct by-product of the process of examination and generalization performed while the writer researched historical events.

Hegel concurs with Aydelotte in pointing out the emotional relationship between the historian and the evidence. In mentioning that the historian “brings the categories with him,” Hegel hints at the statement that Hempel has expounded. That is, historians create laws when they generalize history and find the relationships that link evidence to other evidence. White criticizes Hegel for suggesting that “history could...be a deductive science, whether the deduction was guided by the rules of the old or those of the new logic.”²¹

Hegel writes that even the historiographer who contends that he is the most passive, most receptive to his evidence “brings his categories with him, and sees the phenomena presented to his mental vision, exclusively through these media.”²² White points out that Hegel’s new view of history was not without criticism during Hegel’s lifetime. The alternative that would serve as an organon to “...this older logic, a logic of human praxis, that is, of history as lived...” was criticized by most professional historians who believed “...he had been wrong to attempt this, for they believed that history could never be a deductive science, whether the deduction was guided by the rules of the old or those of the new logic.”²³

Collingwood opposes the argument that Hempel would create nearly fifty years later but, upon closer inspection, Collingwood espouses a view more akin to Hempel despite his statements to the contrary. He writes:

There is no such thing as empirical history, for the facts are not empirically present to the historian’s mind: they are past events, to be apprehended not empirically but by a process of inference according to rational principles from data given or rather discovered in the light of these principles; and there is no such thing as the supposed further stage of philosophical or scientific history which discovers their causes or laws or in general explains them, because a historical fact once genuinely ascertained, grasped by the historian’s re-enactment of the agent’s thought in his own mind, is already explained. For the historian there is no difference between discovering what happened and discovering why it happened.²⁴

An analysis of Hempelian logic and discourse would conclude that rational principles are synonymous with generalizations. In order for the historian to re-enact a historical event in his own mind, he must first find it and that much is done through the process of generalization. Therefore, Collingwood is correct to state that the further stage of scientific history that discovers historical laws does not exist because that task is accomplished by the historian himself during the process of researching the historical event and it may be as unique and different as each individual historian. There may not be a uniform system of generalization. However, we find that the result is almost always the same: generalizations are made regardless to what they refer. We find our proof of historians' creation of these conclusions in Morgan's statement: "Mine becomes an essentially inductive method. I put together the facts that I find, after assessing them according to what I think their worth may be, and thus slowly and painfully I build toward central conceptions."²⁵

Sir Lewis Namier also criticizes the generality of historians' conclusions. According to him, "the subject matter of history is human affairs, men in action, things which have happened and how they happened; concrete events fixed in time and space, and their grounding in the thoughts and feelings of men - not things universal and generalized...."²⁶ However, Namier fails to realize that generalizations are the primary method of historical instruction. The minutest details of historical events can only be fully understood after the historian has fully understood the larger concept. An understanding of the uses of an M1A1 Abrams tank comes only after understanding warfare in the larger sense. A historian needs to understand that tanks are sent in response to a concrete military threat posed by a tangible enemy. Without that understanding, the uses of that tank are lost on the historian. This contention is further proven by the nature of historical education at university. Before a student is permitted to enroll in upper level history courses, she or he must first take the introductory surveys which deal primarily in generalizations. In the survey course, history is grouped into decades, centuries, and defining moments. Upper level courses delve into smaller periods of time for greater analysis that builds upon the knowledge gained from the introductory surveys.

To the contrary, Smith takes Hempel's logic too far in assuming that "the conclusion is that there are no such things as historical explanations. The explanations that historians give, 'to the extent that they are acceptable explanations, must be scientific ones.'²⁷ While any explanation is bound to be scientific given the standing of history as a social science, these explanations must, *a priori*, be historical because they deal with history. Melchert's argument of defined logic illustrates the difference between validity and verifiability. Validity exists when "it is not possible for the conclusion to be false. An argument can be valid, however, even if the premises are false." The verifiability principle is "the rule adopted by logical positivists to determine meaningfulness in factual statements; if no sense experience can count in favor of the truth of a statement—can verify it at least to some degree—it is declared meaningless, since meaning is said to consist in such verifiability."²⁸ History, not being tangible, cannot be smelled, tasted, or seen. It can only be experienced but it need not be experienced by those who were alive while it was occurring. Through the power of the literary relationship to history, a power which Canary and Kozicki say is as important as the relationship between history and philosophy, history can be appreciated by those interested in it, who approach it long after the historical actors, on the various stages, have left the earth.²⁹

Perhaps Durant explains it best in explaining the nature of laws from a philosophical point of view: “. . . a law is not an eternal and necessary decree to which events are subjected, but merely a mental summary and shorthand of our kaleidoscopic experience; we have no guarantee that the sequences hitherto observed will re-appear unaltered in future experience.”³⁰ Durant’s statement illustrates the relationship between the whole of history and the small portion of that which the historian investigates. He points out the uniqueness of history and historical events but he also provides the basis for Hempel’s general law in the “mental summary and shorthand” aspect of the historical research process. However, Flew tempers Durant’s argument by stating that “it is no tautology at all to say that whatever will be will occur, necessarily, inevitably, and unavoidably.”³¹ The balance of the two statements points to the separation between those who favor laws and those who are opposed.

Hempel was not the only philosopher to espouse a movement toward laws in history. Two other noted philosophers, Karl Popper and William Dray, have also written about historical laws. Popper proclaimed that the job of history is not to make predictions concerning future events yet he understands that no predictions can be made without intrinsic general laws. In his writings, Popper held that “history does not evolve in accordance with intrinsic laws or principles, that in the absence of such laws and principles unconditional prediction in the social sciences is an impossibility, and that there is no such thing as historical necessity.”³²

William Dray supports the idea of laws in history but takes a different approach from Hempel. Dray proposes that general laws designed for use in history, which he calls covering laws, are too general and are not applied properly. The problem lies not in the existence of the covering laws but in their loose application to specific historical circumstances. Due to that fact, the laws become useless and irrelevant for any purpose at all. General laws need to be applied to a general situation. Dray proposes that if historians need something to apply to specific circumstances, then there needs to be the invention of specific laws. Beard seconds that analysis by stating “in the 1960s a number of philosophers writing on history opposed the Popper-Hempel view. . . The opposition, led by William Dray, argued that history had more in common with the type of explanations that occur in ordinary discourse that history’s concern was with particular narrative, rather than general laws.”³³

Fain offers a counterpoint to Hempel’s arguments by applying Hempelian logic to the case of scientific evolution. According to Fain, the story of evolution produces no explanatory insight because “the importance of the story of evolution in the development of the theory of evolution is completely overlooked, and therefore, Darwin’s contribution to the history of science cannot be appreciated.”³⁴ Fain, in the instant case, completely misses the point. Hempel’s contention, as it can be concluded, is that the historian need only concern himself with historical laws if he wishes to relate one historical topic to another, or apply the lessons of the various topics within a larger grouping to a more general topic, thereby necessitating a general law. The task of relating the story of evolution is not overlooked, as that implies that the historian has not bothered to investigate such an idea. The historian, in order to properly generalize evolution, must have considered the story in order to round out the knowledge base. The entire point is to synthesize as much of the complete conglomerate of historical information as possible into a law that covers the entire

topic. A complete investigation of as much of that information as possible must be conducted in order for said law to be relevant and proper.

In exploring general laws, we need not worry about the moral implications that careful selection may bring with it, as Salvemini explains. He believes that quantitative problems such as determining the cause of an event or the results that follow are no moral difficulty. However, posing qualitative inquiries into the historical acts themselves such as ascertaining whether an act is worthy of praise or censure puts the historian in the tall grass. He perceives the problem as one for a different kind of analyst. “It belongs to the domain of the moralist and not of the historian or the social scientist. When they encroach upon the task of the moralist, the activities of the historian or social scientist fall under Aristotle’s definition of practical activities. What is imperative is that the historian or social scientist should draw a line between the moments in which he is writing as a moralist and the moments in which his purpose is to impart information concerning the ways things did and do happen.”³⁵

According to some historians and philosophers, historians seeking to create general laws need to place the concepts of time and evidence at the top of their concern list. Barzun writes that because history “has its origin in man’s awareness of continuity” the concept of time is “modified by that of separateness—of moments, days, years, hours, centuries, Ideas and objects find their place in Time. . .”³⁶ Stanford takes that concept one step further by affirming that “the use of evidence requires a correct understanding of the processes – that is, the temporal series of changes – that have produced the evidence. Processes are the chains along which the historian’s thinking can move from present to past.”³⁷ Lefebvre bolsters that contention by illuminating the relationship between scholarship and history, the practical end result of any historians’ research efforts. “No documents, no history. Without scholarship, there can be no history.”³⁸

Donovan is careful to tie together historians as writers with their actions as researchers and philosophers. “Historiography at any particular moment in time is a reflection, to a greater or lesser degree, of the age in which it was written. Historians, consequently, become not only the chroniclers of the past but also indicators of the currents of their own time.”³⁹

Walsh differentiates between historical thinking and scientific thinking by pointing out that the concept of time makes the two species separate and equal. “It appears from this that there functions in historical thinking a subjective element different from that which is to be found in scientific thinking, and that this factor limits, or alters the character of, the objectivity which historians can hope to attain.”⁴⁰ Given the nature of geologic time and historical time, Hempel accepts that history is influenced by non-scientific concepts such as time. Time, as it is understood in the natural sciences, factors into discussion in terms of evolution, whereas in history, and historical thinking, time factors into the discussion as a classificatory grouping.

Contrary to Walsh’s assertion, there need not be a complete divide between historical thinking and scientific thinking. Chandler has provided a blueprint by which we may be able to construct laws of history. According to this process, the four processes that constitute the scientific method: “1. assumptions; 2. deduction of the consequences of the assumptions; 3. observations to test the consequences, where

necessary and; 4. inductions that lead to generalizations (called also hypotheses, or laws).⁴¹ These four items provide the necessary ingredients for the creation of scientific laws in the field of history.

Beringer makes a good case for the necessity of laws in history in stating that “some historians even today may attempt to satisfy their needs by adopting an attitude of absolute certainty about the past, a condition supposedly achieved by putting oneself in tune with the *Zeitgeist* of one’s own era.”⁴² He goes on to mention that because of this immersion: “[t]he result is a narrow, deterministic view of history in which eras and ideas become equivalents, and inevitable trends are discovered and projected into either the past or future.”⁴³ When the similarities of a historical period are placed in common, general laws may be created. However, such creation need not be at the expense of the historians’ authenticity. The most effective method of establishing laws, as is evidenced by Hempel and Popper’s logic and statement, would be a removal from the *zeitgeist* of a period into a place where a historian may compare and contrast any era or idea to each other so that the resulting fervor to which the historian will expose himself does not cloud the global view.

Tosh provides an interesting point for consideration. He proposes that “if the outcome of historical enquiry is so heavily conditioned by the preferences of the enquirer and can so easily be altered by the intervention of another enquirer, how can it merit any credibility as a serious contribution to knowledge? If fact and value are inextricably tied together, how can a distinction be drawn between sound and unsound history?”⁴⁴ The distinction between sound and unsound history, by applying Hempelian logic, may be made by reasserting Donovan’s claim that history is a snapshot of the time in which the historiographer lives and much may be deduced from an understanding of that relationship between the historiographer and his times.

The distinct relationship between facts and the writing of history is mentioned by Bunzl albeit somewhat missing the mark. He proffers: “Even if there is a tradition about history that allows for the givenness of facts themselves, when it comes to *writing* history, how much good will this do us?”⁴⁵ The question fails to consider the nature of evidence as explanatory in itself. Eventually, despite Verene’s statement, evidence points toward a certain chain of events that leads to the exact beginning of the timeline. This is our absolute starting point; nothing happened or existed relative to the facts before this point in time. Therefore, facts need givenness in order to exist, otherwise nothing would be provable because we cannot provide evidence of existence before the beginning.

The quantification (or measuring) of history, is also a discussion proper to the topic of historical laws. Part of creating historical laws rests upon finding ways to measure the substance of those laws, which is not an easy task. As Flout professes: “qualitative questions complement qualitative questions, and quantitative evidence complements qualitative evidence; neither can replace the other, and neither can pretend to comprehend the whole of historical study.”⁴⁶ Chaunu sees the issue of quantification quite differently as “a history interested less in the individual facts...than in the elements which can be integrated in a homogenous series.”⁴⁷

Chaunu's somewhat pessimistic viewpoint illustrates the tug of war between the whole of history and the specific subgenre of particular interest to the historian. Hempel's statements illustrate the importance of thorough investigating to uncover all the facts. Since the historian cannot know everything, as not everything is recorded according to Gray, an investigation can, at best and most unlikely, only include every known fact, not every fact ever in existence. Such facts may lend themselves to homogenization, naturally, because the entire gamut of facts is not available to the historian. Whatever is left over may meld together better as the result of natural circumstances.

Fischer, who thinks of historical laws as absurd, has explained the concept of Hempelian laws enough to substantially question whether or not laws can ever truly exist. According to him, a law must have a conclusion reachable by deduction and must have, essentially, been a prediction.⁴⁸ He proffers, quite correctly, that the facts in history point toward the notion that any statement containing the word "all" must be severely questioned and scrutinized. All of one kind of people does not do the same things. All Chinese do not eat with chopsticks, as Fischer illustrates; certainly the Chinese man who does not have fingers does not eat with chopsticks.

Consequently, any statement that has been modified from the universal to the specific would need to replace the word "all" with "some" or "certain" in order to make it applicable to the rest of history. Fischer thinks that such a replacement automatically transforms that law into a statistical description. Therefore, stating that some Chinese men eat with chopsticks at certain times has no historical relevance because it attempts to over-quantify the premise of eating with chopsticks; it does not even matter that such a statement can be reused in some other historical investigation.

Part of what negates Fischer's argument is that he does not see the idea in the proper perspective. He has interpreted Hempel's contentions to mean that any historical law that focuses upon a narrow topic is not general enough to qualify as a general law. Thus, he discounts the proposal that there might be a place in history where all of some kind did the same thing, even if it pertains to a small, narrow topic such as military materiel used in the Civil War. Thus, the true statement that "every recorded usage of a wheeled cannon was followed by a vicious motion in the opposite direction of the discharge", is a scientific law based upon Newton's law, stating that every action has an equal and opposite reaction.⁴⁹ However, Fischer's argument also places the notion that the wheels on the cannons were not blocked, not a scientific law, as not even considered because it focuses upon too narrow a subject. Thus, we have found a historical law: every Civil War cannon that recoiled did not have its wheels blocked. Though we may tie it to natural science, the nature of the wheels not being blocked is not the result of the natural sciences but rather, the result of the soldiers loading the cannon.

Fischer's bias towards historians shows through here in his implication that there should be a separation between the fields of statistics and history. Fischer fails to remember the close relationship between history and statistics as those historians who have learned how to crunch numbers properly have also learned how to put history into perspective. A historian does not need to be the only person who might find an applicable general law. Someone from any other field, natural or social, may invent or even stumble upon

a statement that works in more than one place.

Over the course of this examination of historical laws, we have found that laws, or global generalizations, are quite useful to the historian. They exist in virtually all forms and facets of historical study, from economic history to cultural history but they are not touted in the same fashion as the laws of the natural sciences due to a wide range of factors and circumstances. The argument of historical law illustrates Day's statement that "history is both meaningful and meaningless, progressive and static, ordered and chaotic."⁵⁰ The heady argument that large quantities of history, even as "the source of philosophy," as Acton has written," can be synthesized into general laws that cover the entire argument mad by a historian is a task owing as much to abstract philosophical discussion as to historical literature application.⁵¹

Yet, for all the discussion in the abstract and realist realms, important questions remain: Can valid historical laws truly exist? Are any two historical events alike? Are laws in the field of history necessary? Are they useful? Building upon the premise that a good discussion creates more questions than it provides answers, we have arrived at such a place. Only through the attempt to create historical laws can the historian discover historical events that are similar enough to be considered alike. The need to generalize history for consumption among certain audience, notably young, inexperienced children, will dictate the necessity and usefulness of historical laws.

Hempel has written that the laws of which we have investigated, and have worked toward explaining, only refer to the logic of the laws not the psychology of explanation.⁵² The exact reasons for the necessity of historical laws, other than generality, in terms of any reasons for using them or any aims they may accomplish, are not considered in any substantive way in any of Hempel's writings and are, thus, the subject of considerable speculation and conjecture. His findings have been the same as suggestions that have spurred debate, questions, criticism, but most of all, the expansion of historical thought toward a concept criticized long ago without any decisive proof. Hempel's research also proves that the discovery of the purposes and benefits of historical laws lies in an investigation of a wide range of interdisciplinary sources, as we have done here and as Hempel has done himself.

As can be plainly seen, the topic of historical laws requires further and more elongated discussion if it is ever to be taken seriously and with merit. The idea of narrow, or limited, historical laws clashes with many historians but, as we have touched upon here, it may yield historical fruit. It is plainly seen that wide-sweeping attempts to lump every one of a kind together just does not work. There will always be the exception. Therefore, in order to create historical laws, we must travel to the narrow and very specific to find "all" of some classification that works properly. The limits placed on the scope differ from Hempel's contentions but not from his logic. His logic refers not to size and scope of the topic but to the verifiability and validity of the statement. Such laws can be proved and that makes them valid.

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- ⁴ Atkinson, W. P. *On History and the Study of History: Three Lectures*. P. 15.
- ⁵ Hempel, Carl G. "The Function of General Laws in History" *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 2. (Jan. 15, 1942) P. 35
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- ¹⁰ Martin, Rex. *Historical Explanation: Re-Enactment and Practical Inference*. P. 100-1
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- ¹⁴ Wang, Q. Edward and Georg G. Iggers, Eds. *Turning Points in Historiography: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. P. 149.
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- ¹⁸ Grafton, Anthony T. and J.H.M. Salmon. *Historians and Ideologues: Essays in Honor of Donald R. Kelley*. P. 305.

- ¹⁹ Aydelotte, William O. *Quantification in History*. P. 83.
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- ²³ White, Hayden and Frank E. Manuel. *Theories of History*. P. 13-4.
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- ²⁵ Topping, Gary. *Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History*. P. 147. This quote is taken from a conversation between Dale Morgan and Juanita Brooks, both Mormon historians.
- ²⁶ Stern, Fritz. Ed. *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*. 2nd Ed. P. 372.
- ²⁷ Smith, Page. *The Historian and History*. P. 94.
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- ²⁹ Canary, Robert H. and Henry Kozicki, Eds. *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*. P. xii.
- ³⁰ Durant, Will. *The Story of Philosophy*. Rev. Ed. P. 258.
- ³¹ Flew, Anthony. *An Introduction to Western Philosophy: Ideas and Argument from Plato to Popper*. Rev. Ed. P. 247.
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- ³⁴ Fain, Haskell. *Between Philosophy and History: The Resurrection of Speculative Philosophy*
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- ⁵¹ Acton, Lord. *A Lecture on the Study of History*. P. 57.
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Ishraqat, Part III: Towards a New U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East?

By Babak Rahimi

With the reelection of Mr. George Walker Bush, the selected president who held on to power for four years thanks to a Supreme Court ruling, has a legitimate electoral mandate at last. With the support of a Republican-led Senate and Congress, the new administration now maintains a firmer base exceeding the Democratic Party by 3.5 million votes – a huge achievement for the Republicans. Now, the “accidental president” has become an elected president with “political capital” to spend for his second term, a capital which he “intends to use” according to his socially conservative and militaristically hawkish agenda.

The one question that looms over all concerns with a second term Bush administration: what will the president elect do now with his victory in terms of US foreign policy in the Middle East? Should we expect any radical changes? Will the neo-conservative ideology of democratization through conquest, articulated best in the idiom of shock and awe, once again overshadow pragmatism and respect for international rule? Will the newly reelected administration demonstrate any greater sensitivity in an attempt to deal with various challenges, including its failure to secure Iraq as a result of an illegitimate and unilateral war?

As the second-term Bush administration begins to pursue its military objectives in the Middle East with battles raging in the streets of Fallujia, Ramadi and other insurgency strongholds, several key issues will play an integral role in the shaping of US foreign policy in the next four years.

Iraq: The Case of a Quagmire

In the January 2003 *Hoover Digest*, Larry Diamond, a leading democratization theorist, argued that the greatest danger facing the US was not Saddam Hussein and his dictatorial regime but “imperial overreach and the global wave of anti-Americanism that it is already provoking.”¹ According to Diamond, since the US-led war in Iraq would be perceived throughout the Muslim worlds as an act to control Iraq’s oil

and control the region, the price of invasion could be a heavy one for Americans. Without evidence that Saddam's regime broke its obligation to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction, a war in Iraq would be void of legitimacy and lack broad international support. In short, Diamond worried that an "extended, unilateral American military occupation of Iraq" would "turn American soldiers from liberators to occupiers."

Diamond's prophetic assessment, stated just a few months before the war, best articulates the situation that the US government faces in post-Saddam Iraq. Although the administration continues to boast about the positive impact of invading Iraq in building schools, roads, public institutions and securing an elected government come January 2005, the US presence in the region has increasingly been viewed around the world as an imperialist aggression in an attempt to dominate the international oil market and maintain a military presence in the Middle East. Correspondingly, Muslims have easily interpreted the administration's calls for democratization and claim of freedom not as liberating Iraq from Saddam Hussein, but as subduing the region for self-interested objectives. A serious anti-American reaction based on the administration's perceived malicious intentions has certainly developed within Iraq, and the region, against a US-led process of democratization.

The administration's pre-war claim that the invasion of Iraq would be a huge victory in the ongoing war on terror by dislodging Saddam Hussein, which would ultimately open the way to bring democracy in the Middle East, can now be easily dismissed. In reality, the March 2003 invasion has provided a new camping ground for Islamist terrorist organizations to launch attacks against the "infidel" invaders. Accordingly, much to the dismay of the neo-conservative's dream of a pro-American liberal democratic Middle East, the insurgency's sabotage of oil pipelines in Iraq has (indirectly) assisted authoritarian regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia to maintain power with the increase in oil prices, boosting the sway of non-democratic states in the region.

With regard to the institutionalization of democracy in Iraq, the US-backed interim government also experiences a serious legitimacy problem. While the insurgency shows no sign of abating, even during the US-led military invasion of Fallujia and Sammara, Iraq's interim government continues to face a crisis of legitimacy, in being regarded a "puppet regime", as it prepares for the general election due by the end of January. The recent declaration of a state of emergency by the Allawi government shows how daunting a challenge it can be to establish a legitimate and indigenous democratic polity in post-Saddam Iraq, which brings with it the prospect of the US military continuing to occupy the country for years to come.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Failure of a Partial Policy

The second Palestinian Intifada in 2000 underscored the continuation of the US foreign policy in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Despite repeated efforts to jump-start the Oslo Peace process through a set of negotiations (with the objective that peace between Palestinians and Israelis would reach the entire Arab world by offering concrete dividends that could be redistributed to the population), the first Bush

administration by and large has failed to play the important role of an impartial broker to establish a multipurpose peace process. For the most part, the US foreign policy has continued its favorable stance toward Israel and showed little interest in acknowledging the Palestinians' predicament in the occupied territories. Despite the administration's claim in support of a "viable Palestinian state", the Palestinian population remains under siege by the Israeli army and the advancing march of extremist Jewish settlers in their territories.

Although some of the blame can (and should) also be attributed to the PLO and Yassar Arafat's corrupt and inept leadership's inability to control the Islamist and secular-nationalist groups and their army of suicide bombers, the administration has shown little interest in curtailing the right-wing Israeli government in its military onslaught of the Palestinian civilian population and expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Not since Ariel Sharon's now famous deliberately provocative walk on the esplanade of the Haram Sharif in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000, and Arafat's misguided call to launch the Al-Aqsa second Intifada, has the Israeli-Palestinian relation seen a greater deepening of distrust, anger and hatred, showing little sign of recovery even with the effect of the death of Arafat at a Paris hospital.

How to restore a necessary condition for the two sides to return to the negotiation table has become a central dilemma for Mr. Bush's future foreign policy. This dilemma will continue to haunt the administration into its second term, as the neo-conservatives seek greater influence in the policy making process in the next four years.

Iran: A Brave New "Axis of Evil"?

In May 2005, Iran's current president, Mohammad Khatami, who was elected into office in 1997 after a popular vote on a platform of reform, will leave his job. In his place, the US will face a conservative parliament and possibly, given the electoral constraints set up by the hardliner Guardian Council, a conservative president in Iran, a country that Mr. Bush labeled in his 2002 State of the Union Speech as an "axis of evil".

Having defeated the reformers through bureaucratic infighting, imprisonment of reformist activists and organized violence, the conservatives now openly reject the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty with signs of increase of uranium enrichment activities for the possible production of weapons of mass destruction. On October 31st, Iran's conservative-dominated parliament approved the basis of a bill to develop fully a nuclear capability, a decision that clearly defied the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); the UN's nuclear watchdog, which earlier demanded Tehran to suspend all uranium enrichment and plutonium-reprocessing activities.

Although the EU could play an important role in the negotiation process in the future, the newly resurgent conservatives pose a serious challenge to the (disengaged) US foreign policy with regard to Iran's nuclear

ambitions. The key problem, however, is not merely the degree to which Iranian politics will deal with its political factionalism, which promises to be an ongoing struggle between reformists and conservatives in years to come, about how to resolve its problem with the West, but how the US will handle Tehran's alignment with China.

When China, an important member of the UN Security Council with a veto power, signed a lucrative deal on October 30, 2004 to extract and purchase huge quantities of Iranian oil and gas in exchange of developing Iran's oil fields, Iranians have clearly shown that they will be seeking China's protection if other UN council members, notably the US, try to have them sanctioned for their advancing nuclear technology. With the backing of its other ally, Russia, Tehran's main civilian nuclear supplier and another member of the UN Security Council, the Islamic Republic's conservative regime is now preparing to face the second Bush administration; this time, however, with the confidence that the US will not launch attacks against its suspected nuclear installation since such move is fraught with risk.

Iran's hardliners in a sense are fully aware that the US military is overstretched, and prospects of a regime change by a military invasion, similar to the Iraqi case, remains highly unlikely. With over 100, 000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US cannot wage another invasion due to the fact that wars are costly, and with little international support, it is highly improbable that the Americans will engage in another misguided militaristic venture to Iran.

It seems that US can best dissuade Iran from continuing its production of uranium and plutonium through negotiation, but the first Bush administration failed to engage with the Iranian regime to offer incentives for a change of behavior. Armed with neo-conservative ideology and apocalyptic terminology such "axis of evil", it is very unlikely that the Iranians will perceive America as a potential partner at a negotiation table.

Such foreign policy can have further negative ramifications for the newly elected US government. With the extension of a policy of disengagement toward Iran, thanks to the hawkish faction of the American government, the US could face further problems in Afghanistan and Iraq as it continues to ignore Iran's potentially positive influence in the reconstruction of the two countries.

What remains certain is that the US foreign policy in regard to the above-mentioned key issues must undergo a radical shift of paradigm if it is to give legitimacy to its alleged benign intentions and rhetoric in advancing freedom and promoting democracy in the Middle East.

Confessions of a Neo-conservative: A New Foreign Policy?

The greatest paradox of the first Bush administration was that while it highlighted the promotion of democracy for the advancement of peace as its primary foreign policy objective in the Middle East, it

largely turned its back on international institutions that most proponents of democracy champion. In the last four years Mr. Bush has shown little patience for international institutions, which play an integral role in the institutionalization of democracy in significant ways. The cause of this dilemma mainly lies in the neo-conservative takeover of the Republican administration after September 11, 2001, which calls for the dissemination of the American model of democracy in the region by whatever means necessary--including military force and excluding international organizations.

The neoconservative project to restructure the world along ideological lines appears now to resurface with a stronger voice after the November elections. Consider the following statement by Frank Gaffney, an influential foreign-policy neo-conservative and a student of Richard Perle with long-standing ties to the Bush administration. Gaffney, the founder and president of the Center for Security Policy (CSP), has laid out what he calls “a checklist of the work the world will demand of this president and his subordinates in a second term.”² Beginning with “the reduction in detail of Fallujah and other safe havens utilized by freedoms’ enemies in Iraq,” the list includes a pursuit of an aggressive foreign policy of regime change in Iran and Korea, creating new strategies to tackle China’s increasingly “fascistic trade and military policies”, and defeat the “worldwide spread of Islamofascism”.

For Gaffney, the second Bush administration should tackle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict head on by “keeping faith with Israel, whose destruction remains a priority for the same people who want to destroy us (and...for our shared moral values) especially in the face of Yasser Arafat’s demise and the inevitable, post-election pressure to ‘solve’ the Middle East problem by forcing the Israelis to abandon defensible boundaries.” But could such a neo-conservative road map underline the future agenda of the State Department and Pentagon in an attempt to, as Gaffney puts it, “imprint moral values on American security policy[,] in a way[,] and to an extent[,] not seen since Ronald Reagan’s first term”?

Mr. Cheney’s November assertion that the newly reelected president has now a “mandate” to follow through a “clear agenda” to continue the “war on terrorism”, should provide us with some clues. In a way, the election is viewed by the administration as a confirmation that they are on the right track, and that with a bigger margin of victory and a Republican Congress, Mr. Bush may now feel he has no reason to disappoint the hawkish faction of his party who supported him in his reelection campaign, which won him the presidency. What we should expect from the second Bush administration then should not be viewed in terms of moderation, bipartisanship or application of a new multilateral foreign policy approach, but an *expansion* of the neo-conservative agenda of unilateralism tied with distrust of international institutions.

While we should expect a reshuffling of posts in the second term, a new Bush administration will most likely consist of a fresh aggressive stance to extend the “Bush doctrine” of preemption to its logical conclusion. A hardliner foreign policy is now more firmly intact and we should expect for Mr. Bush to do whatever he can do to pursue its “democratic” missionary objectives in the region.

As Colin Powell best articulates it, Mr. Bush would not alter his policies abroad in his second term nor is he “going to trim his sails or pull back.”³ According to Powell, the future US foreign policy will be a

“continuation of his principles, his policies, his beliefs.” This is the path of moral certitude that will most likely guide America’s stance toward the region.

A Future that could Fail

Such neo-conservative ambitions of “democratic” conquests to seemingly save the native’s souls by spreading democracy will surely face opposition from various camps, including the traditional conservative Republicans that have already shown resistance to the most sweeping elements of Mr. Bush’s foreign policy approach. To be sure, the cost of such ventures, at the economic, militaristic and human levels, will certainly be high, and Iraq’s advancing state of disarray could make a huge impact on the expected US budget deficit to be built up in the next four years.

Iraq should expect a long-term upsurge of resistant movements by various insurgency groups (both secularists and religious) in an effort to challenge the US military presence in the country. As the problem of security looms over the prospect of democratizing Iraq, so will the extension (and the possible expansion) of the US army in the country. This could cause a major legitimacy problem for a future democratic political order in Iraq as the country faces the prospect of occupation by foreign troops for years to come. A call for a more “aggressive” US foreign policy in Iraq will only enhance the cause of the insurgency, coupled with American presence and the mounting civilian losses as a result of military operations aimed at destroying opposition to the Alawi government.

The post-Arafat situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will most likely increase the administration’s support of Israel, as the new secular-nationalist and radical Islamist groups engage in a power struggle in the West Bank and, notably, the Gaza strip, followed by new military strategies to fight against Israel. In this respect, a possible extension of closer ties between US and the Jewish state could lead to an increase in the wrath of numerous well-armed militants who increasingly see Americans as the sole protector of Israel.

With a growing sense of distrust of US foreign policy, Iran could see a rise in the power of hardliners as they continue to label any form of domestic dissent as an American effort for regime change. What the hardliners in Tehran and neo-conservatives in Washington share is the ambition to maintain the belief in the phantom of a monolithic, demonic and an absolutely immoral enemy, which requires the unconditional loyalty of the country’s citizens and the affirmation of a culture of fear with the belief in the destructive and belligerent will of a foreign adversary. This in return can hamper civil society and dissent in a post-Khatami Iran.

In the failure of Mr. Bush’s visionary projection of democracy and stability in Iraq lies the failure of the neo-conservative ambitions, now likely to expand beyond the next four years of administration’s time in office. In this regard, the greatest challenge to the neo-conservative make up of the US foreign policy is not the extent to which it can maneuver so as to tackle possible threats lurking in hostile regions like the

Middle East, but how to march on the offensive as it continues to create more enemies than it can defeat in the process.

Notes

¹ See Larry Diamond, “Diamond Replies” in Tony Smith and Larry Diamond ”Was Iraq a Fool’s Errand?” <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20041101faresponse83612/tony-smithlarry-diamond/was-iraq-a-fool-s-errand.htmla>

² Frank J. Gaffney, “World Wide Value: Bush’s appreciation of freedom shapes his foreign policy,” November 5, 2004: <http://www.nationalreview.com/guffney/gaffney.asp>.

³ “US to remain ‘aggressive’ abroad,” *BBC News*, November 9,2004: <http://newsvote.bbc.col.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk>.

Going Back to Metaphysics in the Attic.

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Abstract

The paper aims at understanding the implications of the Heideggerian poser that Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking only. In this regard, a sentence, “Let us begin at the beginning,” randomly taken up, is subjected to rigorous analysis to check the proposition in the manner of Analytic philosophy, not forgetting Continental philosopher Jacques Derrida’s aversion to the “trace,” obviously of metaphysics. An attempt is made to find whether language or discourse analysis point a way out. Can the binary of percept and concept help explicate the proposition; whether percept stands for subject and concept predicate; and whether analytic truth is all there is to know or whether synthesis by means of philosophical analysis, i.e. by comparing each term with others, reveals the big picture? Regardless of true and false knowledge, the attempt is to begin at the possible beginning to find how humanity came to speak in the cave. By confronting humanity with the elements, it is sought to be proved that the elemental is nothing but metaphysical. An unconscious realization and confirmation is that most of philosophy is giving expression to preconceived opinion. It is also a humble submission that the paper has limitations of space and time and knowledge.

Let us begin at the beginning. To start with what does the ‘English’ word ‘let’ mean? Lexically it means ‘to go’ or ‘pass in’ (perceptual); with first person plural ‘let’ is used to make a suggestion as in ‘Let’s go,’ also in requests and commands; and used to express an assumption etc, and hence conceptual. Both suggestion and assumption arise from, and in, the mind, but suggestion is verbal and assumption internal. Therefore, concept flows from percept through cognition. Suppose someone were to say “Let’s ...” and not complete the sentence, ‘let’s’ cannot be called a percept, unless you add the verb ‘go’ or some other specific act such as read. ‘Let’ alone can be perceptual, because it is an act that can be seen or cognized; and ‘let us’ as phrase stands in midair. So the question arises, is concept a predicate? If we take the sentence, ‘John has two books,’ what is the percept and what the concept? The sentence is perceptual insofar as one can see John having two books. The question of concept does not arise in the proposition, for concept figures only when one wants to use the knowledge to prepare a model for a particular purpose. While concept is not straightway evident, ‘John has two books’ arguably projects the concept of possession. Therefore, for a percept to become a concept there has to be an intermediate stage, called intercept. Intercept is the intermediary that can turn a percept and thought about it into an idea and a concept. Cognition mulls over

a percept before converting it into a concept. However, it is not essential to turn every percept into concept. Those percepts that enhance knowledge are concepts. Even so, ‘let’s’ has become a handy phrase for initiating conceptual knowledge such as starting a sentence. Perception follows conception: Is one right in saying so? Does not conception precede perception? Normally it should, for conception is an act enacted by two agents to give birth to an idea. ‘Con’ literally means together. A concept is therefore fusing of the percept and the intercept. A concept forms only when a thought, a notion, or cognition arises from a generic idea derived from particular sensual instances. For conceptualizing a phenomenon has to occur more than once at least. It is more accurate to say, causally, that a percept goes through the mill of intercept and effect before the concept is constituted. Thus, four stages are essential for achieving knowledge, the percept, the intercept, the effect and the concept.

Percept, Cognition ~~ Intercept ~~ Effect ~~ Concept
 (-----Cause-----) / (---Effect-----)
 (-----Knowledge-----)

First, a percept has to be cognized by sensual knowledge and validated by mind after generalizing the generic phenomenon before a model is ready for further use. Perception does not need the elaborate procedure, for every phenomenon is immediately perceptible. The only thing needed is that a phenomenon has to recur together with assessing its generic value before a concept evolves. Percept is immediate to sensual knowledge, which can be cognized in a flash. The effect, however, has to stand repeated testing before validation and formulation. However, once a concept is validated, tested and attested it is time to move forward. A percept is temporary and lasts as long as it is untested, whereas concept can be permanent because it is validated. Since the noun form, conception, attracts connotations, it is better to confine to the shorter noun ‘concept’. Curiously, concept and conception are noun forms standing in for abstract thought, whereas they are actually the result of causal fusion.

Going back to the primordial beginning, because we proposed to begin at the beginning: ‘God said, Let there be light: And there was light.’ Before God said it, there was clearly no light hitherto! At least till He said it, the Copernican revolution of the heliocentric nature of the solar system not having been proved well into the middle ages, it was mythical, mythological and chaos, going by the book and also by science. The question, therefore, arises, is it for man to determine what God said or did not say and when? The metaphysical question arises can man speak on God’s behalf and attribute things to Him? Must we take it that to assign things to God that are essentially human conceptions is one of the great delusions of humankind? Why not put faith in physics of physics that is metaphysics till such time as no clearer understanding is achieved?* It is not that the heliocentric nature of the solar system by itself proves the nature of light. What it proves is that the earth itself is not the centre of the universe just because of the presence of “man”. Besides, humanity’s presence is a contingent factor evolution and the greater scheme of things. Even assuming Sun is a star, what endows Him with energy? ‘Even Assuming...’, but is not Sun a star before the assumption? Is humanity a measure of all that is metaphysical? Concept as science, as truth, nullifies constructions of man. It may at best validate scientific knowledge that humanity has acquired

despite taboo. Anyway, since God said it, would it be a percept or concept? If God said it all of a sudden then it would be a percept. Because He would not have experienced the intercept or seen the effect before the concept of “man” arose, unless he has created the model elsewhere. (Even so, Analytical philosophers are fond of saying “The proposition must be true in all possible worlds,” knowing well it will not be because different possible worlds have different gravity, relative to the Cosmic Force). Since percept is only a perceiving and not thinking constructively, when God said it, should it not be a percept-concept occurrence? He obviously had the conception of light in Him when He made the pronouncement due to his attribute of omniscience. While perception is immediate to the senses and reflection on it alone leads to a model or concept, in the specific case of the Creator, it is the chicken and egg question, wherein the concept apparently comes first and the series of percepts thereafter. Much better, since it is in the realm of metaphysics, the two are together, phenomena fused in, and driven by, noumena. For a fact, “Let there be light,” is not specific in its address to anyone; and it is for the believers to take it for granted. When nobody heard when it was said, how can it be assumed that it was said in the first place? In other words, most of concepts found in the books, or preached or posited, have divine sanction, irrespective of science! Thus, there is room for hermeneutics. ‘Let’ in metaphysics may arise de novo as much as creation, as in ‘God said it...’ By the same yardstick, is it valid to say: ‘Let also rises,’ like sun rises? Hardly. Thus for the ordinary man ‘let’ is luxury of playing God. Because the need for ‘let’ arises for him to describe such situations as that existed even before “man” came out of the mud. ‘Let’ generalizes a situation, as in ‘Let’s go.’ It does not specify that Tom, Dick or Harry will have to accompany someone. They may go together or severally. The use of ‘let’ avoids inconvenient specifics. By generalizing, the word tends to address the other, the many and the whole. ‘Let’ as the starting word, initiates happiness and stresses the positive more than the negative. The word presupposes leadership, resolution, pleading and so on for one using it. Hence, ‘let’ is purely a ‘creative’ word. Since ‘let’ covers a binary of two opposites, command and pleading, and since it is a handy word for the Creator, it is metaphysical, as used by King James, because the Bible itself is translated into English. The exact words in ‘The First Book of Moses, Called Genesis’ Chapter 1, reads:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

‘Let’ comes from the Book. In other words, ‘let’ may not be originally English and must have first come in for use as perceptual word through the Latin route before entering the conceptual arena. Conceptual knowledge lies in perception, cognition and working on it. When it is stated ‘let’ is foreign (exotic to English), it does mean outwardly, that is external to the original core of the English language, but very much a word in some other language from which it has been affixed into English. To start with, since liturgy has generally been in Latin, the word could have been borrowed from that language, and Latin from Greek since the etymology of the word finds place in the latter and stands for the attic. ‘Let’ is thus virtually pulling something out of the attic! And attic, too, sounds a borrowed word, for ‘ataka’ in the Dravidian language of Telugu it stands for the same.

Perception – seeing, hearing, feeling, touching or tasting – prepares the ground for a signifier such as the

word 'light' – that which dispels darkness – into concept light, that which enables one to see/understand something better. Simply put, without 'let' there is no letting in of light, or conceiving, imagining or positing a God or Prime Mover who said, 'Let there be light.' 'Let' thus is without hindrance. 'Let' therefore came with the conception by an ancient people who recognized that it is the Prime Mover that made the Sun, the moon and the stars and the human. Synchronic words such as let and light came in the diachronic field of time and space. The binaries such as percept and concept, analytic and metaphysic and skepticism and bewitchment and so on are therefore dependent on the bearing we give to a word rather than its use in language. To understand a concept such as God, Prime Mover or Higher Power also needs 'let' which is signified. Signifier 'let' for individual and local needs and universal 'let' cutting across cultures and languages point not necessarily to English but universal conception. This is perhaps what linguist Ferdinand de Saussure had in mind when he defined synchronic as popular use (as opposed to diachronic use) of let.

'Us' too is another binary as we see in 'us and them.' 'Them' raises the question of other minds, and the misunderstanding starts. 'Begin' is another binary that has an *end* as its antonym. The third and the sixth inflectional words 'begin' and 'beginning' are related, and sound and mean the same, but one is a verb and the other gerund. The proposition, "Let us begin at the beginning," is more analytic inasmuch as "a tall man is man," if only one tends to overlook the fact that both sentences have recursive words. The preposition 'at' refers to space that cuts both ways in space and time. In the sentence our dealing with 'at' relates to time rather than space, although the latter too is not incorrect. We shall not complicate matters at this stage by trying to find whether space and time are coterminous at infinity and so on, except to make the obvious observation that space and time take the same preposition.

However, we seem to be concerned only with the English language. Why the English language alone? For the simple reason that we are essentially dealing with western philosophy, linguistic philosophy, discourse analysis and philosophy of language, because logical positivists have come to put so much in store by language analysis. For instance, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, one-time positivist, says in *Tractatus*, "Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language ... (obviously German)." In the same vein, Martin Heidegger frames the question in a more forthright manner: "Do our western languages have an intrinsic metaphysical structure so that they are forever destined to be onto-theo- logical in their nature or do they harbour other possibilities of thinking?"* Not only Western languages but also their possible progenitors such as Sanskrit and Semitic have also the same problem to contend with. The solution to the metaphysical problem, if any, is clearly outlined by Wilhelm von Humboldt:

Even if we find ourselves in possession of the necessary lexical and grammatical details of two important language stems, e.g. Sanskrit and Semitic; that will still not take us very far in our effort to sum up the character of each of them in such a way that we can make fruitful comparisons between them and specify their proper places in the general enterprise of language creation, as measured by their relation to the spiritual-intellectual capacity of the nations. What is still required is a special seeking out of the common sources of the individual peculiarities, the gathering together of the scattered features into the picture of an organic whole. That is the

only way to enable us to get a firm hold on the particulars.**

Continuing with our original sentence, “Let us begin at the beginning,” we come to the definite article. A binary to the definite article is the general, the common, and not particular. When we say ‘the beginning’, do we mean particular beginning or beginning of the beginning? Regardless of particular, universal or primordial, thanks to Plato because there cannot be ‘beginningness’ as cattiness and tableness and since beginning has to be made in the mind for it to be initiated, stated or grounded, we shall begin at the primordial beginning. Where else can such a beginning be but in the cave, even if it may have family resemblance to Plato’s cave? Let us posit a group of the nascent Homo sapiens in the cave, since by historical materialism we have a pretty clear idea that the first man was neither Adam nor the first woman Eve, since monads and gonads go together. In terms of ‘Origin of Species,’ Adams and Eves were always in the making, without it being possible to isolate the first Eve. Instead, we shall assume there were Adams and Eves in the cave and they constituted a group of common hunters for food gathering, whenever they ventured out. Let us not be so cruel as to confine our Adams and Eves to the cave and light a fire behind them, or to erect an impenetrable wall in front of them to facilitate the shadows to fall on the wall, and then derive a philosophy out of it that *it* is all shadowboxing after all! We shall also not force Adam to chase a mirage, but help him come out of the cave to see the nature of true form; if not in its full resplendence, which is impossible, at least in part. We shall also not beguile him into believing that the restricted forms of shadows falling on the impenetrable wall are all there is. We shall thus refrain from condemning him to false knowledge. Instead we shall give him freedom to think for himself, as is humanly possible, and to find for himself the rudiments of true form through nascent semiotics. At the same time, we shall not be taken in by the shadowy forms on the wall as reality or by sensual feelings lit up by sunshine at the mouth of the cave. (Or the analogue of moonshine in the dark!). Neither do we attribute to the one who got away for the pleasure of roaming in the early morning sun as basking in any extra-knowledge. We must be clear what million suns meant to nuclear scientist J.R. Oppenheimer and the spectre under which we are living ever after.***

Let us, therefore, begin at the beginning, in the cave, giving enough freedom to the hunter-gatherers dwelling therein. It maybe assumed that these hunter-gatherers do not yet have a full-fledged language, let alone ‘our languages,’ even in the proto form. So how would this man communicate with the other minds, the outside world, his fellowmen, fellow Adams and Eves? First of all what do we mean by naming our man Adam? We have named our man Adam for convenience after the first man in the book before setting him in the Garden of Eden and finding him the consort Eve, locating him near the tree of knowledge bearing fruits, the bite of one of which became the bark of the world, goaded of course by the slippery serpent. We have named him Adam but not christened him. Our Adam is a strapping, sturdy youth, what with feeding on unpolluted food given by Mother Nature. So our Adam, as he comes out of the shadows, sees but bright sunlight and for what purpose – food gathering. As he comes out of the cave and takes a few uncertain steps, he finds he has crossed a long slithering thing in the grassy path. After crossing, he reminds himself of his good luck that he has not come to any harm, for he remembers in a flash something of the nature being gestured about back in the cave. Despite the luck, he has had a sinking feeling. In fact, contrary feelings envelop him, all occurring and hitting him at the same time. While tension mounts, he could kill

the snake on his own, but it is a rather risky affair. Rather, the killing can be in quick time by alerting others in his tribe. As is usual, the first human reaction would be to shout and that would have to be onomatopoeic as well. So he says something sounding like ‘hiss’ ‘busss’, for the snake makes a hissing sound when faced with danger and man refers danger to him by that very sound. While the signifier is hiss, it maybe conveyed to others (if only those in the cave or coming out of it) who know what it signifies. So how would Adam1, coming next out of the cave after our Adam, register the sound? When there is a snake in the grass, birds in the vicinity start frantic twittering. Once this is observed *a priori*, cause to effect, it becomes standard knowledge. Next time, one sees frantic twittering by birds, *a posteriori*, one knows that there is a snake in the grass around, or at least some form of danger such as the approach of a hawk or a bird that preys on smaller birds or a wild animal lurking in the shadows.

Thus alerted Adam1 runs back into the cave and makes the same ‘hiss’ ‘busss’ sounds demanding, of course by gestures, those of his age group to rush out, with whatever rough-edged weapons they may have. While they are so preparing, an elderly matron and master gesture the cause of commotion to others in the cave that there is some kind of danger outside the cave. This is done in ‘didn’t-we-tell-you-so’ gestures.

After the snake is killed and danger warded off, and as the tribe seats itself down to a meal of venison or whatever, they will reconstruct in their own onomatopoeic ways and nascent words the episode of snake and how they have encountered it. In the process, they may coin more words for such concepts as ‘lurking danger’, ‘to sound the bugle’ (‘bugul’ fear in Telugu) and the creatures that cause it such as lion, tiger, snake and so on or phenomena such as heavy rain, hail, heavy wind, forest fire, flood, rapid flow of water, and earthquake or human-made dangers that engender fright. Some of the more thoughtful in the tribe would continue to reflect on the day’s happening and the knowledge gleaned into the night, burning midnight fat sometimes. For it is the darkness of the night that holds and throws light on more of the nature’s secrets and mysteries to mankind. Night is the time of thought, reflection. At some point in thought, images are not enough like in the silent-era films. Words need to be formed first for objects. To describe a percept such as the snake in the grass in the early morning sun while going out for food-gathering, there ought to be a chain of words. Even assuming that the cavemen have graduated to naming all objects of importance to them, there cannot be an unbroken succession of words to describe the percept or the series of percepts. The informer can hardly run out of breath if he has to make himself intelligible to his fellowmen and women. So he has to take a pause – after uttering a phrase which makes some sense – or complete a sentence about the perception, committing himself to a subject, predicate and object, as ‘I saw a snake in the grass, and so be on alert’ even in proto language. The coherent sound, syntax and semantics – all reflections of the mind -- take a long period to come to fruition. It may be days and nights, years and ages to develop a workable language. Even so, it needs mention that while the day is for various episodes to occur, the night-outs are for reflection and epiphenomena. Night is the time for clearer demonstration of metaphysics -- shooting stars, comets cutting across and phenomenal knowledge. Darkness is the time for transcendence from dark to light and back again. The darkness is time to light up the space, isolate an object such as a star, or nocturnal animal, or a buzzing bee or an idea that needs codification. It is perfect time to mull over a phenomenon, an object, which in transcendence becomes the subject. This transcendence transforms the idea or subject into a concept and object. Thus transcendence is the search

engine for an idea inasmuch as language.

In the night of transcendence, there is room for individual genius. Modern science in fact describes transcendence as higher consciousness. Higher consciousness relates to deep inner peace, bliss, unbounded awareness and oneness with the elements - the particulars and the universals. A recent scientific study in the area claims it has quantified brainwave patterns in some of those people who experience transcendence in their daily lives and compared them with those who show no signs of such experience. Based on the neuro-physiological markers obtained from both the groups, the study has drawn up 'an integration scale', a gamut of transformation in brain activity corresponding to integration of transcendent experience with daily activity. The study implies first that transcendence is inborn in some, that it is it is not necessarily learnt, practiced and perfected as by philosophers and that there is for some transcendence in daily activity also. It also explains that higher consciousness does not automatically mean higher intelligence but higher awareness, higher happiness and greater scope for understanding, integrating and rationalizing. In short, it is higher understanding of phenomena that may result in science.

It is very much possible that some ancients individually thought of the necessity for naming things and donning words to describe them, who also thought up the subject and inserted the predicate to find the object. Rationalistic theorists in Germany argued that the solution to the problem of the origin of language lay in the consideration of the condition of primitive man, of the similarities and differences between man and the animals, and of primitive forms of expression. Since the primitive man had the same structure of the brain and activity as any specie of *Homo sapiens*, it is possible that he soon realized that he is gifted by nature in that he could trap animals more ferocious and bigger than he is. What's more, he could domesticate them if he so wished, he could drag them where he went on his little finger, that he could use nature's gifts like no other species could, and that he was endowed with mind that was a quantum jump over animal instinct. When the primitive human realized that s/he had the gift of the gab, it made all the difference. How did s/he come to know s/he had it in him/her? There is a distinct animal instinct in the origin of human languages as s/he uses emotive words. Man has biological memory that he could imitate animals better: the poor animals could not repeat the sounds of man. Man is reminded of his innate vocal gift, right from birth, when the new-born comes out of the safety of the mother's womb and into the reality of the world with a piercing cry. (There is room for rationalist reason rather than empirical experience in the birth-cry). The birth-cry is not common to all species, but perhaps unique to humans. The immediate shouts of joy or commotion created by those present at the time of delivery are somewhat of a response and reassurance to the infant who may then take a nap. As the child grows, it starts using the technique of crying to demand responses when those that protect it play truant. As it grows older, it recognizes the importance of sound, to learn the sounds uttered by others, to repeat them in fits and starts, to check their effects, to standardize its speech, in short to learn a language by experience. That is not all: the human knows s/he is privileged in nature because s/he has well developed organs of vision, hearing, touch, taste, and above all mind, to synthesize the data obtained by the senses.

The communal setting of primitive man consolidated the small gains such as rudiments of language, order, and division of community work. Inherently being individualistic, there are bound to be differences

between man and man over possessions, power and self. Language only grew because of ontological predicament. Man had the knowledge that his vocal chords were amenable to various sounds, whereas those of animals are fixed by nature. Dogs can only bark, lions roar, snakes hiss, bees buzz, the crow only crows, horses neigh, sparrows twitter, cow mews, but only man can talk and talk, making all kinds of sounds. He could imitate these and more sounds. He used the knowledge as decoy to trap his food. This knowledge he developed to understand nature, now to claim control over nature and currently to go into frontiers where no man had gone before. The origin of language is, therefore, “environmental.” That is man-coined words to name the objects in his environment whether it is cave, forest, hill, mountain or plain. Then he further used his mental capabilities to describe how the immediate objects are of use or danger to him. In the night he looked to the sky for thought, reflection and metaphysical ideas. As the day follows the dark, he pursues the two worlds, the natural and the metaphysical. Without confusion, but after much thought, he relates one to the other. By the synthesis, he derives further language and knowledge.

Back to metaphysics then: The fact is we are never out of its hold. For we are creatures of physics and metaphysics one way or the other. As the sentence, “Let us begin at the beginning,” although randomly picked and allowed to develop on its own, amply demonstrates, the binaries are built into each of the six words. The proposition has an in-built metaphysical structure that may point to immediate beginning or the beginning of the beginning. That there is no escape from metaphysics, however much one may try, is the Absolute Idea.

Notes

* Let me explain: physics is phenomenon such as $F=MA$, force= mass x acceleration, $E=MC^2$ energy is equal to mass multiplied by the square of the speed of light, and so on. All these can be proved if not seen by physical principles. But what is that that is behind these: force, mass, acceleration, light and so on. Let me explain further: There is the solar system, in which the planets move round the Sun. It can be argued that the planets are kept in place i.e. their respective orbits, and check by the Sun in conformity with physical principles. But what is it that is keeping the Sun in position which is keeping the planets in position? If the answer is Milky Way or galaxy, then what is keeping the galaxy in position? The answer is difficult, hence noumenon. Hence physics of physics is metaphysics. I am tempted to define: “Metaphysics is physics that cannot be explained or inferred or known or knowable by physical principles.” It is this metaphysics that people call the Creator, God and by countless names.

* Martin Heidegger, ‘Identity and Difference,’ Translated and with an Introduction by Joan Stambaugh.

** Is it not curious that many of the philosophers of language have been German-speaking? Perhaps they are in a better position because of their interest in Sanskrit and access to Semitic languages.

*** Nuclear physicist J.R. Oppenheimer, who was member of the American atomic project, recalled

Brahman, as the blinding nuclear flash went off during the live experiment in the New Mexico test, which he compares with million Suns, towards the close of Second War. However, Brahman in Hindu mythology is responsible for creation, not its destruction.

Criminal or Revolutionary? Determining the Ethical Character of Emergent Terror.

By Matthew O. Cleveland

For the broader community, both organized crime and organized resistance elicit a mixture of fascination and apprehension. This of course is most obviously indexed not only by the multitude of literary and cinematic dramatizations of phenomena and identities that pertain to organized crime or social and political revolution, but also by the newsworthiness of those phenomena and identities. The simultaneous appeal and intimidation exerted upon us by –‘real’ and imagined – incarnations of organized crime and organized resistance is in part a function of the fact that both operate according to codes not commensurable with those bureaucratically implemented to sustain normative moral-civic Law and Order. In this sense, both organized crime and organized resistance can be understood to occur as instances of aberrant or abject particularism; collectivities that are repudiated by, and repudiating of, the ruling order. That is, not only are organized crime and organized resistance groups interdicted against by the Law, but their outlaw status is in fact one that is actively sought.* In contemporary world politics, the dialectic between so-called ‘fundamentalist’ terror networks – such as al-Qaida – and dominant Western economic powers can be read in similar terms. Beyond the self-evident interdicted and criminalized status of terror groups, suffice to observe the sensationalism with which terrorist acts and the appending ‘War on Terror’ have come to be framed by the gaze of the mainstream Western media.¹ Recalling Jacques Lacan’s famous dictum ‘Truth has the structure of fiction’, it is expedient to consider the possibility that this gaze is indicative of our own unacknowledged (and unacknowledgable) libidinal investment in phantasmal figurations of cataclysmic disaster visited upon the West in general and America in particular. Indeed, in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Slavoj Žižek posits that this paranoid fixation upon images of catastrophic violence visited upon the United States, is borne out in a range of Hollywood films from *Escape to New York* to *Independence Day*, which seem to uncannily anticipate the World Trade Center (WTC) attacks (15). In light of these contiguities between the ways in which organized crime, revolutionary groups, and emergent terror are apprehended, should the latter be properly understood as a modality of criminality, or is it more appropriate to classify modern terror networks in terms of revolutionary identity?

Criminal Identity and the Sentiment of Guilt

In the first instance, it is important to discern certain structural distinctions between the criminal and the revolutionary impulse. While both operate against, and often beyond, the broader social Symbolic ‘economy of exchanges’, we would like to argue that the feature or complex that most meaningfully defines criminal identity is Guilt. Discussing the dialectical antecedence of Crime to the Law in *(Per)Versions of Love and Hate*, Renata Salecl argues that in the wider social horizon, Crime can be properly understood as the traumatic un-Symbolizable Real around which the Law establishes itself (82). In Hegelian terms, we can say that the Law emerges as the ultimately failed (though not necessarily ineffective) negation of Crime. In other words, although the Law inheres to circumscribe and domesticate criminal phenomena, it is never able to fully do so. In her reading of Frank Darabont’s cinematic adaptation of Stephen King’s *The Shawshank Redemption*, Salecl explains this dialectical matrix in terms of the formation of criminal subjectivity:

The crime committed by the subject destroys the subject’s former identity, since it also touches the unsymbolizable kernel, the lack around which the subject structures his or her identity. Thus, after committing the crime, the subject will never be the same again; he or she will never form his or her identity in the same way as before. The new identity the subject forms in prison thus has to do with the real (related to) crime, or better, this identity enables the subject to escape the real. ... [T]he prisoners do not talk about their crimes, they do not boast about their murders: they all claim that they are innocent and that their conviction was a horrible mistake. They do this not because they are sorry for their past deeds: what is more in the prisoner than he himself, that which makes him a convict – the crime – has to remain hidden, unspoken, in order that he can form his new symbolic identity. (82-3)

So that just as the Law is unable to fully tether crime and criminal identity, the criminal subject is similarly not able to fully elude the Symbolical and moral mandate of the Law (unless of course that subject is completely psychotic).² Therefore in Lacanian terms, the identity of the criminal subject is structured by the Crime committed and that subject’s negotiation of its entailing complex of Guilt. In popular culture representations of organized crime groups such as the Italian Mafia and the Chinese Triads, group identity can be characterized in terms of that group’s collective disavowal of their own investment in transgression. For example, in films such as Martin Scorsese’s *Goodfellas* and Francis Coppola’s *The Godfather*, Mafioso characters are constantly maintaining that they are ultimately legitimate businessmen who ‘bend the rules just like everyone else.’³ This collective disavowal must be properly understood as totalitarian in nature. Describing the mechanism of collective identification *qua* Stalinist totalitarian socialism, Salecl observes that:

Under [Stalin’s] socialism, in the eyes of the Party, everyone was potentially guilty of some crime (not believing in the regime, petty theft at the workplace, bribery, etc.). But this was not the guilt that really traumatized people; another more horrible guilt was that most people collaborated in some way or another with the regime (they denounced their colleagues to save

their own skins, they did not oppose injustices when they should have, or they simply kept quiet). And it was guilt for this “crime” that essentially determined their identification with the system. People did not consciously identify with the regime, but formed their identities around the trauma of their guilt. (85)

Salecl’s notion of the ‘totalitarian exploitation of guilt’, then, can be applied to the way in which collective identification operates for organized criminal factions. In order to prove his allegiance to the organized crime ‘family’ the criminal subject-to-be is customarily asked to perform a murder. Often, the designated target is either someone to whom the killer is emotionally connected – such as a childhood friend or sibling – or whose murder would constitute a violation of some other social or moral taboo – such as a priest or social worker. Of course upon completion of his task, the killer is interpellated into the criminal collective because he has become a part of the cycle of Guilt which he has to, in turn, disavow in order to maintain the Symbolical semblance of his identity. In this way, Crime, and the entailing ‘sentiment of Guilt’, subjectivates* the transgressive individual because it renders a subjective identity for that individual by forcing him or her to construct phantasmatic narratives which sustain Symbolic identity against the Real of Crime. That is, it is precisely the sentiment of Guilt that links him or her to a collective disavowal because it not only frames the recidivism of that subject, but also sustains his or her complicity to the criminal coterie in question.

The Ethico-Ideological Cause of Organized Resistance as *Sinthome*

In contrast to the primordial locus of the criminal impulse, the revolutionary impulse is one that is borne out of the realm of normative Law and Order as violent excess. Moreover, although the revolutionary figure is often criminalized by the ruling order, it is significant that the Symbolic identity of most organized resistance groups is nonetheless structured in terms of their constitutive antagonism with organized crime. In other words, at the level of explicit social codification, the collective identity of the revolutionary group is primarily compounded against the register of criminality and moral dissipation. For example, it is widely documented that the Black Panther Movement of the American 1960s and 1970s asserted a differential identity against prevailing organized crime syndicates and worked to put an end to gambling rackets and prostitution rings in black underclass neighborhoods. We can thus say that it is the very point of equivalence between organized crime and organized resistance (viz. crime) that constitutes their incommensurability with each other.

This antagonism between the organized crime coterie and the revolutionary collective can be further understood in relation to *the* fundamental feature that defines the ethical identity of the latter. Namely, that group’s unyielding adherence to an ethico-ideological Cause. For both the subjective identity of the revolutionary individual and the constellation of intersubjective collective identification of the resistance group, this Cause is conferred with the status of *summum bonum* and functions as a fundamental structuring principle or what in Lacanian psychoanalysis is called a *sinthome*. In *The Ticklish Subject: The*

Absent Centre of Political Ontology, Žižek explains of the Lacanian *sinthome* that it is a knot or point at which all the lines of the predominant ideological argumentation meet (196).⁴ Therefore, as *sinthome*, the revolutionary Cause is what sutures both the public aspect and intra-structural cohesion of the organized resistance group. In the first place, the adherence to, and public promotion of, this Cause affords the revolutionary group a point of coincidence with the greater populace. In order not to *appear* anti-social, the revolutionary group must at the very least maintain/project the *semblance* of their Cause as its proper Symbolic identity. Via their Cause, the message to the public takes the form of the familiar refrain of revolutionary militia groups throughout history and around the world – from the Jacobins of the French Revolution to the insurgent East Timorese struggling against Indonesian colonization, the message is: ‘Although we oppose the governing forces, we are on the side of the people’. In this way, the Cause also protects the revolutionary group from utter deracination from the ruling order because it effects a tenuous charter, which partially franchises its ideological and extra-ideological transactions. Secondly, because of the inevitable element of corruption and criminality of individual members that constitutes any revolutionary group, and because of the subjective desires and competing exigencies of those members, the revolutionary Cause provides what in Kantian terms would be a *noumenal* site of coincidence whereupon all members are in intersubjective Symbolic accord. To wit, the Cause creates for the microcosm of particularities a united front against organized crime groups and the dominant order.

We have argued above that the meaningfulness and/or efficacy of the revolutionary ideological Cause, of that feature that delimits the organized resistance groups against the abyss of Crime, relies greatly upon its amenability to the general populace. What this means is that the Cause must pertain to the axiomatic Hegelo-Kantian notion of the ‘common Good’ insofar as its public semblance must be sanctioned by a significant fraction of the general populace. In *Emancipation(s)* Ernesto Laclau observes that:

The starting point of contemporary social and political struggle is ... the strong assertion of their particularity, the conviction that none of them is capable, on its own, of bringing about the fullness of the community. But precisely because of that, ... this particularity cannot be constructed through a pure ‘politics of difference’ but has to appeal, as the very condition of its assertion, to universal principles. (51)

Therefore, although the particularism or ‘strategic essentialism’ of the revolutionary group achieves its differential identity against Crime and the ruling order, its very constitution relies upon a level of complicity with, and an avowal of, both of the latter. This is why one of the chief tactics deployed to undermine revolutionary groups consists in alienating the public Symbolic identity of the group in question (or its members) from any public identification or support. Returning to the example of the Black Panther Movement, this strategy is exemplified by the well-known efforts of the FBI’s COINTELPRO to criminalize the Black Panthers in the public eye. Regarding the structural relation between organized resistance groups and the ruling order, the ethico- ideological agenda (in the form of the Cause) subscribed to by the former, at once posits an alternative socio-political universe, whilst it mirrors or substantiates certain aspects of the latter. So that the very assertion of differential identity, the very resistance against those sectors of the ruling order that marginalize or ‘oppress’ that resistance group, must be based upon a ground

of principles that not only transcends the particularism of any group, but which constitutes the locus of intersection for all groups within that political milieu.

Concerning *any* political matrix, the Universal is, of course, an empty signifier. Each particular or material manifestation of ‘politics’ is nothing more than the bid to occupy the empty space of the Universal or Master (S1) signifier. And this is specifically what Žižek means when he appropriates the logic informing Lacan’s infamous maxim ‘Woman doesn’t exist!’ and declares that ‘Society doesn’t exist!’:

the Universal emerges within the Particular when some particular content starts to function as the stand-in for the absent Universal – that is to say, the Universal is operative only through the split in the particular ... Owing to the contingent character of this link between the Universal and the particular content which functions as its stand-in (i.e. the fact that this link is the outcome of a *political* struggle for hegemony), the existence of the Universal always relies on an empty signifier... Since ‘society doesn’t exist’, its ultimate unity can be symbolized only in the guise of an empty signifier hegemonized by some particular content – the struggle for this content is the political struggle. (*Ticklish* 176, emphasis in original)

Since there is no ‘politics’ outside the order of the (necessarily empty Master) signifier, and since politics exists precisely because “Society doesn’t exist”, the project/Cause of social redress around which the collective identity of the revolutionary militia is structured, can be thus conceived as a properly ‘hegemonic struggle’. In other words, the status of the dominant or mainstream ideology as universalized Might/Right must be understood as one which is provisional: it can only ever be another ‘particularism’ which at that moment, within that milieu, is ascendant in the hegemonic struggle. Moreover, because this ascendancy is not temporally permanent nor structurally immutable, the moral and social order adhered to by the public facet of the revolutionary group, is able to posit itself as an alternative to the extant moral and social order.

The Ethical Character of Contemporary Terror

Like criminal and revolutionary groups, modern terror organizations such as al-Qaida occur as a kind of excess. However, while crime is the excess that the Law tries to domesticate, and revolution is the excess of the hegemonic struggle, we would like to argue that the surfeit that contemporary terror represents can be more appropriately understood in terms of a context of global economic concerns. In the first place, it is important to draw a structural distinction between the different Islamic groups or nations propagandistically homogenized as ‘fundamentalist terrorists’ through the gaze of the Western media and various economic interest groups and governments: it is clear, for example, that in the case of the Chechen rebels and Palestinian groups such as Hamas and Fatah Al-Aksa, terrorist violence is mobilized as part of a hegemonic bid for self-determination. There is nothing unique or new about the ethical character or underlying rationale of these revolutionary groups since their struggle is structurally consubstantial with the struggles of similar groups through history and around the world – from the Native American retaliations against

white settlers to the Irish Republican Army's bid for the end of partition, these resistance groups are *sensu stricto* hegemonic since they are organized around an ethical-moral Cause that is based upon universal or universalizable principles such as freedom and self-determination.

In contrast, terrorist violence associated with emergent collectives such as al-Qaida is unique insofar as it issues not out of specific nation states nor crime organizations, but rather from what we have referred to earlier via Laclau as a pure 'politics of difference.' As is the case with the above-described 'traditional' organized resistance groups, contemporary or emergent terrorist networks are similarly organized around a Cause as sublime Thing. However, in contrast to the traditional revolutionary Cause, the Cause of modern terror groups emerges not to engage or renegotiate the hegemonic order but to obliterate it. Insofar as the political rhetoric of these groups involve the complete and unconditional rejection of the hegemonic conditions imposed by the forces that are opposed, the underlying impetus of such terrorism must be read as one that serves to negate the universal signifier occupied by those prevailing forces. In elucidating the two key considerations for factions engaged in hegemonic resistance, Laclau explains that:

... the struggle of *any* group that attempts to assert its own identity against a hostile environment is always confronted by two opposite but symmetrical dangers for which there is no logical solution, no square circle – only precarious and contingent attempts at mediation. If a group tries to assert its identity *as it is at that moment*, as its location within the community at large is defined by the system of exclusions dictated by the dominant groups, it condemns itself to a perpetually marginalized and ghettoized existence ... If, on the other hand, it struggles to change its location within the community and to break with its situation of marginalization, it has to engage with a plurality of political initiatives which take it beyond the limits defining its present identity – for example, struggles within existing institutions. As these institutions are, however, ideologically and culturally moulded by the dominant groups, the danger is that the differential identity of the struggling group will be lost. (49, italics in original)

Here, it is evident how Laclau's schema might be viably applied to determine the ethical coordinates of actions and strategies mobilized by the traditional revolutionary group in achieving the fruition of its Cause. However, since an organization like al-Qaida seeks not to engage in any "attempts at mediation", it is neither affected by Laclau's "system of exclusions", nor does it risk ever losing its differential identity by becoming subsumed by what it opposes.

So how are we to articulate the ethical identity of such a modality of terror? Can we ascribe its radical otherness to the incommensurability between Islamic and Judeo-Christian frameworks of morality? Or can we say that the al-Qaida brand of terror is an evolutionary permutation of an ultimately bloodthirsty dimension of Islamic doctrine? In his examination of the WTC attacks, Žižek argues that regarding groups such as al-Qaida, we are not essentially dealing with a feature inscribed into Islam as such; indeed, in his formulation, the phenomenon of emergent terror groups does not have all that much to do with religion in itself. Rather, he proposes that the so-called Muslim fundamentalists of contemporary terror are not in fact 'true' fundamentalists – they are always already 'modernists' inasmuch as they are a product of modern

global capitalism. He rhetorically asks:

are not ‘international terrorist organizations’ the obscene double of the big multinational corporations – the ultimate rhizomatic machine, omnipresent, albeit with no clear territorial base? Are they not the form in which nationalist and/or religious ‘fundamentalism’ accommodated itself to capitalism? Do they not embody the ultimate contradiction, with their particular/exclusive content and their global dynamic functioning? (*Welcome* 38)

Therefore, the problem of articulating the ethical character of contemporary terror is simultaneously the problem of articulating the ethical character of globalization. Contemporary terrorism is not an excess that eludes the Law nor is it an excess which issues from the hegemonic struggle in the same way that organized resistance groups can be conventionally understood. Rather, the radical character of emergent terror organizations such as al-Qaida is directly the result of a trajectory of modern political and economic reform. Žižek explains that one of the ways in which this dialectic can be observed is via a consideration of the political and economic ties that inhere between the United States and repressive ‘anti-democratic’ governments in the Middle East:

The Muslim ‘fundamentalist’ target is not only global capitalism’s corrosive impact on social life, but also the corrupt ‘traditionalist’ regimes in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and so on. ... Beneath the opposition between ‘liberal’ and ‘fundamentalist’ societies, ‘McWorld versus Jihad’, there is the embarrassing third term: countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, deeply conservative monarchies but American economic allies, fully integrated into Western capitalism. Here, the USA has a very precise and simple interest: in order that these countries can be counted on for their oil reserves, they have to remain undemocratic (the underlying notion, of course, is that any democratic awakening could give rise to anti-American attitudes). (*Welcome* 41-42)

If we agree with Žižek’s reading, what is troubling here is not simply that it is the system of exclusions and privilege engendered by global capitalism that has largely contributed to the production and development of contemporary terror organizations. Also disconcerting is that the *other* corollary of globalization is the rise of totalitarianism in the West. One of the key concerns of *Empire*, by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, is that two of the products of global capitalism are the formation of authoritarian Nation-States and the incidence of unlikely political alliances between a multitude of distinct ideological particularities that oppose globalization. Regarding the latter trend, we have already witnessed massive assemblies of anti-globalization proponents made up of a diverse cross-section of hitherto discordant, marginalized, ideological factions and NGOs – from Anarchists and left-wing environmentalists to Right-wing groups such as the French ‘National Front’, and from human rights activists to conservative agricultural groups and unionists.⁵ Can we thus not also discern the emergence of ‘fundamentalist’ terrorist groups as part of this trend? And on the opposite end of this spectrum, can we not also apprehend in the ‘War on Terror’ the materialization of authoritarian structures and policies? Regarding the 2002 decision of the European Union to establish an all-European border police force to prevent the influx of immigrants, Žižek observes that:

This is the truth of globalization: the construction of new walls safeguarding [the] prosperous from the immigrant flood. One is tempted to resuscitate here the old Marxist ‘humanist’ opposition of ‘relations between things’ and ‘relations between persons’: in the much celebrated free circulation opened up by global capitalism, it is ‘things’ (commodities) which freely circulate, while the circulation of ‘persons’ is more and more controlled. (Welcome 149, emphases in original)

This totalitarian feature of globalization is incarnated not only by the American government’s policy of military unilateralism – for example, concerning the assault against Iraq – and the ‘War on terror’; which, along with its appending social, political, and economic trajectories, have produced a culture of paranoia and a society of reduced personal freedoms. It is also evident in the collective disavowal of the obvious evidence of our (viz. ‘we’ in the West) own investment in the system of exclusions and privilege that have in turn engendered this new modality of terrorism, and our continued investment in that system. This disavowal, that can be characterized in terms of a psychotic split between the (Real) Knowledge of our culpability and the (Symbolic) Belief in our innocence, is palpable in two material examples pertaining to current circumstances in the Middle East. Firstly, in the fabrication of Iraq as a threat to world peace, what is at work is the totalitarian mechanism by which a paranoid fear and distrust of the other is fostered in order to marshal support for, and identification with, the authoritarian Seat of Power. In other words, in the name of protecting against the threat of Iraq’s putative ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’ a state of emergency can be maintained – the rest of the world, of course, is hysterical by the ‘forced choice’ of Bush’s injunction: ‘You’re either with us or against us’. In the second illustration, this psychotic split can be discerned in what Žižek refers to as a ‘short-circuit’ between the formal Letter of the Law and the jouissance of its obscene Superegoic supplement of ‘unwritten’ codes.⁶ This is exemplified by the (split) position taken up by the American military in response to being exposed in the media for the systemic culture of torture, sexual abuse, and other mistreatments of Iraqi prisoners. On the one hand, the military is adamant that the documented instances of the torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners merely reflect isolated events, and cannot be indicial of the ‘true’ identity of the military; and on the other hand, is the position maintained by the military that the Geneva convention does not apply to these prisoners because they are ‘Enemy Combatants’ and not ‘Prisoners of War’ (implicit in this second standpoint, of course, is the justification to use ‘any means necessary’ – including torture – to extract information from such prisoners). Needless to say, this split between the contradictory positions of the disavowal of culpability, coupled with the self-righteous justification of brutality, is structurally equivalent to the earlier-described totalitarian disavowal of Guilt that achieves collective identification for criminal organizations. It is therefore clear that the most serious threat in the world today is not the possibility of being targeted by terrorists; rather it is the threat that we ourselves pose to the horizon of democratic possibility. Indeed, one sure index of a totalitarian society is the fetishistic elevation of the Self to the status of the subject with special access to the Thing. In the aftermath of the WTC attacks, it was widely proposed by the Bush administration and other conservative groups that the terrorists attacked America because ‘they’ were jealous that America was the only true paradigm of democracy and freedom; does not this heroization of the ‘special’ status of Americans recall Joseph Stalin’s infamous assertions regarding the “special stuff” that putatively constitutes communist identity?

Notes

* Excluded here of course are legislated forms of resistance such as union strikes or civilian product boycott.

♦ One military spokesman even questioned the authenticity of the evidence, recommending that the photographs and video footage was probably the work of terrorists seeking to damage the reputation of the American military.

¹ Needless to say, with the advent of ‘embedded reporting’ in the wars engendered by the Bush administration in Afghanistan and Iraq, this commercialization and melodramatization of war and terror is taken a step further: the horror of war and terrorism is transformed into prime time entertainment that resembles ‘reality TV’.

² The psychotic subject is not able to identify with the social ‘reality’ of the Symbolic order because the ‘Name-of-the-Father’ is foreclosed. In other words, for the psychotic subject, the Symbolic falls into the Real.

³ One of the reasons that this mechanism of collective identification functions so effectively is because of the criminal or corrupt dimension that inheres in the Law. The criminal subject’s disavowal of his culpability can be justified inasmuch as the execution of the Law is never able to fully fulfill its own moral mandate.

♦ the term ‘subjectivate’ designates the moment of becoming a subject of a Symbolic/signifying matrix via the process of interpellation. It is used by many contemporary theorists who draw from Lacan and/or Althusser (e.g. Judith Butler, Žižek, Badiou).

⁴ Although the Lacanian conception of *sinthome* is developed from the Freudian notion of the ‘symptom’ (the former term being the archaic spelling of the French symptôme), during the latter stages of Lacan’s development, the *sinthome* is increasingly established as being not identical to the symptom insofar as the latter is an index of some more fundamental process occurring at a different level to that which it is ancillary to, whilst the *sinthome* is that which sutures the Thing (the Freudian *das Ding*) itself.

⁵ This point is a development of a similar observation made by Žižek in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*.

⁶ This notion of the “short-circuit” is prevalent throughout Žižek’s writing but its application to totalitarian authority can be found in *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment As a Political Factor*.

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An Extended Essay on the use of the Gesture in Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons and Paul Klee's *Architecture Red-Green (yellow-purple gradations)*

By John Hyland



Julia Kristeva fundamentally defines language as “a chain of articulated *sounds* but also a network of written *marks* (a writing), or a play of *gestures* (a gesturality).”ⁱ For Kristeva, the question that immediately arises out of this statement has to do with the relationships that exist (or do not exist) between sounds, marks, and gestures. All language, as Kristeva further notes, originates with a purpose of communication – a social exchange; in this way, language is an exercise executed in social communication: in a process that communicates a message between a sender and a receiver language is realized.ⁱⁱ The notion that what is known is contained within the limits of language has something to do with the fact that language has a distinct primary function of communication. Also if something is not communicated, or at least not acknowledged, then it is, so to speak, unknown; unknown, that is, within language. That language exists, breathes, through exchange presents the issue of its relations to that which is outside of it (i.e. nature, society, etc.). There nearly always seems to be this belief that all the remnants and particulars of what is known are somehow contained within the sphere of language; yet, for instance, a bunch of dried peppers that hang, dangle, off the rafters of my apartment are there, exist in space, even if I refer to them as leftovers from a Vermeer still-life. An interesting and also important question provoked by this situation is “how are the named universe and the universe that names differentiated from each other?”ⁱⁱⁱ

To consider this question, one must have a firm understanding of the conception of the linguistic sign. Language is not necessarily an instrument of thought, yet it does function to both produce and communicate thought in ways that are not separate but inherently linked, hinged adjacent to one another – in this way, “language is the material of thought.”^{iv} That I refer to these particular things encountered in the above situation as being an event in seventeenth-century Dutch painting may not have bearing on the essence of what that thing may be. I impose my impression of these things, because of associations they initiate in the recesses of my knowledge. If I refer to them as “Vermeer leftovers,” there are only certain listeners who would understand my decision to refer to them this way. The act of naming is a strange act. But naming has only loose threads attached to the idea of the *sign* – fundamentally the two (the sign and the name) are quite different. The idea that the *sign* is the primary element of the “social side” of language reaches back through the centuries and has been considered by many thinkers and schools of thought. As Kristeva observes:

What unites all these phenomena [from Charles Peirce to the Greeks] is the fact that they all *replace or represent* something that is absent, evoked by an intermediary, and, consequently, included in a system of exchange: a communication.^v

It is Ferdinand De Saussure to whom we owe the first meticulous examination and scientific development of what we now refer to as the *linguistic sign*. It is useful to refer to a passage from De Saussure’s Course in General Linguistics:

The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a *concept* and a *sound-image*. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it ‘material,’ it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the

association, the concept, which is generally more abstract.^{vi}

The linguistic sign, then, is “a two-sided psychological entity,” wherein each of the two elements is fused together in such a way as to summon and inform each other. The sign then functions as a “convenient envelope” (the term is Kristeva’s) that maintains and recognizes the thousands (upon perhaps thousands) of representations that any particular sign might manifest.

De Saussure designates these two inseparable elements of the linguistic sign as being the *signified* (the concept) and the *signifier* (the sound-image). As Kristeva notes, “for Saussure, the linguistic sign is defined by the signifier/signified relation; the object, excluded from this relation, is designated the *referent*.”^{vii} The relation between the signifier and the signified is that there is not necessarily any particular, concrete relation, yet – to cite the excellent example employed by De Saussure – the relationship may be understood, visualized considering the two sides of a single sheet of paper. That is, it is impossible to take a pair of scissors and cut the paper and not slice both sides – the signifier and signified are two sides of the same sheet of paper. Taken as entire unit, the nature of the linguistic sign is defined by De Saussure as being “arbitrary.” To say this does not mean that signifiers are blindly chosen; more it speaks to the *unmotivated* disposition of the sign. This intimates the fact that, as Kristeva remarks, there is no “natural or real necessity linking the signifier with the signified.”^{viii} In this way the word “icon” is not a cognate of the linguistic sign because an icon is intrinsically linked to that which it represents. It is not empty, nor arbitrary: the crucifix could not simply be replaced by pieces of yellow and black polka-dotted cloth for those who hold it as valuable; in other words, it is irreplaceable to them.

The linguistic sign, to follow along with De Saussure’s conception of its nature, is the central carrier of the cargo of the message between the *addresser* and the *addressee*. Its effectiveness as a device of communication relies upon an agreement between the speakers of a specific community. For instance, if you, the reader, and I, the writer, agreed that for the rest of this essay \aleph signified the painter Johannes Vermeer’s painting *Woman Holding a Balance*; well, then \aleph might function quite successfully as a linguistic sign. There would be a contract that I would only use \aleph to denote that painting; however, if I used \aleph to signify something other than that painting, the contract would be broken, and communication would fail. In this way language begins to become limited in its ability to function both effectively and clearly, since impressions often tend to be individual in nature – or at least limited. For instance, an \aleph description of those peppers is limited to those who have an understanding of Vermeer’s theory of light. My description (my reference that seeks to describe) is only successful to those who understand how my impression of those peppers provokes a reference to that particular painting. However, if I present an appropriate definition of \aleph , if I make clear what is intended by its use, then my description would presumably be more effective. But, there would be different interpretations of my definition. The definition of my description offers a vast range of possibilities that extend from complete misunderstanding to the other end of the spectrum, understanding.

The linguistic sign is an integral, nearly essential, aspect in the constantly flowing, folding field of that disclosing activity: communication. The linguistic message depends upon communication, which seeks to

express the impression that some particular entity has left upon the senses.^{ix} However, the linguistic sign “conceived of as an indivisible entity and absolute value” is not the foundation that language operates upon.^x In his reduction of discourse, De Saussure formulated that the sign operates within a linear chain, which isolated the word as the singular, rudimentary element; yet, as Kristeva notes:

It is more and more difficult to maintain that the word is the minimal unit of *la langue*. In fact, a word does not achieve its complete signification except in a sentence, that is, by and in its syntactical relation. On the other hand, this same word can be broken down into morphological elements, *morphemes*, which are smaller than it is, and are themselves bearers in signification.

xi

The observation that a group of morphemes building a word constitutes a portion of its signification, points to the complex function of the linguistic sign within the linguistic message; such an observation extends the notion that a word approaches its full signification syntactically. The sign is a “two-sided psychological entity,” consisting of a “sound-image” (signifier) and a concept (signified).^{xii} To continue along with Saussure’s formulations, as each word is viewed as a series of signs and then each sentence and then etc., the arbitrariness of the sign begins to be called into question, since the object that the sign (signifier/signified) seeks to elucidate is not at all completely contained within it. This arbitrariness does not exist between the signifier and signified, but between “the reality it names, in other words, the relation between the language symbol in its totality and the real outside that it symbolizes” is arbitrary.^{xiii} Several theories and points of view have been postulated and presented in reaction to this reevaluation of the linguistic sign. One point of view of particular interest here is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s conception of the *trace*. This theory works from the idea that in writing something is traced, not made to resemble. To jump along the line of this thinking, the signifier is, so to speak, erased, leaving behind the signified. That language is diaphanous, that it is something to see through and then into something else, locates the transient if not fading role that language takes on and often functions within.

Given this complexity, writing and painting could be viewed as universes that speak of other universes. A writer / painter creates to seek – in order to disclose – some impression that an entity left upon their senses. The reader / viewer is given – presented with – the manifestations of this seeking. There, inside the multitudes of what is left behind after the creative act has concluded, are all the various elements that exist to elucidate for the reader / viewer the possible essence of some particular. In this way it is necessary to note that the concerns of a poet or painter are more intrinsic than a muse, or some external point of inspiration, for the writers’ concerns influence and affect the work in obscure ways.^{xiv} The concerns of the poet or painter are not the reader’s point of interest and study. A reader’s job is to consider the piece at hand; examine it for what it is, not for what it could or might be. The job is to complete the poetry of the poem or painting. The concerns are embedded into the writing into the painting. Trying to explain the intimate tie that a poet or painter has with some thing or event is not only laborious but also irrelevant to that which is there within and between the lines of a poem or the colors of a painting; however, a poet’s / painter’s concerns potently influence all aspects of a piece.

Language is an extension of a person's existence; an extension that Maurice Merleau-Ponty says "propels us towards the things it [language] signifies."^{xv} The mark that is entrenched into each sign, each linguistic unit, with a certainty of who has written it, is influenced by the poet's / painter's concerns.^{xvi} The artistic decision to include or exclude certain signs determines the linguistic value of the signs given. The gesture is as much a result of the signs, as it is the signs themselves. The meaning of a piece is a precarious, somewhat strange balance of filled space and space molded by filled space forming in the gaze of the viewer / reader. The gesture is a kind of movement between these two nearly nebulous spaces (filled space and space molded by filled space). A primary function of the gesture is to stimulate a kind of movement, a sweeping of the reader / viewer under and through the spaces of the signs toward the feeling and the meaning of the intended expression of some entity.

The gesture is in many ways the carrier of concerns. Not to speak of the romantic ideal of inspiration (because inspiration is ephemeral), but more to speak of a kind of place where the gesture spawns from: the "interior" of language. In the processes of creating an expression, the poet / painter is somehow recoiling through her interactions with her surroundings, somehow walking back along the markers, to create – revisit a thing, a moment, an impression in another context; all this, in an effort to make another world somehow akin to that which initially aroused the senses of the mind and motions of the self. There is, then, a *force* that propels the poet / painter along the trail that is being re-blazed. The reader / viewer, in turn becomes witness to the remnants of these rustlings and runnings that seek to revisit. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty asks: "How would the painter or poet express anything other than his encounter with the world?"^{xvii} Well, yes, what is there beyond the simple infinity of this world? But the way we see the world is only in pieces – it is unlikely to have some piece that speaks of the whole. Things are lost in the process of creation, during the act of writing language; for "writing obscures language; it is not a guise for language but a disguise. That fact is clearly illustrated by the spelling of French *oiseau* 'bird'. Not one spoken sound is indicated by its own symbol."^{xviii} When the poet or painter expresses through creation a perception of the world, she is striving to somehow uncover and convey, not in a representation of how a thing appears but more in an expression of what a thing is. As Merleau-Ponty accurately remarks, ". . . perception itself is never complete, since our perspective gives us a world to express and think about which envelops and exceeds those perspectives . . . why should the expression of the world be subjected to the prose of the senses or of the concept?"^{xix}

Poetic language, Kristeva explains, is "a system whose specific elements must be isolated and precise laws of articulation found."^{xx} An integral and functioning aspect of poetic language is the dubious communication system that transmits an often quite clear message: gesturality. The system of gesturality is ambiguous and quite difficult to locate, because it is not easily delineated and designated into core elements that could correspond to the phonemes, morphemes, and syntagms of verbal language. Gesturality is a kind of other dimension that acts and achieves its presence through and in relation to language proper.^{xxi} The gesture is in a way subversive of the linguistic sign, since it is not unmotivated; it is not necessarily arbitrary. The gesture is in many instances motion that participates within things – as a part of what they are made of – to not only signify them, but also to capture and hold some primary aspect(s) of the thing disclosed.

The gesture is often studied and spoken about in reference to the human body; for example, American *kinesics* defines gesturality as “the communicative aspects of the learned and structured behavior of the body in motion.”^{xxii} Somewhat similarly, I can recall that my first interaction with the term “gesture” was in a life drawing class several years ago. This idea that the gesture is linked to the movements of the human body is not to be completely disregarded, since the source of the gesture is somehow linked to the human body in distinct if not primal ways. The first efforts that sought to explain the gesture considered the actions of communication of those who are deaf and mute; also, it has been often conjectured that the first means of human communication was a series of grunts and arm sweeping and such. The gesture is not limited to these formulations, though – it could be described as echoes bouncing amongst and between the other elements of language, and then also erupting from them. It is irreducible because its processes are without specificity. “The gesture is not only a communication system but also the production of this system (of its subject and its meaning).”^{xxiii}

This notion that the gesture is the cause of its own existence somewhat obviates the difficulties of developing a science that could be called the “language of gestures.” The next part of this extended essay will examine Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons* with the point of view that the gesture of the work is produced by the syntactical play of the signs, not just as a result of the play but also as an undulating presence that both accentuates and enhances meaning. The gesture creates movement. Momentary, but also cemented into and between the lines, the gesture does not seem to be limited to some particular way of communicating. It is both the signifier and signified. It criss-crosses the grey areas of language, weaves from white to black. To a large extent, the gesture is, so to speak, “uncharted territory,” not in the sense that much has not been written about it but more in that its very processes are allusive yet real. The gesture I would like to say is liquid. Liquid is often described as having unhindered movement of its aggregation of molecules among themselves without a tendency to separate. The gesture is as unified as it is distinct. It may be said to be the material of poetic language; for poetry is not limited to the word written upon the page, nor is it merely colors upon a canvas. When encountered or aroused in some semblance of its pure state of meaning, when sensed, understood, poetry washes over one as if to extinguish a blazing fire sparked by severely honest reading.

The gesture has something to do with the multitude of ways that an image (and also a text) has the power to cause arousal in a viewer. A viewer / reader is drawn to a particular painting or work of literature for a variety of reasons. The power of an image cannot be explained by a discussion concerned with the semi-otic range of it – to do so minimizes the entirety of work (i.e. its emotional content, erotic features, etc.).^{xxiv} A particular painting that immediately comes to mind for me is Vincent Van Gogh’s *Shoes*. There in that painting we have five shoes crumpled, and perhaps waiting to be used. It is not only the textured surface Van Gogh quite often employed, nor is it the one shoe upside down, but some aspect of the piece speaks to the presence of them there leaning against the wall. In the painting I encounter much more than shoes. There are a multitude of examples like this one. Another, which also occurs to me, is Jean Leon Gerome’s *Pygmalion and Galatea*. The story of a creator falling in love with his creation, which, in turn, suddenly comes to life, somehow speaks to the power, the compulsive potency, of the human passion to create. And since reading / viewing is very much an act of creation, an effort that seeks to possess the essential

processes of work, it makes sense that there are more than just signs that signify things or ideas in a work. This is not to say that the sign is without weight; on the contrary, the sign is an essential element. It is, so to speak, a jumping off point into the sea of language. Any sign offers to reader / viewer / writer / painter numberless possibilities to touch that which strikes their senses refusing to let go. For the writer / painter it is the act of creating, and for the reader / viewer it becomes the result of the act then re-created.

Painting, as a Kristeva has noted, “has become a process of production that does not represent any sign or meaning, except the possibility.”^{xxv} Beginning with a few forms and, say, some juxtapositions of color and then the relation of “a certain form to a certain color,” the process of a painting does not necessarily signify only that a particular object is the name of the object. If I draw a shoe, if I sketch its outlines and such, I have not created, per se, a dialogue with a shoe; I have only made an empty sign of what we call a shoe. Painting is much more than just this. As Roland Barthes explains:

Of course, the identity of what is “represented” is ceaselessly deferred, the signified always displaced . . . the analysis is endless; but this leakage, this infinity of language is precisely the picture’s system: the image is not the expression of a code, it is a variation of a work of codification: it is not the repository of a system but the generation of systems.^{xxvi}

To paint is to create possibilities, which in turn reveal other possibilities that comment upon and then extend toward that which was previously out of reach. As Marcelin Pleynet notes in his study of Matisse’s system:

Until the very end of his life, Matisse would reaffirm that a painting is a moment of the artist, thereby insisting on it not being a *copy* of nature . . . He would also contrast what the artist learns while painting a picture (the knowledge derived from practice) with the painting as specular work, as a window-mirror “open” onto the world.^{xxvii}

At the closing of his short discussion of painting’s language, Roland Barthes observes:

Something is being born, something which will invalidate “literature” as much as “painting” (and their metalinguistic correlates “criticism” and “aesthetics”), substituting for these old cultural divinities a generalized “*ergography*,” *the text as work, the work as text*. (My own stress)^{xxviii}

An ergograph is an apparatus used to measure the work capacity of a muscle. Ergography, then, would be a way to consider a painter or writer’s work beyond assessments of technique, style, text, image, etc. Instead, the capacity of any piece might be measured in reference to what it ought to be capable of doing and then also what it then does. This would be a way of examining the potentials that a work creates for itself, and then how close the work comes to achieving, touching, those potentials. In a way, this poignantly points out my present concerns (or preoccupations) with writing and painting. To ask a question such as what can any work achieve, calls into question the limits of language. Gesture is somehow inextricably tied to the

“text as work, the work as text.” And this tie, this dynamic of what is possible versus what is achieved is not the breath or necessity of the work but the success of what has been made by language and each and every aspect of its relations.

Part the Second

Now this is perfectly a description of an emplacement.

- Gertrude Stein How to Write

In many instances a poem is recognized by line breaks, rhyme, or any of the other usually employed tools and techniques of that literary form. These things are only that, though: tools. They do not define a poem; they do not necessarily make a piece of writing a poem. No specific formula exists to produce a poem. Given that this is the case, there must be some elements or force that allow words to become poetry. Wittgenstein says poetry is simply “something that is expressed only by these words in these positions.”^{xxxix} It is more than this, though. It is the interplay, the ability of one word to modify the next in a way that is somehow true, given the space that the words have created for themselves. The creative decision by a poet to place a certain set of words into a particular, undeniable order is how a series of words creates a poem. (If a word is moved or removed, the poem is still there. It still is most probably a poem, but it is a different one.) The form of the poem becomes an intrinsic extension of the order of the words that is as much a part of the expression of the poem as the words themselves.^{xxx} The form of a poem is created as each word is built upon the next. Form is the direct result of the expression and the meaning of a given poem.^{xxxi} A series of poems, when placed into the larger context of a book, creates a structure for each poem to exist within. And within this context, individual poems change, emerge as modified new forms of their previous selves, within this change of circumstance. Each individual poem becomes incumbent upon the next for a sense of reason, a sense of place (in this way each poem might take on the quality of being one sign).

Ideas, imagination and thought began to permute poetry and painting at the turn of the Twentieth Century. In Paris the *zeitgeist* was explosive with what is often referred to as “experimentalism.” Turn of the Century industrial innovations presented the poet or painter with a milieu of new circumstances, which were encountered everyday. The pace of living was quickened in a variety of ways. Forms of expressions were in turn affected by the change of the habitual look of things. There was shift in perspective, which could not necessarily be compared with all that had come before. Things began to blur into other things. As a way of elucidating this, consider this passage written by the painter Ferdinand Leger in 1914:

The existence of modern creative people is much more intense and more complex than that of people of earlier centuries. The thing that is imagined is less fixed, the object exposes itself less than it did formerly. When one crosses a landscape by automobile or express train, it becomes fragmented; it loses in descriptive value but gains in synthetic value. The view through the door of the railroad car . . . has altered the habitual look of things . . . so much so that our language, for example, is full of diminutives and abbreviations.^{xxxii}

Although painting is not the subject here in this section of this extended essay, this passage comments on a more general theme, which usefully creates a bit of a backdrop for the discussion that will follow. A large number of now historical figures were emerging and developing methods for exploring and entering

into different dialogues with their surrounding world. Of all of these artists and writers, Gertrude Stein, undoubtedly one of the most central and influential modernist writers, produced between the years of 1912 and 1914 one of the most language-aware works of the Twentieth Century: Tender Buttons. Perhaps (similar to those who first saw Pablo Picasso's *Ma Jolie* in 1914) a reader opening to the first page of Tender Buttons immediately enters into a world of uncertain and unfamiliar constructs.^{xxxiii} The structuring of the language is ambiguous, but is not indefinite. Reading the first few lines drawn across the pages, the reader may not be sure if Tender Buttons (hereafter referred to as TB) is indeed a book of poems, even though Gertrude Stein did refer to the work as such.

The peculiarities of TB often result from syntax, but more than syntax it is diction that dictates gesture. Few if any of the words encountered in TB are not encountered in everyday speech; often though there is a reversal or a scrambling of these normally familiar circumstances. In this way the capacity of the linguistic sign is often stretched or blurred by its interplay with the signs surrounding it. There is a renewal of language; a re-awakening of what is possible within the parameters of poetry. Stanzas and rhythm do not signal to the reader that they are reading a poem, but the weaving together of ideas and images creates layers of meaning. And this layering of meaning is the backbone of the language of poetry.

The assemblage of phonic and conceptual differences that constitute language – as De Saussure has told us – occurs within a system of “interdependent terms,” relying upon each other to create a message.^{xxxiv} “Almost all units of language depend on what surrounds them in the spoken chain or in their successive parts.”^{xxxv} An example of this is the structure of a word; for instance, in “Substance Of A Cushion” Gertrude Stein writes: “What is the use of a violent kind of *delightfulness* if there is no pleasure in not getting tired of it.” The word “delightfulness” decomposes into three sub-units (delight-ful-ness); yet, these sub-units are not independent parts just thrown together (delight+ful+ness). They are “interdependent” elements linked – woven – together by what De Saussure refers to as their “reciprocal action.” When any one particular word is removed, the message changes, however slightly or greatly, it takes on some new shade of a similar meaning, or the meaning may change completely. If any one of the words is removed from the line given above, there is an obvious loss. Even if the suffix “ness” is removed the line almost wholly fails. Each individual word has within it a power; the poet manipulates this power; and it is this power that is accentuated along an expanding scale of value. The expressive power of any signifier is rooted in its interconnectedness with other signs, not from some transcendent power.^{xxxvi}

Persuasive, potent poetry exploits this intertwining, this layering quality of language by permitting a word, as it twists then turns amongst its neighbors, to touch all its possible relations.^{xxxvii} Well-formed poetry achieves this through a subtlety of diction and syntax. Each word is treated, if you will, “tenderly.” And the poem, when it is being strongly wrought, progresses and unfolds beneath the poet's hand in that small yet infinite space between the tip of the pen and the white of paper, without hesitation. As words are written they reveal slots (as those where buttons are placed to close the placket of a garment) where the meaning unmistakably emerges in order to speak. In TB the reader is constantly in the realm of this kind of treatment of language, which exhumes language from what Stein considered to be dullness resulting from long overuse. Stein turned to “portraits of rooms and food and everything because there I could avoid

this difficulty of suggesting remembering more easily . . .”^{xxxviii}

The task of writing in such a way as to bring the reader into the essential moment of the poem is difficult.^{xxxix} This task has something to do with the structure of language. In his discussion of the interior of language, Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to De Saussure’s explanation that the “system [of language] is never modified directly; in itself, it is unchangeable, only certain elements are changed . . .”^{xl} The fact of language is undeniable. The structure of language is mobile and alterable; yet at that same moment, it is there amidst a piece of writing when it is under construction, when one word is being linked between two others. There are certain ways that language is able to succeed as a mechanism of communication; in many ways, this is only explained by facts taken from outside of language.^{xli} Language does not constitute a purely material entity. It is sound. It is a sense of a thing or a concept. And the success of expression is not dependent upon exactness but more upon a manipulation of the structure of language.

As De Saussure said, “Whenever the same conditions are fulfilled, the same entities are obtained.”^{xlii} Gertrude Stein in TB has somehow altered the conditions. The arrival and departure times are not clear.^{xliii} The reader is unsure – tentative as to where to enter. To discuss conditions is to talk about the stipulations of a contract of some kind, and when there is a contract there are usually two parties involved – in this case the reader and TB. Every moment when those “conditions are fulfilled,” the contract is renewed or adhered to; the two parties maintain a way of relating to one another, a connection is continued. When the conditions are unclear to the reader, and in turn the contract, then there is, for lack of better words, a communication breakdown, an uncertainty of the signs explicit (and not explicit) there in the writing. It is in these cases that “we have to find in the phrase as it occurs the rule of equivalences and substitutions it involves, to find the right key to the language, the meaning of the verbal chain – these cases are the very ones by which we understand the most ordinary facts of language.”^{xliv}

Conditions determine the value of a thing; for instance, if conditions A, R, and T when fulfilled by a thing demonstrate that this particular thing is equal to another thing, which also fulfilled the above conditions, then they can be exchanged. It does not matter whether the two things are similar or not, because they both have the same determined value.^{xlv} This makes exchange possible. As De Saussure comments:

To determine what a five-franc piece is worth one must therefore know . . . that it can be exchanged for a fixed quantity of a different thing, e.g. bread . . . In the same way a word can be exchanged for something dissimilar, an idea; besides, it can be compared with something of the same nature, another word. Its value is therefore not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be “exchanged” for a given concept . . .^{xlvi}

In TB exchanges have been made. This results in the uncertainty that a reader will encounter. The task for the reader is at the outset to determine, or at least achieve a strong sense of, the conditions that TB is operating with. Since we are not able to rearrange the poems to understand them, we must consider it (TB) for what it presents itself as. Throughout the entire work there is a “painterly-ness” to the writing. But, what is meant by this term “painterly-ness?” It is that there is a sense of each word, each line being carved, placed

indelibly upon the page.^{xlvii} It is a fluidity of the words, the way they provoke an emotional response. For now, we can be content with understanding it as a feeling, a pointing beyond the words that is at the same time created by the movements of the words. This is all predicated by the gesture of the work, which arouses responses that are beyond the realm of language. The poems are difficult to understand in many ways. Still, somehow, they succeed in provoking questions from a reader, perhaps moving or affecting a reader. The meaning, though, is allusive. TB is not a system intended to match or mirror something. The structure and arrangement are as they are for a reason; they are, so to speak, the something that it is part of a system, which points beyond itself toward something else. As Stein writes in the first poem:

...and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading.^{xlviii}

Using a string of double and single negations in this opening poem, Stein prepares us for what we are about to encounter in this book of poems, which indeed beguiles the most studious of readers. The language in the book is being manipulated for some particular reason, or towards some particular end, or to make some undeniable point about some aspect of something. The difficulty of grasping the reason, the intention of the book begins with a relinquishing of expectations of what a poem is.

Many of the sentences in TB might be called senseless since often they do not talk about some obvious thought about any specific thing. It seems that many of the words have been “withdrawn from circulation.”^{xlix} To remove those words is to leave space for other words to exist.

Dirt and not copper makes a color darker. It makes the shape so heavy and makes no melody harder.

It makes mercy and relaxation and even strength to spread a table fuller. There are more places not empty. They see cover. (Dirt And Not Copper p. 5)

Certainly, to say that a certain set of words does not make sense is to exclude them “from the sphere of language”; it is to suddenly create boundaries.¹ In TB the arrangement is a rearrangement of language leaving words out of places where a reader would expect them to be, and then putting other words in spots where the reader might not be able to see why they are there. This does not mean that a given sentence does not have an effect on a reader, and if it has an effect then it must be, however slightly or greatly, being received as something that has meaning. And meaning is not senseless. In the passage quoted above there is an uncertainty of what is being expressed. However the muddy-darkness of dirt does darken a color much more efficiently than the glittering-brown of copper. To place this line into the context of a painting or, say, a piece of music, when a shape or a few notes are darkened they do become heavier; though the unison of the painting or piece of music is not hindered.

Wittgenstein discusses the concept of “language-games” as a way of examining the multitude of ways that meaning is determined, or “bound” by context.^{li} The difficulty of attempting to decipher the

“language-game” occurring in TB is determined by a reader’s ability to understand the context that the text creates for itself. An easy mistake is to impose a context upon the text as opposed to deciphering the delineations of the actual, existing, context. There is this strong sense that the text itself is not talking necessarily about something else but is talking about itself. If this is the case, then this is a somewhat unlikely context. All of these questions point to the components of the language-game. Stein has written: “an arrangement in a system to pointing” – and then a few pages later: “all this which is a system, which is feeling” – is emotion a synonym for feeling? If it is, then we can understand the text to be a motion of the self – if this statement can be taken as a direct statement about the actual text, a question of how this system is constructed (i.e. how does it work) then immediately arises.

Could there not be a sudden date, could there not be in the present settlement of age old pensions, could there not be by a witness, could there be.

Count the chain, cut the grass, silence the noon and murder flies. See the basting undip the chart, see the way the kinds are best seen from the rest, from that and untidy. (Cranberries p. 29)

Sometimes I read this passage and receive the urge to go outside and change the oil in the jeep and drive to North Carolina. And then at other moments, I lean back in my yellow chair, look out the window, see the building – its weather-beaten paint-peeling front - and think about things that seem so useless. Other times I read on. It is the tone of the passage that stimulates these feelings. There is a sense of orders being given since there are verbs that mandate action (“Count . . . cut . . . silence . . . murder . . .”). But this occurs after a kind of wondering of whether there could be some something that sees all that does occur and has occurred. And then the lines that seem to be giving orders take on a quality of listing that which this “witness” might be seeing.

Wittgenstein uses the word “multiplicity” to denote the quantity of language-games, and also he uses the word *countless* to describe “the kinds of use of what we call ‘symbols,’ ‘words,’ ‘sentences.’”^{liii} In TB the reader encounters this multiplicity and the countlessness in the expanse of every sentence. In the last sentence of “Glazed Glitter” Stein writes, “It certainly showed no obligation and perhaps *if borrowing is not natural there is some use in giving*” (My own stress). When something is given there is a loss for one and a gain for another, and certainly it seems that Gertrude Stein is trading words for other words beneath the gaze of the reader. This idea of giving revisits the early discussion about value and the conditions in language, which dealt with how a sign’s value is determined by the signs surrounding it.^{liiii} It also returns us to the notion of the withdrawing of words from circulation, that Stein is switching words, swapping phrases, just as much as she is manipulating language. In this way, she is permitting the text to be generous.^{liv}

A FEATHER

A feather is trimmed, it is trimmed by the light and the bug and the post, it is trimmed by little leaning and by all sorts of mounted reserves and loud volumes. It is surely cohesive. (p.14)

The tone of this passage is surprisingly reminiscent of the way I was taught by an old seaman to splice pendent lines for securing vessels to moorings. He would say, not tell, “first, you take this (which he called A) and slid it through this (B) and then tighten over with this one (C). Finally,” he would say, peering over his rimless glasses, “trim all of the ends and burn them with that torch.” There are obvious problems in my reading of the piece here. First of all, I am projecting a memory, some sort of a psychological association (it is the word “trim” that gives the passage this particular tone for me), and it obscures, masks, my reading of the piece. As Wittgenstein says:

If you do not keep the multiplicity of language-games in view you will perhaps be inclined to ask the question: “What is a question?”...Think of how many different things are called “description”: description of a body’s position by means of its coordinates, [etc]. . .^{lv}

“I do not know whether” there is a description of an order or a description of a thing here. To a large extent, TB achieves what it does achieve by a kind of turning of language inside out; then, with the other side in view the text examines – considers – language. There is, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty has pointed out, an “interior to language” out of which arises an *expressive act*. De Saussure too pointed out that there is an interior to language. This “interior” is not based in the history of language. It is the structure of language that we use to communicate. Creative expression is an arranging of the units of language that produces a sense of immediacy, a feeling of proximity that this wholly essential, nearly spiritual slab of language generates. In TB the careful reader will encounter, and then perhaps be struck by clarity of language, which does not result from pure relations to denotation. In TB language is in “its live and creative state”; for in this state, “language is the gesture of renewal and recovery.”^{lvi}

The power of language, the vigor of the gesture is to transport readers, kind of throw their senses and intellection out / then toward the movement of the molecules which constitute that which is being expressed. Moving beyond the “system of official grammar which attributes a given signification to each sign” the reader of TB “can see another expressive system emerge which is the vehicle of the signification but proceeds differently: *expression* in this case is not suited point by point to what is expressed.”^{lvii} Here within this shift of the treatment of language each element is not particular or isolated, but receives its significance from its neighbors.

In TB each word is important in the formation of the pointing; though, what is it pointing at or towards? Does it point at the same thing or concept or what-have-you all the time? Let’s step back for a moment and examine the text’s general structure as a way of trying to talk about these questions. The entire work is a sequence arranged into a particular order that is determined not by external influences, by a prefabricated form, but by internal elements developed each upon each. In this sense, TB is readily independent. It does not subscribe to something else, nor does it rely on another source to exist. It is only itself. The book is divided into three sections: *Objects, Food, and Rooms*. The first section consists of fifty-eight pieces varying in length from one or two lines to over fifty. The second section is also divided into shorter pieces (forty-three), which also vary in length. The third section might be referred to as a narrative poem, because of its form and structure. These quite common entities, which serve as the names of the three

sections, provoke a certain set of expectations or ideas about what they are – and perhaps for this reason, Gertrude Stein chose them.

The reader brings a set of expectations when these entities are encountered. Since these entities are so common, the readers assume that they already know what it is that can be written about them. All of these expectations are immediately shattered after the reader moves through the first few lines. Something entirely unexpected is placed before the reader. Now in that moment what was thought to be there is not there, and instead something else is there. (In this way, the reader is placed at the will of the text.) An object usually has a concrete quality, a tangible quality to it. This seems to be what constitutes the idea behind what an object might be; however, might I not see a broad, blue, cloudless sky and say that it is a sun-drenched canvas? Or, am I not able to call a can of motor oil “blue,” since that is its color? A word, any single word, might signify any set of signifiers when put into any particular context. In TB Gertrude Stein is constantly playing with the plasticity and the disparate dispositions of words in ways that often betray their everyday usage. De Saussure taught us that the sign is wholly arbitrary; it does not have any direct link to the sensible world. In a piece of writing a writer may decide to say that a particular rock is rainbow colored, and the writer might do this (perhaps) to achieve a particular effect in the story that is necessary to the expression of the piece. This does not mean that there are rainbow colored rocks in nature. Similarly, Stein is manipulating language in ways to achieve a particular gesture.^{lviii}

The movement generated by Stein’s workings of language across the page depends upon a quite specific command of language. Food is quite simply something edible; yet in the second section of TB some of the poems bear names such as “End of Summer,” “Single,” and “A Centre in a Table.” Similar, in the first section, are poems with titles such as “A Frightful Release,” “More,” and “Nothing Elegant.” Though these entities are not necessarily objects or food, they might take on an object or food quality when placed into either section. And it is possible that if they were placed into another section, which was titled “moments,” they would take on the qualities of just that. How could this happen? As De Saussure has said, language is only made up of differences without positive terms.

Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms.^{lix}

This fact of language further clarifies the questions posed because it elucidates the notion that what makes any signifier what it is *is* the difference existing between it and other signifiers. As Gertrude Stein says, “The difference is spreading.” This fact shows how language when written presents a variety of possibilities to a poet or a writer. To place one word beside another is to create a juxtaposition of differences between both value and signification. There is no word that is any other word. There are words similar to other words, but no two words are the same. This seems a bit ridiculous, but it is intrinsic to understanding what can be produced within the realm of language.

Elephant beaten with candy and little pops and chews all bolts and reckless reckless rats, *this is this*. (A Sound p. 15 – my own emphasis)

This returns to the earlier discussion of the value of a term, which is determined only by the presence of other terms. To continue along this line, value is only “one element in signification, and it is difficult to see how signification can be dependent upon value and still be distinct from it.”^{lx} What is the linguistic value of “little pops”? A term’s value (once again referring to De Saussure) is unfastened as long as it can be “exchanged.” And since value is determined by difference between terms, the content of a given term (a given word) is determined only by the chorus of terms that surrounds it.

De Saussure:

Its content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside of it. Being part of a system, it [the linguistic sign] is endowed not only with a signification, but also and especially with a value, and this is something quite different.^{lxi}

A discussion of value is crucial in an examination of gesture in TB because Gertrude Stein arranges particular words in ways that impact the value a particular word might carry in different circumstances. The value of “little pops” is determined by “chews all bolts” and “reckless reckless rats.” The differences enunciated between these units are clearly heard; yet, the value of one isolated unit is troublesome to define. However, even if two terms, in this case two units, are (to use De Saussure’s term) “dissimilar,” they can still be “exchanged” if a value is determined. A way of possibly determining the value might be answering the question: do they all make the same sound, since that is the name of the piece. How this question might be answered is certainly ambiguous; however, it does raise a critical question in an examination of TB.

The question has to do with determining the relationship between the text of individual pieces and their accompanying titles. There seems to be no direct connection. They do not appear to be descriptions. They might be definitions of some obscure type. But the definitions given, which may or may not be obscure, are at least allusive. Let’s look at one of the pieces.

A SUBSTANCE IN A CUSHION

The change of color is likely and a difference a very little difference is prepared. Sugar is not a vegetable.

Callous is something that hardening leaves behind what will be soft if there is genuine interest in there being present as many girls as men. Does this change. It shows that dirt is clean when there is volume.

A cushion has that cover. Supposing you do not like to change, supposing it is very clean that there is no change in appearance, supposing that there is no regularity and a costume is that

any the worse than an oyster and an exchange. (p. 3)

Do we have before us the definition of a cushion? It is true in that sugar is not a vegetable, but that is only true outside the context of the passage; perhaps, it is a description of the color of the stuffing of a cushion. And the possible definition of “callous” is accurate in this way also, in that it describes the covering of the stuffing. Though suddenly the passage begins to distort itself. Now the passage is talking about change. The entire passage is talking about objects that are hid inside of other objects. And the “hidden” objects are much softer than the objects that are hiding them. An oyster and an exchange: there is a monetary notion here, a reference again to value. Inside oysters there may be pearls. Not every oyster has a pearl in it, yet an oyster that has a pearl in it does not change in appearance – all oysters wear the same “costume,” so to speak. The interior and the exterior are being discussed here, the seen and the unseen. The substance in a cushion is not seen, but when the substance is sat upon it is felt – which returns us to the quote cited earlier “all this which is a system, which is feeling.” These may be some of the particulars of the passage. Note the use of the phrase “very clean.” This is an unlikely use of the word. Then, though, the use of the word “clean” is a paradox. The entire sentence may seem senseless. It is difficult to understand how when there is a volume of dirt it becomes clean. Understanding this sentence depends upon how the three-word sentence that comes just before it is read. If that sentence is read as a question without proper punctuation, then the reader becomes lost. But, if the sentence is not a question then it is a fragment. It is quite easy to become lost inside the particulars of the text. There come certain points in the text where the reader might be “put off”; for what is the cover of a cushion in this passage? It is something that the reader only has a feeling of – it is not specific. A cover within the context of this piece is something that is callous and equal. We could go to the dictionary, but it seems we are completely missing the point if we turn to Webster while reading TB. Possible answers to the questions the text presents are not in, so to speak, “conventional” places, nor are they necessarily arrived at in standardized ways.

In the first two sections (*Objects* and *Food*) we have over a hundred pieces, each of which consists of a body of writing and a title or a heading. The body of writing appears to function separately from the title, but from across that distance it could be discussing some aspect of the title. The other day while reading the paper an idea occurred to me as I was looking at a photograph in the *Bangor Daily News*. There was an image of a woman with a gloved hand over her mouth. Bundled-up, with the wind sweeping her hair across her face, I had no idea as to why this photograph was on the front page. The caption below the photograph brought relevance to the picture’s presence: *high winds and cold bring county to a standstill*. Sitting down at the computer this morning, it occurs to me that the relationship between title and writing in TB might be compared to a photograph in a newspaper commented on by a subtext. The heading or title in TB could be the photograph, and the body of writing in TB could be the subtext that is telling us how we should understand the heading. The purpose of the subtext accompanying an image in a newspaper is to point a viewer toward those elements of the image that are pertinent to the story the newspaper article is telling. Roland Barthes in Responsibility of Forms discusses this relationship between text and image in newspapers and advertisements. Quite similar to a newspaper or advertisement image, there are a panalogy of denotations, connotations, and expectations accompanying the objects and food that Stein presents to the reader.

ORANGE

A type oh oh new new not no not knealer knealer of old show beefsteak, neither neither. (p. 38)

There is a twist, though. Given this throng of signifiers, the reader is not necessarily given very certain sentences that seem to point out specific ways of understanding the title. It is not obvious what the reader is intended to understand or gather about, in this case, an “Orange.” To push past the expectations of what an orange usually appears as in writing, is difficult because there does not appear to be a reason as to why, or a way as to how, a reader would do that.

A passage from Barthes:

Language helps identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself: it is a matter of a denoted description of the image (a description that is often partial)... The denominative function corresponds nicely to an anchoring of every possible (denoted) meaning of the object, by recourse to a nomenclature; in front of a dish of something (in an Amieux ad), I may hesitate to identify the shapes and volumes; the caption (“*rice and tuna with mushrooms*”) helps me choose the *right level of perception*; it allows me to accommodate not only my gaze but also my intellection. On the level of the “symbolic” message, the linguistic message no longer guides the identification but the interpretation; it constitutes a kind of vise which keeps the connoted meanings from proliferating either toward too individual regions or toward dysphoric values; an ad (d’Arcy preserves) shows a few fruits scattered around a ladder; the caption (“*as if you had picked them in your own garden*”) distances a possible signified (parsimony, poor harvest) because it would be an unpleasant one and orients the reading towards a flattering signified; the caption here acts as a counter-taboo, it combats the disagreeable myth of the artificial, ordinarily attached to canned goods.^{lxiii}

The purpose of the text (of the body of writing in TB) would be then to aid the reader in choosing the appropriate level of perception when reading a particular piece; however, this level of perception is not obvious. It is unlike an advertisement for food in many ways. For instance, in “Orange” the readers are not given a line to direct them back towards the image of, say, fruit in a basket; instead, there is a telling to the viewer of elements that are quite un-orange-like. Barthes identifies the text’s purpose as directing the viewer toward those signifieds that are to be considered and those that are to be disregarded. In TB the text directs the reader toward a place that appears irrelevant to the title of the piece – oranges are not known to be “knealers.” In this way the denotations of the word “orange”, which usually signify fruit or color, do not coincide with the text that is given.

The next two pieces after “Orange”:

ORANGES.

Build is all right.

ORANGES IN.

Go lack go lack use her.

Cocoa and clear soup and oranges and oatmeal.

Whist bottom whist close, whist clothes, woodling.

Cocoa and clear soup and oranges and oatmeal.

Pain soup, suppose it is a question, suppose it is butter, real is, real is only, only excreate a no since.

A no, a no since, a no since when, a no since when since, a no since when since a no since when since, a no since, a no since when since, a no since, a no, a no since a no, a no since, a no since.

There must be (to use Eisenstien's terminology as found in Barthes) "corresponding associations" between the title and the body of writing. In the space that exists between the two there – it would seem – must be threads that the reader can trace back and forth between them.^{lxiii} Eisenstein is speaking of sound and color in film when he uses this term, and just as Barthes finds this apropos, here it too seems somewhat opportunely relevant given the last sequence of "Oranges In." (Note: it is important to not use the word repetition here because each time, for instance, the word "since" is read there is a renewal of its meaning(s) in new or different context.)^{lxiv} The title "Oranges In" has an action quality to it, a verbal tone – movement. And that last line – a sequence of permuted phrases – creates with and through a re-sounding of four words a rhythm of moving-toward, when read aloud. This building of sound (which could circle back to "Build is all right") corresponds to the title not in a literal, written-out way, but through sound, which the reader will discover when the passage is read aloud. There is also a play of sound when the three titles are read: Orange . . . Oranges . . . Oranges In. There is a progression there. Building upon itself, there is a continual forward progression that echoes.

To continue with the discussion of image and text relations, if the body of writing is the subtext of the image given (the title), it would then serve to "*direct* the reader among the various signifieds of the image

(again, the title).” The body of writing in turn (to use another of Barthes’ terms), “anchors” the reader; tells the reader which signifieds are to be considered.^{lxv} The text is intended to move the reader along and through the image, toward a predetermined meaning. One of the difficulties in TB lies in attempting to understand the signs so that we can reach that predetermined meaning that Gertrude Stein may have selected for us. As we move along and through the lines of each piece, we feel that we are being thrown around like a bag of fluff. We go over there, we run to here, we jaunt back over to there; we are not ever able to rest our gaze or employ our intellect – thoughts are not provoked in a symmetrical way. The body of writing directs the reader into a place that does not usually carry connotations of culture, history, politics or anecdote. In this way the book begins to create its own structure, but at times the pieces seem to float “unanchored” in the sea of language. The possibilities seem so endless that not any particular one appears to be definite. For the reader, there is a striving to understand what exactly is being talked about, since one of the primary purposes of language is to answer, “more or less directly, more or less partially, the question *What is it?*”^{lxvi} There is this tendency in reading TB to want to know *what* exactly is being written about. This is an easy mistake to be made when reading TB.

However, unlike an advertisement, in TB there is no exact set of signifieds to be uncovered by a reader in regards to the title. Barthes discusses every image’s polysemy, which “questions meaning, and this question always serves as a dysfunction.”^{lxvii} It dilutes meaning. In TB the titles are so common that they are nearly polysemous themselves. “Orange” has “a ‘floating chain’ of signifieds from which the reader can select some and ignore the rest” in an arbitrary, uninformed manner.^{lxviii} The commonplace quality of the titles Stein chooses makes them disguises of sorts; they assert a mendacious form because once the reader enters into the body of writing she encounters a universe adverse to what the title usually designates.

SALAD

It is a winning cake.

(p.37)

It may be possible to also say: “cake is a losing salad.” The relationship between cake and salad turns on the verb “winning,” which functions as a modifier. To venture an interpretation, perhaps: salad is a winning cake because it tastes just as sweet as cake but is also healthy. This is a description of what salad is; it succeeds in telling the reader how to consider salad in reference to something as apparently opposite to it as cake. If we return to the line in “Substance of a Cushion” which says “Sugar is not a vegetable,” then the equation that we are given above seems improbable within the context of TB, but the verb “winning” makes the equation possible, and allows this short commentary to succeed. This is one of the pieces in TB (perhaps it has to do with the length) that is quickly grasped, available, and then easily entered.

However, the short explication given above does not fully elucidate the piece because “Salad” occurs between other pieces (namely, “Eating” “Sauce” and “Salmon”), and when read in sequence the meaning changes. For instance, consider the last line of three words of “Sauce”: “Sauce *sam in*” in relation to

the title of the piece that follows “Salmon” (my own stress). The sound is nearly the same: “sam in” . . . “Salmon.” There is this type of play with words, this modification, this swerving of sound that occurs not separate from the presence of the title, but in relation to them, tied – and riffing off them. The emphasis in these cases is on sound, and sound is an integral aspect of the linguistic sign.^{lxix} It would be easy to write another essay on Gertrude Stein’s sensitivity and employment of musicality in TB. Sound is central to the construction and life of the lines in TB. Here is another example: “Alas a dirty word, alas a dirty third alas a dirty third, alas a dirty bird” (“Chicken” p. 35). A large portion of the work carouses and cavorts amongst the vibration and consonance performed from phoneme to phoneme. It now seems that the notion of the relationship between title and writing (as being similar to the relationship between a newspaper photo and subtext that occurred to me the other morning), is somewhat lacking analysis given that the two meet, mingle and inform each other in softer, more melodious, less direct ways.

Similar to the rise and fall of a musical score, there are certain parts of TB that always strike me, stay with me; in ways that are unclear they speak to me. I sense a something that in some way seems to be beyond language. These moments seem obverse to all other moments occurring while reading TB. These moments are similar to one that I have nearly every morning with a bunch of different varieties of peppers that are hanging from the rafters in the kitchen. Since autumn they have sat suspended above the stove and every morning they capture my gaze while I fry eggs. It has something to do with their organization, the way a pale yellow one swoops down and away from the others. Many mornings they appear as unreal as a photograph, so I must reach out, touch them, and swing them into stupid motion. The peppers’ sense of “unrealness” has something to do with their hue (that some mornings seems reminiscent of Vermeer to me); however, what exactly it is about their existence that strikes me, I am unsure. These circumstances are all quite similar to Roland Barthes’ discussion of the “Obtuse meaning” which he generates in reference to a series of photo-stills from Eisenstein films:

I believe the obtuse meaning carries a certain *emotion*; caught up in disguise, this emotion is never viscous; it is an emotion which simply designates what is loved, what is to be defended; it is an emotion-as-value, an evaluation.^{lxx}

This concept that the obtuse meaning is an evaluation, an “emotion-as-value,” is quite different from earlier discussions of linguistic value. If the obtuse meaning is removed, communication remains; its presence, its functioning does not impact reading or speaking. In this way the obtuse meaning is, as Barthes observes, outside the system of language. It is not established or fixed with any type of objective certainty within the structure of an image or a piece of writing. The obtuse meaning somehow functions in relation to language, as Barthes says, “it is still within interlocution.” The obtuse meaning “is a signifier without signifieds.”^{lxxi}

A METHOD OF A CLOAK

A single climb to a line, a straight exchange to a cane, a desperate adventure and courage and a clock, all this which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success, all makes an attractive black silver. (p.6)

It represents nothing. There is uncertainty in describing the obtuse meaning. Fading and then resurfacing, undulating, its existence creates “a distancing effect with regard to the referent (to “reality” as nature, a realist instance).”^{lxxii} When I reach out and set those peppers in motion, their effect upon my senses falls away and is no longer there. In the above passage the last six words seem to be (to adopt Barthes’ terminology) a “penetrating feature” of the piece for me, but in a way, the whole piece seems to emit or carry a certain extension of itself that is without a specific point of departure or arrival. But the obtuse meaning is ridiculous to describe; one can only “designate a site”, can only point towards that which seems to be ambiguously doing the same with certainty. The reading of TB – to broaden this discussion out to the whole work for a moment – is continually suspended between action of formulating a definition, a determination of some essence, and approaching a closeness with that essence, coming together with it as in the way one brings cut edges of tissue together. The first line of the above piece echoes this: “a single climb to a line.”

It is not in trying to disclose some “literal” or “obvious” meaning that I begin to enter the universe of these six words. It is the moment my eyes act upon them; for suddenly soon after reading climb, a yellow-cream-grey color spreads across my reading since that is the color I associate with rock climbing. This is not objective, but as Barthes remarks, “a semantologist would not acknowledge its [the obtuse meaning’s] objective existence.” Yet, it is apparent, manifest in my reading. The placement of “single” before “climb” is to an extent a useless modifier. Without it, the reader would still know climb is singular, simply by implication. But, that it is there, that it does not feel useless as I read the piece, is a testament of some kind to its functioning, its operation upon my senses; for instance, if I read the line without the word “single” in it the yellow-cream-grey fails to spread.

The phrase that follows does not signify anything that is without specific description. It is informational; it gives me things that possess a certain yet limited weight. In this way the two phrases are completely separate from one another. The second contains a less camouflaged meaning. And as my eyes move through the piece, a second significance rises in the last six words (“all makes an attractive black silver”) that is strikingly similar to the one I sensed in the first six. In this instance it is the adjective “attractive” that appears to be the pivot point. There are other adjectives that could replace “attractive” and not change the information that is contained there. But that the word is there, that it shifts my senses, my reading, in the way in which it markedly does, discloses the power it carries when placed between “an” and “black.” Then also the placement of “black” and “silver” beside each other is another point of departure for me. They send my reading quickly to another place that is still contained there in the lines. Consider this short passage from Barthes:

The obtuse meaning can proceed only by appearing and disappearing; this operation of presence/absence undermines the character by making it a simple site of facets: a disjunction expressed on another point by Eisenstein himself: ‘What is characteristic is that the different positions of one and the same [i.e. object]...are given without transition from one position to another.’^{lxxiii}

It is this un-melding of permutations that addresses (and might even to an extent describe) the book-ending occurring in “A Method of a Cloak” that I sense in my reading of the piece.

One of the characteristics of the obtuse meaning that Barthes articulates is that it “blurs the limit separating expression from disguise, but also presents this oscillation quite succinctly: an elliptical emphasis...a complex, very intricate arrangement.”^{lxxiv} An arrangement results from elements being placed into a suitable sequence or relationship to one another in such a manner as to direct a reader’s senses of the mind toward some eminently possible way of gathering in and considering the significance and meaning that a work contains and indicates. TB is a complex and intricate arrangement exploiting the power that is contained in each of its elements in ways that subvert their typical usage. The structure of the arrangement (again to employ Barthes’ vernacular) *leaks from the inside*. The obtuse meaning functions as “an *accent*, the very form of an emergence, of a fold (even a crease) marking the heavy layer of information and signification.”^{lxxv}

Gertrude Stein’s diction is not abnormal, nor is it difficult. She primarily uses everyday language in TB. It is her syntax and grammar that throws the reader into a place of quick confusion. The way she manipulates language is strange, yet quite deliberate.

A FEATHER

A feather is trimmed, it is trimmed by the light and the bug and the post, it is trimmed by little leaning and by all sorts of mounted reserves and loud volumes. It is surely cohesive. (P.14)

Reexamining this earlier cited piece: it is presenting itself in another way; perhaps, I am supposed to receive and formulate a visual image because there is a painterly-ness to the piece, a feeling that each line is carving out the delineations of the feather, and the things, the elements, which serve this function are the bug, the light, and the post. Then from these points of reference, these juxtapositions of things that are all placed in direct correspondence to the feather (perhaps among the aggregation of these elements), I am to understand what the feather is - its fragile-ness; its weight; its purpose as an object with meaning in the context of the bug, the light and the post.

Wittgenstein:

We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by another. (Any

more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)

In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.)^{lxxvi}

TB is a case of the latter. There is not a “translation” to be made here, a “making sense of” what is being talked about by recapitulating some other series of sentences. Reading TB is not a matter of talking about what it is talking about. Rather, reading TB is a process of absorbing, recognizing, and then definitively grasping the movement of the stroke performed by each of the words as they meld and converge – within the adherence of the reading – to *point* to the *feeling* which is beyond the words themselves. For, when a painter paints the edges of, say, a fragment of glass lying against a piece of blue velvet, she cannot simply draw out the shape of the glass; instead she must hew and scrape and etch – with a brush loaded with the appropriate color – the fragment of glass with its unexpected edges into the canvas, where the blue velvet carries the same amount of weight as each edge of glass, to express the feeling that the object emits. And when the fragment has been rendered as such, instead “it’s telling me something consists in its own structure, in *its* own lines and colours.”^{lxxvii}

Amidst the lines and colors of the piece given above, and also in this painting of the fragment of glass that we’ve now created in our mind’s eye, there are certain elements that, so to speak, “pop out” to hold our gaze a little longer than the others do. These *accents* (referring back to the obtuse meaning) offset the other elements, manipulate them, to then call attention to the layers of meaning entrenched in the fabric of the piece. I was not too far off when I discussed much earlier that the choice of the word “trim” somehow signified for me something of the essence of the piece. At that juncture in my reading of the piece, I simply did not locate the source of the meaning that it carried. This word creates the movement of the piece. It incites the presence of the feather, its occupancy as an object in the space of the text that describes it. “Trim” is the stroke; it is the gesture. And what is the gesture? Let’s turn to Barthes:

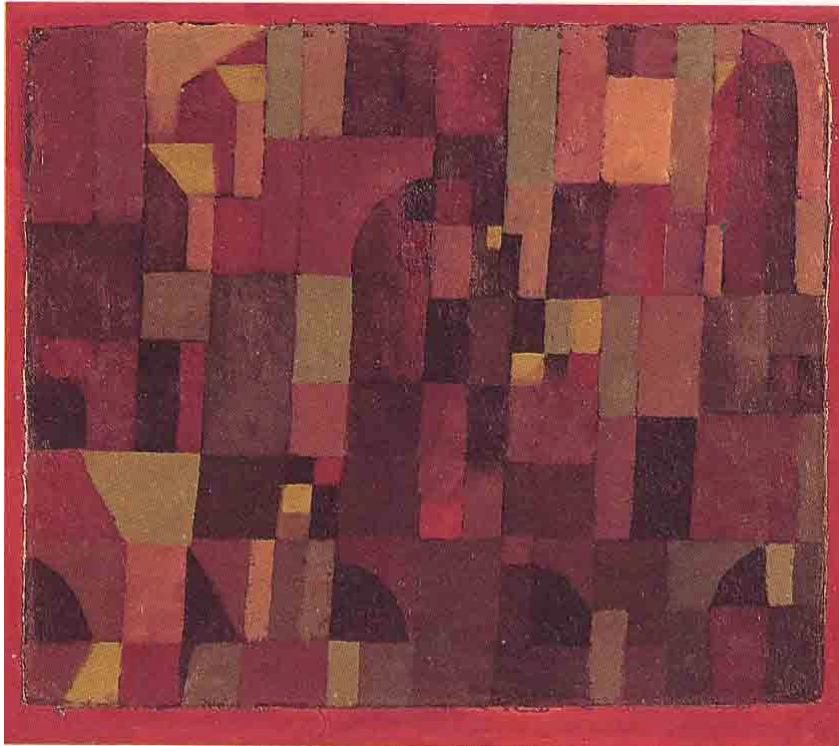
Something like a surplus of an action. The action is transitive, it seeks only to provoke an object, a result; the gesture is the indeterminate and inexhaustible total of reasons, pulsion, indolences which surround the action with an *atmosphere* (in the astronomical sense of the word).^{lxxviii}

Hence, the gesture is separate from the sign and the message. It is separate in that it does not function to produce intellection or carry information; instead, it carries the multitude of emotional content that is left behind by these other, somewhat benign yet necessary, elements. In writing, the gesture acts as a kind of producing agent, which activates the others out from their dormancy, for each word has within it a power waiting to be stimulated, awakened.

In TB it is diction that predicates and then produces gesture. By diction I do not mean a verbal description; more, I mean it as the choice of words, their correctness and effectiveness; specifically though it is the

enunciation – the preparation in relation to a system – creating, as Barthes says, an atmosphere, which sweeps the reader toward a notion of the essence of the object. “The essence of an object,” says Barthes, “has some relation with its destruction: not necessarily what remains after it has been used, but what is *thrown away* as being of no use” (his emphasis).^{lxxix} That stuff which is disregarded, tossed aside with some indifference, still exists there where it is, pointing back towards where it once did reside. The peeling away of diction in TB, this sense that certain words have been “withdrawn from circulation,”^{lxxx} is the gesture operating on and within the “system to pointing.”

Part Klee



Architecture Red-Green (yellow-purple gradations) 1919/22.

34.4x40.3cm; with border: 37.9x42.8.

In his analysis of Paul Klee's works in relation to Ferdinand de Saussure's formulations of linguistics, Ranier Crone posits:

The complications attendant upon applying semiotics to works of visual art are not easily resolved. The language of painting is never given apart from individual works, and since the language of painting is not in the possession of the entire social body but of a limited number of individuals, it can undergo many more volatile mutations than language proper.^{lxxxii}

Crone continues on in his essay to compare Klee's formulations of the "dividual" and the "individual" with De Saussure's signified/signifier. Paralleling Klee's "interplay of systematic constraint and free choice" with De Saussure's development and defining of *la langue* and *parole*, Crone attempts to establish the constraints (i.e. the "umbrella") under which "free choice" (his indefinite term for expression and accent) takes form in Klee's paintings. This is an idea Klee briefly discusses in his Pedagogical Sketchbook as

“Divisional Articulation.” Crone’s discussion leaves us with two distinct points. First, that attempts to establish, define a “universally valid *langue* for painting escapes our capacities,” since any attempt seemingly leaves everything in flux: words and images do not readily cohere; they often succeed, in Crone’s estimation, in canceling each other out. To cancel something out is to render it useless and difficult to detectable. This, I would like to say, seems to be somewhat extreme, since, for example, one would think that a letter, if taken to a certain visual scale, or perhaps if given a particular typographic treatment, might in itself become an image.

In Klee’s work, the writing is often there in the painting. It has become incorporated into the actuality of the painting; a part of – linked to the image. The second point that Crone makes, which is relevant here, is that Paul Klee was undoubtedly influenced by De Saussure’s cultivation of modern linguistics. And then also that Klee wrestled and worked with these conceptions in his paintings in various ways. Citing examples from Klee’s notebooks, and also referring to several of Klee’s paintings done in color, then also early sketches and drawings, Crone discusses the possible roles of linguistics in Klee’s work.

Paul Bauschatz remarks in his article on Klee’s use of language in painting that “much of Klee’s colloquy is explicit, not analogical, and linguistic principles play a central role in his artistic enterprise.”^{lxxxii} Before moving into a discussion of four of Klee’s paintings, Bauschatz offers a question which is not only applicable to the works of Klee: “how does word meaning operate in the visual event before us?” And, to relate this question to Klee’s use of language, what does the employment of letters, numbers, etc. accomplish in a painting that might not be accomplished by other means? Indeed, to spend time viewing/reading any number of his paintings is to become caught (maybe released) in a kind of verbal-imagery, which at times may have more of a sense of reading than perhaps of seeing. For Klee the painting was motion. It was an unconstrained area of perpetual motion, stimulating the eye to gather the multitudes of what might be seen in conjunction with what is seen. Klee, as Bauschatz notes, understood the limits of human communication. And in his paintings he worked with these limitations to create visual fields that commented somehow on the complexity of those limitations.^{lxxxiii}

Roland Barthes, in his investigation of Jean Louis Scheffer’s discourse on the Venetian painter Paris Bordone’s work *Chess Game*, says of the work that:

It is not the disciplines that need to be exchanged, it is the objects: there is no question of “applying” linguistics to the picture, injecting a little semiology into art history; there *is* a question of eliminating the distance (the censorship) institutionally separating picture and text.^{lxxxiv}

To a large extent this may be what Klee attempted to accomplish when he included various linguistic elements: close the distance, bring into view the various components of signification. It appears he was working towards writing the painting in ways that might move beyond the description of the object.^{lxxxv} Yet, Paul Klee did not begin to seriously work in color until the late teens, after he had been released from the ranks of the Great War. And it is not until these works in color begin to emerge that one can discern

any ‘Cubist’ influence in Klee’s finished paintings. Indeed, Klee had been to Paris (he traveled widely from 1905 to 1906), and was exposed to a variety of movements (Fauvism, Cubism, Orphism, etc.), but in his work at that time he was completing a series of etchings, which were intended as satirical comments on humanity. These etchings, which are highly sculpted pieces, meticulously formed, bare no resemblance to any of the multitude of movements rising up across Europe at the time.^{lxxxvi} Marcelin Pleynet notes in his study of Matisse:

The real question is to know what the artist did with what he saw; whether what he saw determined what he made; and whether what he made did not determine to some extent what he was capable of seeing.^{lxxxvii}

It is obvious in his journals that Klee was aware of what he was doing and that he was quite disgusted with the ‘classical’ conceptions of the figure. He knew that his etchings would not receive much attention at the Munich Secession in 1906, where they were displayed as one piece.^{lxxxviii} In his journal Klee notes that they were “a necessary first step”.

In his book *Paul Klee and Cubism*, Jim Jordan explains that Aubrey Beardsley predominantly influenced Klee’s etchings, since many of the etchings (particularly *Menacing Head*) are closely aligned with Beardsley’s Art Nouveau work.^{lxxxix} For Jordan, the interesting link between these two artists is not their etchings, but the fact that they both harbored a general disgust for the human figure. Klee never actually produced what one might consider a classic study of beauty, yet he worked with the figure almost exclusively through 1909. The majority of the etchings are anatomically distorted for the purpose of satiric human commentary. The first set of etchings became a series that allowed Klee to express his rejection, as he noted “the service of beauty by drawing her enemies.”^{xc} Indeed, this reassessment of the human figure was a somewhat ubiquitous sense at the early part of the twentieth century. The reassessment was almost entirely a reaction to the academic and/or the salon; however, with Klee, the reaction is more to the classics than to the immediate past (Impressionism, Post-impressionism, etc.). Another trace of a connection between Klee and his early contemporaries is in his second series of etchings, which focus on masks. The use of masks is similar to the Cubists (particularly Picasso), who, as Pleynet notes, used African masks. Klee, unlike Picasso, was not interested in the mask as a new way of seeing the human face and its structure; more, it was the metaphorical function of masks. As he noted in his journal: “...the mask as a work of art; behind it, the man.” After 1909 Klee began a series of landscapes that – much like Matisse’s seascapes in 1898 - would be a turning point in his career, despite their weaknesses in composition and the lack of strong use of color. Until 1909, though, it seemed that Paul Klee was working in a sort of historical vacuum, where he was preoccupied by Greek statuary. There is a sense that this preoccupation is his own preconceptions of the classical; in the etchings he is to come to an understanding of what the ‘classical’ is/was, and then also work through some of his own preconceptions / problems with these conceptions. Klee’s maturation as an artist is a fascinating if not beguiling timeline of various investigations and preoccupations. And if one reads through the various materials of those years (mainly the diaries) one will see struggles with attempting to approach and enclose some semblance of synthesis between music, visual art, and linguistic practices.

Sometimes I dream of a work on a vast scope, spanning all the way across element, object, content, and style. This is sure to remain a dream, a vague possibility . . . We must go on looking for it. We have found parts, but not the whole.^{xci}

Klee was a practicing musician in addition to being a painter. He wrote poetic works during his years in the war, and also produced a series of paintings often referred to as “poem-paintings.”^{xcii}

In the light of the fact that Klee often exhausted certain particulars in an effort to see what they could and could not do, I will offer a brief examination of the use and examination of color in one of his paintings. *Architecture Red-Green (yellow-purple gradations)* is oil on canvas with a red watercolor border. Begun in 1919 and completed in 1922, the painting balances color. “In a broad way we may say that color balances on middle gray.”^{xciii} Klee employs this sense of balance of color in many of his paintings by using a moderate amount of extremely strong color in contrast to other more grey colors. For instance, there is a patch of bright red there in the lower middle of the painting that is counterbalanced in other red-purple squares. “In fact, it is one of the aims of the artist to discover the powers of colors and to employ their suggestiveness in his appeals to emotional man.”^{xciv}

Munsell uses a sphere to represent the world of color. Balanced on a pole whose “North” end is white and whose “South” end is black, the color wheel is situated in the middle (grey) area. To consider *Architecture Red-Green* beside Munsell’s color sphere is useful since in his painting Klee is attempting to create a balanced architecture of color. The actual shapes will not be of import here in this discussion, because they are primarily dictated by the effect of color upon the senses. Color has three fundamental dimensions: Hue, Value (light), and Chroma (strength). To pick up at that bright red patch, if the viewer is to enter there, then their eye might bleed – as the red in the painting does – up into the next small patch of greener-greyer red that is similar in value to the rectangle above it. There is an ease of movement of the eye in this area. At other points in the painting, the contrast of value and hue is more severe, but remains within the grey of the color sphere. The yellows, which appear and function as sorts of accents upon the others, are yellow-greys. In Munsell’s color sphere yellow is the hue situated between green and red; also there in the wheel are yellow-red and yellow-green. In his painting, Klee does not use blue. In this way the painting could be an exercise in the use of “primary colors.”

The range of value and chroma in the painting explores one level of colors on Munsell’s color sphere, although some of the yellows do move “North” at certain strategic points. If we return to our bright red patch and then follow downwards, we enter into a large, relatively neutral rectangular area that seems brown-red. This takes us out of the painting. If while inside this area, which is repeated to the left of our bright red patch, we move either right or left, a series of what appear to be dark red-brown quarter-circles are encountered. These elements are the strongest, darkest hues in the painting, and they occur at other junctures in the painting. They are, however, not red in hue; they are yellows. That shade of yellow is a low valued one with a lot of black in it. This is most likely the reason that Klee called the piece “gradations yellow-purple.” This quarter-circle shaped hue serves to hold the painting, gives it a sense of gravity. This darker, “Southern” hue has more weight when transpiring beside the yellow-greys. The contrast is stark.

To continue an observation of the composition of this painting, the color-shapes at the top of the painting are long, and on the whole much lighter in value than those at the bottom of the painting. The middle of the painting is primarily without the quarter-circles. It consists primarily of rectangular shapes. The varicolored functioning of red, green, yellow in this painting is achieved through the juxtaposition of differing value and chroma. The ways this all occurs seems similar to De Saussure's conceptions of language being a system of differences without positive terms. Our bright red patch is what it is because of the various other color-shapes that surround it. Each element of this painting, though rationally separated by Klee's careful constructions (only in rare instances does one color overlap or blend into another), still offers varying sorts of commentary upon one and other. (This is all somehow similar to the syntactical play of words in Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons.) The threading, unifying apparatus of this painting is indeed in its playful balancing of color. To let the eye roam across the painting, at no point in that roaming is the eye bombarded by extreme shifts in value or chroma. There are differences, but they are subtle if not quite balanced. The key to balance, in Munsell's estimation, is reason and consistency. In *Architecture Red-Green*, each of the varying hues appears in a varying repetition with one another. Although, considered as a whole piece, the painting is not compositionally symmetrical, the precarious placement of each color beside the next creates a well-balanced gesture of the relations of red and green, which has more than just a symmetrical quality to it.

If considered on a large scale, Tender Buttons is not a, so to speak, symmetrical work. There is not an obvious logic to its structure. The three parts (*Objects, Food, Rooms*) do not necessarily reflect a consistent balancing of words but, as was discussed in the previous section, there is movement from one poem to the next (*Orange . . . Oranges . . . Oranges In*) that is certainly a smooth progression of gesture. In *Architecture Red-Green* Klee fabricates a very comparable structure by melding and shaping color that is dictated not by shape, form, or composition but by the impact that color has upon the senses. In the painting there are jumps in value and chroma that at first glance appear arbitrary, closer inspection, however, reveals a subtlety in shifts of value and chroma that progress smoothly.

If this situation of a similar progression of gesture exists in Klee's painting and in TB, then it would seem that the act of expression through writing is not very different from expression through painting. As Merleau-Ponty observes:

What if language expresses as much by what it says between words as by the words themselves? . . . And what if, hidden in empirical language, there is a secondary language in which signs once again lead the vague life of colors, and in which significations never free themselves completely from the intercourse of signs?^{xv}

The writer, it is often said, works from a pre-fabricated system of expressions; on the other hand, the painter, it is often assumed, works within an unarticulated mass of lines and shapes. However, as was discussed in the previous section, writing is not in anyway limited to the rules and structures of everyday speech. Here in this section we have seen that the seeming arbitrariness of a painting that is without compositional symmetry does employ balance of color as its fundamental tool. In both of these cases there is

the creating of a work that had not yet existed. In each case there are decisions being made about what word or what color to place where.

After a discussion of a film that shows Matisse making decisions as to where to place a line, Merleau-Ponty concludes:

Consequently, there was a choice, and the chosen line was chosen in such a way as to observe, scattered out over the painting, twenty conditions which were . . . in formulable for any one but Matisse, since they [the painting's conditions] were only defined and imposed by the intention of executing *this painting which did not yet exist*.^{xvii}

“Expressive speech,” Merleau-Ponty continues, “does not simply choose a sign for an already designed signification;” instead, it “gropes around significative intention which is not guided by a text.”^{xviii} In this way, the creative act is an event defined by concerns that are certainly outside language. For perception occurs before thought, and thought is very much a relation of language. Before the gaze of a viewer / reader there is motion; rarely if ever do things sit completely still. And that motion is an occurrence beyond language that exists as a result of language. The word play in TB achieves a gesture that is markedly similar to the color-play in *Architecture Red-Green*. This similarity in “play” does not result not in some similar message or meaning being made by Klee and Stein; instead, it is that space of language where differences meet that is surprisingly comparable between Tender Buttons and *Architecture*.

The grounds for comparison are innocently not subject or style. The point of intersection between these two works is where the treatment of colour juxtapositions and syntax produce meaning that is explicitly gestural as opposed to obviously literal or pictographic. The colors of *Architecture Red-Green* look like a stained-glass window that was shatter and glued back together and Tender Buttons' syntax often reads as if first it was placed into a food processor and then removed. However, this is not the case with either of the works. The expressive intention of both works relies upon a movement of each element modifying the next element and then the next until there is a universe of meaning that is received in a sweeping motion of the reader's / viewer's eye as it allows each element to meld into the next. In both of these works, the gesture becomes the pivot point for transmitting meaning. The gesture's function becomes that of a kind of epoxy that produces a unifying structure, which is built upon generous yet precise reading of that which is there in each piece.

Notes on Part One

ⁱ Julia Kristeva Language *The Unknown: An Initiation into Linguistics* trans. Anne M. Menke. Columbia University Press, New York. 1989

ⁱⁱ *ibid.*: “We can say that language is the process of communicating a message between at least two

speaking subjects, one of whom is the *addresser* or sender, the other, the *addressee* or receiver (figure 1.1).”

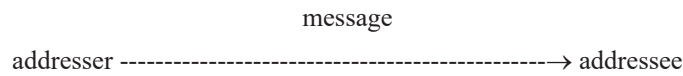


figure 1.1

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid.* pgs. 5 – 8.

^{iv} *ibid.* pgs. 5 – 8.

^v *ibid.* pgs. 12 – 13.

^{vi} Ferdinand De Saussure Course in General Linguistics trans. Wade Baskin. ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. 1966.

^{vii} Language The Unknown p. 14

^{viii} *ibid.* p. 15

^{ix} Course in General Linguistics. p. 66: “the *psychological imprint* of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses.” The word that De Saussure leaves out in that quote is “image,” yet we may assume that image is implied, since it functions the same as the sound.

^x Language The Unknown p. 15

^{xi} *ibid.* p.15

^{xii} Course p. 66

^{xiii} *ibid.* p.17

^{xiv} Refer to Figure One in the Appendix while reading this next section.

^{xv} Maurice Merleau-Ponty. “Science and The Experience of Expression” in The Prose of the World. Edited by Claude Lefort. Translated by John O’Neill. Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973. p.10

^{xvi} In How to Write – Dover Publications, Inc., 1975. – Gertrude Stein says: “There is no use in finding out what is in anybody’s mind.”

^{xvii} “Science and The Experience of Expression.” p.27

- ^{xviii} Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, McGraw-Hill Paperbacks, New York. 1966. p. 30.
- ^{xix} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” in Signs. Translated and with an Introduction by Richard McLeary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964. p. 52.
- ^{xx} Language The Unknown p. 303
- ^{xxi} As Antonin Artaud wrote: “alongside the culture through words, there is a culture through gestures.”
- ^{xxii} Definition of Gesturality by American Kinesics as found in Language The Unknown.
- ^{xxiii} *ibid.* p. 307
- ^{xxiv} David Freedberg. The Power of Images. The University of Chicago Press. 1989. pgs. 317 – 344.
- ^{xxv} Language The Unknown p.314
- ^{xxvi} Roland Barthes The Responsibility of Forms trans. Richard Howard. Hill and Wang, New York. 1985. p.150
- ^{xxvii} Marcelin Pleynet, Painting and System, trans. Sima Godfrey, University of Chicago Press. 1977. p. 19.
- ^{xxviii} The Responsibility of Forms: Is Painting Language? pgs. 149 – 152.

Notes on Part Two

- ^{xxix} Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Macmillan, New York. 1968. Section #531, “We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it can be replaced by another....In the one case the in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in other words, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions.” (Understanding a poem.) This is intrinsic in a discussion of Tender Buttons, because there is not another sentence that could be written to replace a sentence in Tender Buttons. The only sentence is the sentence that is there in the work. This challenges the perceptions of a reader’s concept of *understanding*.
- ^{xxx} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Signs: Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence. trans. Richard C. McCleary. Northwestern University Press, 1964. To reiterate a definition of expression: “expression is not the adjustment of one element of discourse to each element of meaning, but an *operation of language upon language*

which suddenly is thrown out of focus toward meaning.” p. 44

^{xxx}i Charles Olson, *PROJECTIVE VERSE* as found in *The New American Poetry* ed. Donald Allen, University of California Press. 1999. pgs. 386 – 397. (Originally appeared in *Poetry New York* No. 3, 1950.) Olson writes that the principle which governs “Projective Verse” is that “form is never more than an extension of content (or so it got phrased by one R. Creeley...) Gertrude Stein is not writing “Projectively” in TB, but this concept is important because it speaks of the interconnectedness of form and content. This notions towards the structure of TB.

^{xxx}ii Charles Harris and Paul Wood, ed. *Art in Theory:1900 – 1990*, Blackwell, Cambridge. 1993. p. 157: “Contemporary Achievements in Painting”. (– Or, as Stein said,” The painters were naturally looking...)”

^{xxx}iii *Ma Jolie* is cited by Gertrude Stein as being the first Cubist work in Picasso, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1984. p. 13.

^{xxx}iv Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. 1966. p.120: “A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas . . .”

^{xxx}v *ibid* p.127: This concept is referred to as *Syntagmatic Solidarities*. which De Saussure refers to as the “most striking” aspect of the organization of language.

^{xxx}vi *ibid*. p. 139: “word-order alone expresses thought.”

^{xxx}vii *ibid*. p. 126: “A word can always evoke everything that can be associated with it in one way or another.”

^{xxx}viii Patricia Meyerowitz, *Gertrude Stein: Writings and Lectures*, Penguin Books, Inc. Baltimore. 1971.

^{xxx}ix “It is important to remember that all views of what exists change when there is a sense, a notion, in the mind that there is an interwovenness, a web of layers of events and discourses, that exist in one form or another beneath the immediate surface of things.” (My notes from Course)

^xi Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World: Science and the Experience of Expression* p. 24

^xii *ibid*. pgs 9 – 46. “Everything I say about language presupposes it, but that does not invalidate what I say; it only shows that language is not an object, that it is capable of repetition, that it is *accessible from the inside*.” p.24

^xiii De Saussure, *Course*. p.108 – 109.

^{xliii} De Saussure uses the example of two Geneva-to-Paris trains that leave at twenty-four hour intervals. The trip travels the same course, and we feel that it is the same train; yet, the cars and personnel are different.

^{xliv} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Science and the Experience of Expression*. p.30

^{xlv} As De Saussure on p. 115 of *Course* points out: "...outside language all values are apparently governed by the same paradoxical principle. They are always composed: (1) of a *dissimilar* thing that can be *exchanged* for the thing of which the value is to be determined..."

^{xlvi} Course p. 115.

^{xlvii} Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations #523: "I should like to say 'What a picture tells me is itself.'"

^{xlviii} TB p. 3 (note: hereafter page numbers will be noted directly after passages.)

^{xlix} Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations I, Macmillian, NY. 1968. Section #500: "When a sentence is called senseless, it is not as it were its sense that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation."

^l *ibid.* Section #499: "To say 'This combination of words makes no sense' excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language."

^{li} *ibid.* In Section # 7: "In the practice of the use of language one party calls out the words, the other acts on them. [...] I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language-game." In section #23 Wittgenstein lists a series of examples of the "multiplicity of language-games" : "Giving orders, and obeying them / Speculating about an event / Making a joke; telling it / etc . . .

^{lii} *ibid.* Section # 23.

^{liii} In How to Write – Dover Publications, Inc., New York. 1975. – Gertrude Stein says: "What is a sentence for if I am I then my little dog knows me. Even if it is all tenderness. What is tenderness. First there must be a way of going about waiting. There are two things a dictionary and the country."

^{liv} All of this is strikingly similar to the relationship between Wittgenstein's A and B since B is continually giving and A is continually receiving^{liv}; however, the component that is missing in TB, which is present between A and B is that B receives orders from A. There is reciprocity between the two. If the text is viewed as B then I have yet to determine who A is; unless, A is – the reader. But, if the text is A then that would make me, the reader, B, and in this case I have just gotten fired, because if there are orders being given, I am not hearing them in the text. But, many of the passages have a tone, when read aloud,

of order-giving.

^{lv} *ibid.* Section # 24.

^{lvi} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Science an the Experience of Expression*. p. 17.

^{lvii} *ibid.* p.28

^{lviii} Course in General Linguistics pgs. 67 – 70.

^{lix} *ibid.* p. 120

^{lx} *ibid.* p. 114

^{lxi} *ibid.* p. 115. “. . . and this is something quite different” refers to signification’s dependence upon, yet distinct separation from, value.

^{lxii} Roland Barthes. The Responsibility of Forms trans. Richard Howard. Hill and Wang, New York. 1985. pgs. 28 – 29.

^{lxiii} *ibid.* p. 56

^{lxiv} In Course De Saussure says: “Each time I say the word *Gentlemen!* I renew its substance; each utterance is a new phonic act and new psychological act. The bond between the two uses of the same word depends neither on material identity nor on sameness of meaning but on elements which must be sought after and which will point up the true nature of linguistic units.” p. 109

^{lxv} The Responsibility of Forms p. 29 and p. 30: “Anchoring is the most frequent function of the linguistic message; we frequently encounter it in press photographs and in advertising.”

^{lxvi} *ibid.* p.28

^{lxvii} The Responsibility of Forms p. 28.

^{lxviii} *ibid.* p. 28

^{lxix} please refer back to the discussion of the “Linguistic Sign” in Part One.

^{lxx} The Responsibility of Forms p. 51.

^{lxxi} *ibid.* p. 55

lxxii *ibid.* p.55

lxxiii *ibid.* p. 57

lxxiv *ibid.* p. 48

lxxv *ibid.* p. 56

lxxvi Philosophical Investigations I. Section # 530.

lxxvii *ibid.* Section #522.

lxxviii The Responsibility of Forms p. 160

lxxix *ibid.* p.158

lxxx This the same passage from Wittgenstein referred to in footnote #23.

Notes on Part Klee

lxxxi Ranier Crone and Joseph Leo Koerner, Paul Klee: Legends of the Sign, Columbia University Press, New York. 1991. *Cosmic Fragments of Meaning: On Syllables of Paul Klee*. p.6.

lxxxii Paul Bauschatz, “Paul Klee’s speaking pictures” in *Word & Image*, volume 7, No. 2, April – June 1991. pgs 149 –163.

lxxxiii *ibid.* p.162: “At some point, language fails. All human communication fails. As Klee knew, even visual communication fails.”

lxxxiv The Responsibility of Forms: Is Painting Language? p. 152.

lxxxv In viewing the arrangement of colors in Klee’s painting(s), we must let our gaze roam freely about the surface of the image, finding echoes and correspondences and discovering therein a pictorial structure. Joseph Leo Koerner fully discusses this in his essay *Paul Klee and the Image of the Book* in Paul Klee: Legends of the Sign.

lxxxvi Jim Jordan, Paul Klee and Cubism, Princeton University Press, New Jersey. 1984.

lxxxvii Painting and System p. 14

^{lxxxviii} Paul Klee and Cubism pgs. 10 – 25.

^{lxxxix} *ibid.*

^{xc} The Diaries of Paul Klee ed. Felix Klee, University of California Press. 1964.

^{xcⁱ} Paul Klee Notebooks: Volume I: The Thinking Eye. ed. Jurg Spiller, trans. Ralph Manhiem. Lord Humpries, London. 1961. p.95.

^{xcⁱⁱ} Among the works done on these subjects are Paul Bauscatz's *Paul Klee's Anna Wenne and the Work of Art, Image/Music/Text* vol. 19, no. 1, March 1996, pgs. 74 – 101. Association of Art Historians 1996, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, MA. And also the earlier cited "Paul Klee's speaking picture" and finally Joseph Leo Koerner *Paul Klee and the Image of the Book*.

^{xcⁱⁱⁱ} Munsell: A Grammar of Color ed. Faber Birren, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York. 1969. p. 11.

^{xc^{iv}} M. Luckliesh, The Language of Color, Dodd, Mead, and Co., New York. 1920. p.3.

^{xc^v} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" in The Prose of the World. p. 45.

^{xc^{vi}} *ibid.* p. 46.

^{xc^{vii}} *ibid.* p. 46.

The Early Years 1944-1951: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Search for True Religion

By Ron Large

With the publication of *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, it is possible to trace the development of King's thought more fully than ever before. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project has given scholars and the general public the most complete access to King material than any previous publication. While I am aware of the issues of plagiarism and King's misuse of sources, my purpose in this essay is not to re-visit these matters since others have already examined them in depth. Rather, I want to approach the papers as a resource for offering insight into how King's ideas evolved. With a focus on volume 1, this essay will investigate King's quest for what he considered to be the essence of true religion. While Volume 1 of the Papers covers the years 1929-1951, this essay will examine the period from 1944-1951, which covers King's high school, college, and seminary education. The great majority of material in Volume 1 covers King's years at Crozer. In examining the period from 1944-1951, we can glimpse some of the ideas and concepts that shaped King's views both about religion and social change. Although necessarily in nascent form, we can begin to explore some of the themes King later develops more fully. Only 22 years old when he graduates from Crozer Theological Seminary, King is on the path that will guide him into what is then an unknown future.

While some key aspects of King's views are formed during this time, we cannot yet entertain any expectations of completeness in King's thought. We will need to set aside our recognition of King and the Civil Rights Movement to look through the lens of his and our own inchoate efforts of analysis. This essay will examine several of the main themes of King's early years: his critique of religion, his view of the impact of science on religious faith and understanding, his assertion that true religion is ethical in nature, and how this notion informs his understanding of God and Jesus.

Two quotes from the Introduction to Volume 1 help to set the dichotomy in King's approach to religion. The first quote refers to King's father in stating that "the elder King stressed the need for an educated, politically active ministry" (33). This contrasts with a second passage in remarking that the younger "King was uncomfortable with the fervent emotionalism he sometimes observed in the church." It seemed,

perhaps to King, that an “educated, politically active ministry” could not easily combine with “fervent emotionalism” (34). This tension followed King for much of his life as he sought to balance the demands for critical, objective scholarship with an emphasis on reason on one hand with the experiential awareness of God’s presence in human history, both personally and socially, on the other. As King draws closer to Personalism as a way to understand God, experience does become more fundamental to his approach to religion. However, King never jettisons the call for reason as a counter to uninformed piety. He will need both reason and emotion for the task ahead even though they do not seem to be very complimentary at this point in his life.

In his essay entitled “An Autobiography of Religious Development,” (359-363) King reveals the trajectory of his beliefs and opens a window to some of the themes that shaped his early views of religion and society. Although technically a matter of hindsight, the essay does give King the opportunity to reflect on how his childhood experiences influenced his understanding of religion and its role in society. Living through the Depression for his first decade, King recalls that his family had the “basic necessities of life” and that, more generally, “no one in our community was in the extremely poor class” (360). Despite this apparently benign experience of the Depression, King moves beyond his own personal situation to recall seeing the breadlines and how this image contributed to his “present anti-capitalistic feelings” (359). These feelings will shape King’s critique of capitalism for its failure to deal adequately with those basic necessities for many others. It will become the role of religion, through the Social Gospel, to sustain this critique as King comes more and more to see the connection between civil rights and economic conditions. As a young child, however, King’s focus was on other matters in his religious development: the experience of his family life and that of his relationship to the church.

King writes fondly and nostalgically about his family and “that intimate relationship which existed between us in childhood” (359). Taking his parents’ relationship as a model of intimacy, King expands this pattern to include his siblings and maternal grandmother who also lived with his family. He recalls listening to her telling stories (359) as part of his “congenial home situation” (360). While King writes movingly of his grandmother, his father is the obvious center of the family. King senior was a “father who always put his family first,” a father who “has always been a real father” (360) with regard to caring for the wellbeing of the family. Accordingly, King examines his father’s sensibilities of frugality, responsibility, and simplicity as providing the hallmarks of his family life and setting an example for King to follow. The emphasis on his father’s personal qualities may also partially explain King’s own focus on the specific personal traits he felt that individuals needed in order to participate in the nonviolent movement. The effort to end segregation also required that people prepare personally to bear the responsibilities of freedom. Love, however, is the most important quality that defines King’s assessment of his childhood and the one that most clearly influences his understanding of religion.

Love encapsulates King’s sense of family and community; it provides the essential cohesion that binds together all of his childhood relationships. From his parents, to his grandmother, to his siblings, to his playmates, and to the community, it is love that most vividly describes King’s interpretation of these collective associations and provides the basis for his views of religion and his own religious development.

This conclusion is not very surprising given an earlier paper from 1949 in which King argues for the primacy of experience in seeking and knowing God (234). Thus one's experiences fundamentally shape one's notion of God. Although not completely deterministic and fixed, the past for King offers a key to the future. For this reason King concludes that his family experiences "were highly significant in determining my religious attitudes" (360) and that love formed these attitudes and the contours of his vision. Since love forms his experience, it also forms his view of God. King's own words state the matter clearly.

It is quite easy for me to think of a God of love mainly because I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever present. It is quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly mainly because of my uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances. It is quite easy for me to lean more toward optimism than pessimism about human nature mainly because of my childhood experiences. It is impossible to get at the roots of ones (sic) religious attitudes without taking into account the psychological and historical factors that play upon the individual. (360-361)

In what may foreshadow King's views that psychological and historical factors also trapped the supporters of segregation, he cannot separate his own self-understanding from his experiences. However, this connection does not imply that King felt that the trap was completely closed. Since he hoped and worked for significant changes, the possibility always existed that individuals and society could imagine a new way of being, through new experiences or a re-interpretation of old ones. King was not naïve enough to assume that our lives are fixed. Even so, experience is crucial and it informs King's understanding of the church.

In his essay on religious development, King continues to examine the importance of the church in developing his religious ideas. Reflecting on his childhood experiences, King's relation to the church is almost dualistic. He writes of joining the church "not out of any dynamic conviction, but out of a childhood desire to keep up with my sister" (361) who had already joined. At the same time, King tells us that the "church has always been a second home for me" (361). From a more fundamentalist and literalist beginning where he "accepted the teachings as they were given to me" (361), King quickly progresses to offering a serious challenge to that literalist view of Christianity. He notes how "at the age of 13 I shocked my Sunday School class by denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus" (361). Perhaps, as King wonders, the remark of a precocious child? Maybe, but the challenge is still there. Yet, King is still very much a part of the ethos of the church. Working on a tobacco farm in Simsbury, Connecticut during the summer of 1944, King writes to his mother that he is the Sunday school leader and is "praying for the church" (112). King tells his father in a separate letter that he is "still thinking of the church and reading my bible" (115). However, doubts and questions persist. By the end of his first two years of college, King, in a fairly powerful image, recounts how "the shackles of fundamentalism were removed from my body" (363). Although perhaps implicit and not necessarily intended, the connection King establishes between fundamentalism and the shackles of slavery is hard to avoid. Just as slavery is a form of imprisonment, so too is fundamentalism. It is an effort to hold on to "old dogmatic ideas" (238) and is "essentially a reactionary protest" (240) against a modern and changing world. It is not the sort of church that King has in mind. In spite of his criticisms, King can still say, "the church has always been a second home for me" (361). Thus the key is not whether

King will leave the church, but what sort of church he envisions. Religion and the church continue to be significant for King, but in a manner that blends his own experience of both the church and the modern world through the impact of science and reason.

Given King's criticisms of fundamentalism, along with his view that the church was too overly emotional, it is not surprising that he would look to science and reason to counter each of these. What is surprising is that King does not give up on the church. Instead, through the encounter with science, he offers a reformulation of the basic issues that Christians and the church must face. Essentially following his boyhood rejection of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, King proposes a shift from a church concerned with doctrines to one that looks to the ethical and spiritual truths that the doctrines represent. King clearly wants the church to be part of the modern world; he has no interest in retreating to an earlier, pre-scientific understanding of religion and the church. As King uses science and religion to blunt fundamentalism's claims to the truth, he also does not want science or reason to become the sole sources of faith and arbiters of the truth. As much as King wants the church to move away from a pre and unscientific understanding of religion, he cannot let science overwhelm the basic truths that he sees within the Christian tradition. Consequently King seeks a balance between what he might refer to as a faithless reason and a reasonless faith. We can see this effort unfold through King's papers while a student at Crozer.

For a paper in his Old Testament course during his first term in the fall of 1948, King wants to show how the literature of the surrounding societies influenced the composition and writing of the Old Testament. In order to show this influence, and to truly understand the text itself, King argues that we must apply "the scientific method to the study of the old testament" and place the text under a "critical, unbiased, and scientific light" (180). The bible can no longer be the province of individualistic and nonacademic interpretations, for these will invariably be misinterpretations. Modern scholarship has a role in examining the bible just as it does with any other area human of reflection and investigation. To single out the bible for special treatment and remove it from the purview of rational inquiry denies the bible its power to be understood since that understanding comes only through rational inquiry.

King continues this argument in a paper written during the fall semester, 1949. The title gives the obvious focus: "How to Use the Bible in Modern Theological Construction" (251-256), and the first sentence establishes the issue: "The question as to the use of the Bible in modern culture stands as a perplexing enigma troubling multitudes of minds" (251). It is perplexing as King notes, due to the contradictions between what the bible says and what we know from science. King lists several areas such as astronomy, biology, and medicine where the bible and science conflict. These conflicts can only be resolved to the detriment of the bible as long as the bible is taken literally (251-252). The practical problem is that the bible's unscientific elements cannot meet the challenges of the modern, empirical world. Consequently we need to bring a new interpretive focus to the biblical text that permits "an intelligible way of handling the Bible." For King this focus is one that is "both objective and disinterested" as measured by the demands of "higher criticism" (253) rather than through an allegorical or literal interpretation of the text. These latter approaches belong to what King views as an earlier, unscientific time where knowledge of the biblical text was simply less developed than it is in the modern world. King is not willing to set aside the bible

and remove it from critical study and research. If we are to know more about the bible then we cannot read the bible as if modern scholarship does not exist. Just as scholarly research has expanded human knowledge in almost every area through the application of science and reason; so, too, have science and reason permitted a greater understanding of the bible. Such a conclusion rests on the assertion that King “sees the Bible not as a textbook written with divine hands, but as a portrayal of the experiences of men written in particular historical situations” (253). Thus our knowledge of the bible, for King, depends upon understanding these situations, and this understanding requires the use of science and reason. Removing himself farther from the emotionalism of his childhood, King stresses that individual piety alone cannot bring the insight necessary to comprehend the text. We must rely on the investigative tools of science and the application of reason or else we will fail in our quest for understanding. Writing a book review in the fall semester of his last year at Crozer, King continues to affirm the significance of science and reason. He simply states that if “religion is to be meaningful to modern man it must be scientifically tenable and intellectually respectable” (355). If not, then religion becomes false; it remains little more than a quaint relic with little or no relevance to modern life. A false religion is one that refuses to recognize the contextual nature of human knowledge, even of God, and one that turns away from the demands of reason. Yet how is relevance to be determined and how does King keep God from becoming trapped in the situation and buried under the weight of science and reason? How does King move from a false to a true religion?

King’s solution, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, develops out of a critique of science and the modern world’s dependence on the results of science. As is typical in King’s thought, a movement exists between the literalism of the biblical text and the bald assertion that science provides all knowledge and meaning. Neither view is correct. King rejects the extreme end- points to craft a solution that keeps both science and the text. Consequently he cannot accept an either/or resolution to the question of the relationship of religion and science. He affirms both science and religion while denying that either holds the final and complete answer to human questions. Having already examined King’s critique of fundamentalism, we can turn to his cross-examination of science and reason.

King’s statement that “The modern Christian should never lose faith in rationality as one of the supreme resources of man” (276) seems to imply that faith is subservient to reason, especially when viewed in combination with King’s affirmation of higher criticism. Reason allows science to flourish and furnishes the knowledge that shapes and defines the world. Reason checks our “false thinking” (277); it allows us to “adjust to the changing conditions” of human existence (238). Reason and science push aside the veil of ignorance to reveal the facts hidden behind superstition or uncertainty. Or so it seems. Although King certainly approves of the use of reason and science, he is also aware of the temptation to absolutize the knowledge that science produces. Just as religion may make claims as to the eternal validity of certain beliefs or doctrines, science may also fall victim to the same tendency, making it in effect the new God. In his paper, “The Sources of Fundamentalism and Liberalism Considered Historically and Psychologically” (236-242), King traces the “rise of the scientific spirit in modern culture” (237) to show how science has challenged and altered many ideas that religion previously supported, ideas that are no longer tenable. Yet it is not King’s intention to return to a pre-scientific world where religion held sway even if such a journey were possible. Instead King looks to the cultural impact of the scientific revolution and what he sees as

a shift to a more anthropocentric perspective. He writes: “It seems that the renaissance deviated man’s thinking from a theocentric world-view to an anthropocentric cosmology” (237). God is less important, but does this reduction imply a loss of the human need to have faith in something? For King the answer is no, and herein lies the problem. We have substituted one absolute for another and actually done so rather poorly. However, King’s support of science and reason is not unquestioned. What he wants to avoid is having science supplant faith in God to become its own religion. This is the temptation that leads him to write that “Modern man turned away from metaphysical speculation and decided to worship at the shrine of empiricism” (237). False gods still exist, and science, if it assumes too much authority, can contribute to their rise. King hopes to prevent science’s ascension to idolatry by placing it within the boundaries of limited knowledge and God’s actions in history. Acting as bookends, these two concepts hold science within appropriate limits and, at the same time, allow science to function as a source of understanding.

Given King’s criticism of fundamentalism for its claims to certainty and its rejection of change, it is difficult, if not impossible, for him to view knowledge in anything other than contextual terms. King’s belief that “doctrines and creeds...grow out of the historical settings and the psychological moods of the individuals that set them forth” (226), also informs his view that time and circumstance influence scientific knowledge. If fundamentalism cannot claim certainty then neither can science; it too is subject to the limits of human understanding even as we try to extend these limits. For King, proclamations of certainty or absoluteness raise both theological and epistemological problems. Theologically the claim of certainty denies the role of God acting in human history and confuses a particular understanding of God for the actuality of God. The same holds true for general human knowledge. Even science and reason cannot claim the privilege of finality, for this would merely deny their very purpose in testing the limits of human wisdom. King would turn the claims of certainty upside down. Rather than expressing the foundation of human capability, they really represent the failure to see that ideas require challenge and questioning. We cannot claim absoluteness for the simple reason that we are not absolute. Thus King’s position is that “Our knowledge of the absolute will always remain relative...that intellectual finality is unattainable in all fields; all human knowledge is relative, and all human ideas are caught in the whirlpool of relativity” (235). The temptation of relativity is to succumb to the view that if knowledge is not certain then the search is futile. Just as certainty stifles investigation; why go any farther? Relativity also hampers the quest; why go at all? “But,” as King notes, “we cannot give up the search because of this limitation” (235). Relativity is good news for it implies that the search for God and true religion can continue in the present and into the future. Relativity, then, is a sign of hope, not defeat.

King subsumes the tentative nature of human inquiry and the incompleteness of human understanding under a broader conceptual framework that sees both scientific knowledge and knowledge of God as elements of an almost evolutionary process. Change governs King’s approach to the accumulation of empirical and theological knowledge since it is change that defines human existence. Put simply, the more we investigate and study, the more we know, and the more we see how things change. Yet, this explanation is too simplistic. King wants to make the stronger claim that change and uncertainty are bound to the very fabric of human life, that they define who we are as human beings. King wants to move beyond both the fundamentalism that abjures change and the relativity that sees only change to a willingness to see that

“truth must be discovered from age to age” (239). Truth becomes an evolutionary process arising out of a humble, but critical assessment of the past in conjunction with new discoveries. There is no return to a static past where true religion stood fully revealed. For religion to have any meaning in the modern world, it is not a matter of keeping science and reason out of religion; it is a matter of knowing that true religion “must keep pace with the deepening insights of world thought and keep abreast with the modern problems of a changing culture” (355). If not, religion exists as little more than a quaint relic. However, King now faces an interesting predicament. In his youthful homage to science and the modern world, where does he find God? As science structures more and more of modern life, does it not also then define God as an extension of natural phenomena or remove God from human consideration altogether?

King cannot accept this conclusion as he tries to place God, science, and reason in a somewhat unified structure. He tries to shape this structure by defining God’s nature and by examining how God works in the world. King’s God has an “objective reality” (355); neither the natural world nor human consciousness can express the nature and truth of God. God exists outside the natural, human world. For all his efforts to connect religion to scientific progress and scholarly research, King leaves room for God’s reality to stand beyond their limitations. Writing a book review of *A Functional Approach to Religious Education* by Ernest Chave for a class in the Religious Development of Personality (354-356), King argues that religious educators must recognize the fact that “much of our religious education has failed miserably. We to (sic) often attempt to indoctrinate young people with outmoulded and unscientific ideas. The young person who goes to school today is taught to be analytical, objective, and scientific; he is taught not to swallow the whole apple, but to chew and digest” (355). Still, King does not want science to completely overwhelm God since nature is not a sufficient vessel in which to contain God’s existence. King comments on this later in the same review when he writes that “I guess I am a little more conservative theologically than I thought I was. Somehow I cannot stop with nature, far (sic) Christianity to me is a revelation of the nature of nature” (355). Revelation only makes sense if it comes from outside that which it reveals, and for King this place is God. King’s understanding of the nature of God, perhaps vague and even ill-defined, may not necessarily be his main point however. He wants to avoid participating in a religion that places its doctrines and beliefs beyond the pale of critical analysis at best and, at worst, where science contradicts these tenants of faith. King designs his vision of how God works in the world to deal with this contradiction.

While God exists beyond the confines of nature and human life; it is also the case that God’s revelation comes only in nature and human life for we can only receive God in the world in which we live. For King, God is a God of and in human history. Revelation arrives in a particular human context among the limitations of human knowledge and understanding. Revelation may bring insight, indeed King would see this as inherent to the nature of revelation, but the situation also circumscribes that awareness. Consequently, understanding the meaning of God’s presence is not a simple given. It requires an engagement on many levels of human activity such as theology, philosophy, ethics, and empirical investigation all of which work to express a critical appropriation of faith. Here King tries to put aside the singular reliance on the emotional piety of his childhood as the full manifestation of God’s presence. However, he does so only partially. The human experience of God, in whatever emotional context, is crucial to King’s developing concept of God so much so that he feels inadequate and longs for his own religious experience (415-416).

Yet critical reflection must temper and balance the experience.

For King, the point is not to deny the validity of experience, but to understand it, however incomplete that understanding might be. Just as King views science as a process of discovering the truth “from age to age” (239), he places revelation within the process of “God working through history” (239). King even argues that the process of revelation allows the process of science to occur. God’s presence and connection to human history extends beyond the boundaries of scripture; it also arises in the developing and changing dynamics of human knowledge. King expresses this view of God in several papers written from 1949-1950 while at Crozer. In his paper on fundamentalism and liberalism (236-242), King evokes an historical God whose truth “is a drama of many acts continually appearing as the curtains of history continue to open” (239). The bible cannot fully contain the drama, for the bible is not “the only source of truth,” which exists in “numerous other realms of life” (239). One of these realms for King is clearly that of scientific progress and the discoveries science makes possible. These discoveries are part of “an upward evolutionary movement” (239) of human understanding that also reveals God’s presence in history. Humans can certainly get things wrong; sin does exist for King, but error and sin are not permanent barriers to the God-Human relationship or to the increase of human understanding.

King’s paper, “Six Talks in Outline,” (242-251) offers a more detailed view of how God works. For King, “God works through his spirit in the world” (248) in an ongoing presence that continues God’s relationship to humanity. Chastising the belief that God is somehow less present to humans today than “in the days of the apostles” (248), King holds that “we must believe that the living Spirit—that is, the present living God—is working through history” (248). In addition, human efforts to comprehend the world are also part of God’s historical presence. Theological or religious concepts alone cannot fully express the reality of God’s spirit in the world, and in trying to reduce God’s role in history “we do injustice to God and render our faith ineffective” (248). A limited God implies a limited faith for King. Thus he connects our increasing knowledge of the physical world through science to God’s presence. King writes that “All these advances have come about because of the constant work of God’s spirit in the life of man and in the world” (248). God’s spirit so fully envelops the physical, natural world that King goes on to claim that “Even the scientists who do not recognize God are guided by his spirit” (248). Whether such scientists would accept King’s judgment or not is an open question. His main point is that we cannot sever God from history, nor can we restrict God’s presence to faith alone. The gift of creation also includes the ability to understand that creation.

King’s essay “How to Use the Bible in Modern Theological Construction” (251-256) continues his examination of how God works in the world. While predominately an effort to reconcile the bible with science, the paper, by extension, shows King’s view of God. Understanding scripture requires the application of modern scholarship and biblical criticism each of which exists through the rise of science and the progress of human knowledge. For King, reason and science invigorate and even permit a greater understanding of the biblical text, by offering standards of investigation and interpretation. In his assessment, we have moved from a more superficial and possibly false understanding of the text to one that, while incomplete and imperfect, shows more fully the meaning and purpose of scripture. Here again we see King’s reliance on an evolving conceptualization of knowledge that also structures scripture itself. Consequently he states

“This means that we can trace the great ideas of the Scripture from their elementary form to their point of maturity” (254). As our critical capabilities grow so too does our understanding of the bible, and it is God’s spirit in the world that sustains these capabilities.

However in seeking to align the bible and science as part of God’s historical presence, King comes perilously close to, if not inside, the circle of Christian triumphalism. His use of the term “progressive revelation” (256) to describe how modern biblical scholarship informs an understanding of the text makes it difficult to separate this greater knowledge from Christian faith. Indeed, King’s own words elicit this connection. “We can start with the major ideas of the scripture and follow them as they develop from the acorns of immaturity to the oaks of maturity, and see them as they reach their culmination in Christ and his Gospel” (256). Although it may not be appropriate to accuse King of supersessionism, his words do obscure his main point that “God reveals himself progressively through human history” (254) in light of our increasing knowledge.

King’s search for God while at Crozer culminates in his examination answers for a course he took the first semester of his last year entitled: “Christian Theology for Today” (289-294). In his answers, King tries to reconcile God with science, to explain God’s nature, and to show how God is present in the world. King holds to the views of his earlier papers in trying to overturn the assertion that God and science are incompatible, that in “the emergence of the theory of evolution many thought that the basic Christian view of creation was totally destroyed” (290). The more we have of science, the less we have of God. King’s solution is to transform the supposed antagonism of God and science into a partnership between evolution and creation. God creates, but that creation lives and develops through evolution. In order to keep both God and science, King asks: “Is it not possible for God to be working through the evolutionary process?” (290). Our understanding of creation cannot contradict the means by which that understanding arises; that is, if science explains the means and process of creation as evolution then religion or Christianity in particular cannot deny that explanation without also denying God’s role in the human intelligence that produces this understanding. Science is not God, but the concepts that define and express God cannot be irrational or unscientific either. King employs the term “emergent evolution” as a way to structure the partnership between God and science (290). Evolution explains the world, and God is present as “an intelligent conscious mind working out its purpose through the evolutionary process,” a process that King sees as an expression of God’s creativity (290). True religion, for King, accepts and embraces the accumulation of knowledge about the world that science offers even if that knowledge is subject to change and re-evaluation for that increase in knowledge is also how God works in the world.

Science alone, however, cannot account for the fullness of God’s reality. In completing his exam, King shows a God more deeply involved in the world as both immanent and historically active. For all of his efforts to integrate God and science, perhaps to counter his view of an overly emotional and undereducated Christianity, King also notes an element of sterility in the relationship. God and science co-exist, but, as noted above, they are not the same thing; science depends on the emergent evolution that King assigns to God’s presence. God is prior to and foundational for human reason and the science it engenders. As *a priori*, God underlies the physicality of creation and, more importantly for King, the possibility of human

experience. Taken together both these concepts frame King's definition of God as "a personal spirit immanent in nature and in the value structure of the universe" (290). While transcendence characterizes God's nature in so far as it allows God to be God (291), King relies on immanence to establish the fundamental relationship between God and humanity. God's presence to human beings is personal, which King connects to the essence of religious experience. Not wanting to lose this essence to the advance of scientific knowledge, King writes that it "is only a personal God who can confront man in a religious experience" (290). At the same time, not wanting to lose the personal immanence of God and its accompanying experience to individual emotionalism, King fuses together transcendence and immanence through his synthesis of creation and evolution. True religion, then, holds God's creation on the path of evolution just as evolution expresses God's creativity. From King's perspective his solution "still insists on a creative God and at the same time remains in the orbits of recent scientific findings" (291).

The final section of King's exam deals with the concept of miracles. As the editors point out, the questions for the exam do not exist (289). However, it may be the case that Professor Davis, perhaps recognizing the irony, deliberately chose a question on miracles to establish a contrast for the students with the modern, scientific world. King's brief answer, at least, tries to weave the miraculous and the modern together in an effort to explain how true religion can also contain miracles. King makes four points that reflect his view of God in the world (294). First, miracles are not so much violations of the laws of nature, if they are that at all; rather they testify to a God who is "living and active" and "who is continually working with his children" (294). Second, miracles are the expressions of God's true presence in the world doing "new and unpredictable things" that show God as "immanent in the process of history" (294). Third, miracles for King acquire a revelatory character as they express the ongoing presence of God in the world and in human experience. Fourth, the miracle is God's presence, a God who for King "is alive today and will be forever more" (294). Yet King needs to say more. He is not content to leave God and the true religion that follows solely in the circle of science, reason, and evolution however much that circle must be drawn.

Given King's emphasis on modern knowledge and his acceptance of science as an essential constituent of God's creative activity, it is tempting to conclude that science incorporates all that we really need to know; the rest is window dressing. This conclusion is misplaced for, as the above analysis shows, God's historical immanence and personal presence in human experience envelops King's views on science and reason. As important as they are, science and reason cannot fully express all that is God. Their main function for King is to bring religion into the modern world, a necessary, but insufficient step to attain the summit of true religion. For the next step, King tries to establish a partnership between the modern world and religious tradition by using a series of connections that seek to hold each element of the partnership in place without negating the other. In what becomes his standard, dialectical approach to many issues, King cannot let science supplant faith nor can he allow faith to exist in a scientific vacuum. The head and the heart meet in a single voice even as they each struggle to be heard. King wants to ameliorate the struggle and turn what often appears as a contrast between science and faith into an expression of unity. The connections that King uses to cement this unity flow from his dialectical method into the specific structures of truth/true, myth/fact, and internal/external. Rather than viewing the pairs as incompatible opposites, King sees them as complimentary ends of a single whole, a whole that blends the ancient and modern worlds in a

dialogue of meaning.

In a paper written during his first semester at Crozer in the fall of 1948 entitled “Light on the Old Testament from the Ancient Near East,” King tries to construct the dialogue (162-180). The paper examines the contributions of modern archaeology in understanding the Old Testament, especially the recognition of the similarities between the biblical narratives and the stories of other neighboring cultural traditions. The question then arises as to how to interpret these similarities. King notes one possible conclusion in that “many would argue that these archaeological findings have proven to be very pernicious to modern religion. They argue that archaeologists have robbed the Old Testament of any claim to uniqueness” (180). Secondly is King’s assertion that as a result of modern scholarship “we must conclude that many of the things which we have accepted as true historical happenings are merely mythological” (180). These two points delineate the fundamental problem facing King as he attempts to define true religion. It seems that scripture cannot hold to any special nature or if it tries then that uniqueness is only a mythical fantasy of little use. King’s response is to alter the focus of meaning from a literal interpretation and shift to what he sees as a more balanced approach. The uniqueness of the Old Testament lies in the scholar or scientist’s ability “to give a better understanding of the contents of the Bible,” which “will serve to justify the position of the church in modern culture” (180). The relevance of the church lies in the ability to render its message intelligible in the modern world, a world that new ideas and discoveries have shaped. Thus uniqueness for King is a function of increasing knowledge, not a matter of isolating or hiding the text from the gaze of critical analysis. If new knowledge reveals the mostly mythological nature of biblical events then that is the reality that believers must face. However, King does not want to denigrate the faith; rather, he views the mythical contours of scripture as a liberating realization.

King’s use of the phrase “merely mythological” is not meant to belittle the text or to eviscerate its meaning. Instead King employs the phrase as a means to express the deeper significance of the text. Consequently he differentiates between myth and fact, between what is true and what is the truth. The fact only forms the surface of an event indicating that something happened, but without necessarily conveying meaning. True religion entails the meaning or purpose behind the fact, which King sees as having a mythical content that transcends the fact itself. Myth propels us toward the quest for understanding. Thus King writes “One needs only to know that a myth serves the purpose of getting over an idea that is in the mind of the author. Therefore it becomes just as valuable as the factual” (180). Similarly King separates true and truth. To say that something is true reflects a factual or descriptive assertion that an event took place or that *that* something is empirically verifiable. Truth, on the other hand, elicits the questions of meaning and significance; it expresses the human longing for understanding. A lengthy quote from the end of King’s paper on the Old Testament and Ancient Religion shows this distinction.

If we accept the Old Testament as being “true” we will find it full of errors, contradictions, and obvious impossibilities—as that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. But if we accept it as “truth” we will find it to be one of the most logical vehicles of mankind’s deepest devotional thoughts and aspirations, couched in language which still retains its original vigor and its moral intensity. (180)

King's God of history lives in the facts of human life, but the God of history is most fully present in the original vigor and moral intensity that grounds the human search for meaning and purpose. Except for its awkward phrasing, the term "truth religion" rather than "true religion" best captures what King seeks. Truth religion searches for the "deeper meaning" (226) of faith, for the foundations of faith that lie behind the words of the doctrines and creeds. Truth religion is King's way of holding onto modern, scientific insights as well as the human expressions of belief. Each is essential for human existence and understanding. However, he still wants these beliefs to make sense in the modern world, and his way of doing this is to reference the truth that underlies the expression of belief. In his paper "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope" (268-273), King bluntly affirms that Christians cannot accept old, unscientific beliefs such as a physical, second coming of Jesus (269), the resurrection of all in a day of judgment (270), a physical heaven (271), and earlier ideas about the kingdom of God (272). These were developed, through no fault of their creators, in unscientific times, which is why "such beliefs are unscientific, impossible, and even bizarre" (268). Yet these beliefs have a purpose, and this purpose needs to be translated into the truth that frames the beliefs. "Therefore," King writes, "it is our job as Christians to seek the spiritual pertinence of these beliefs, which taken literally are quite absurd" (268). To make this task possible, King utilizes a distinction between internal and external religion.

External religion represents the outer, institutional manifestation of religious belief organized around ritual and the structure of worship. Although important, ritual and formal worship are not the central elements of King's notion of true religion; they only partially express the full depths of religious meaning. In one of the few existing papers from his undergraduate years at Morehouse College, King examines the sacred and secular dimensions of ritual (127-142). He traces the psychological impact of ritual through its formulation of group identity and power over the individual (137-138), which leads to his three-point conclusion that ritual entails a precise form of observation, exerts a powerful degree of control, and evokes a measure of solemnity in the participants (140-141). King's main criticism is that these elements of ritualistic activity have become "the be-all and end-all of all social occasions" missing the true nature of ritual to move participants beyond the activity itself (140-141). One of King's early papers from Crozer, "The Significant Contributions of Jeremiah to Religious Thought," (181-195) also embraces the distinction of internal and external. Using language very similar to that of the Morehouse paper, King's Jeremiah "deals with a problem that is a danger of all religions. It states the important truth that ritual is never to be used as an end within itself, but only as a means to an end" (187). Thus King places Jeremiah in a position to criticize the "empty formalism" and "organized hypocrisy" of external religion, what King calls "unreal worship" (186). It is unreal because it "failed to see that religion is not something which can be organized, rather it is a spontaneous outflow from men's contact with a divine spirit" (187). King characterizes this outflow of the relationship with the divine as true religion. It arises out of the experience of the divine and its essence is the internal transformation that derives from the experience. While not wanting to denigrate the external and formal structures of religion, King clearly sees them as secondary to the experiential and personal aspects of religion in which God's presence shapes the individual. Thus, for King, "the response of the heart to the voice of God" (193) defines true religion. It is a recognition of and "a trust in the unerring righteousness of God" (191), a righteousness that engenders and sustains the moral transformation of individuals and societies. True religion rises with the hope that "the law written on the heart will become

an inseparable part of man's moral being" (185).

King employs four key concepts to explain the moral focus of true religion: Jesus, the Kingdom of God, moral character, and a prophetic relation to the world. Each lies behind the moral transformation that accompanies King's vision of true religion. If, as King writes, God is "immanent in human history" (294) then there needs to be some normative expression of immanence that clearly reveals God's historical presence and that also serves as a basis for judging the correspondence between God's presence and human activity. Jesus fulfills this role for King since it is "through Jesus [that] the character of God is revealed to man" (287). Jesus shows us "the character of God" (247) and so unveils the fullness of God's historical reality. Jesus stands as the criterion of judgment for human existence and certainly for those who call themselves Christian. King's discussion of Jesus occurs mostly in three separate papers: "Six Talks in Outline" (242-251, see esp. 245-248); "The Humanity and Divinity of Jesus" (257-262); and "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope" (268-273, see esp. 269-272). Perhaps indulging in some hyperbole, the first paper refers to Jesus as "the most persistent, inescapable, and influential figure that ever entered human history" (246). King, then, clothes Jesus in a multi-colored fabric of qualities and characteristics. Jesus is the faithful Jew (245), the teacher (246), and the forceful personality (246) who seeks the deeper, spiritual meaning of his relationship with God. King's vision of Jesus' quest allows him to mold these elements into a cohesive image of an individual fully committed to God. This commitment most dramatically influences King's understanding of Jesus. Commenting on Jesus' character King writes, "Here we find a man who, through the process of struggle, so submitted his will to God's will that God used him to reveal his divine plan to man" (246). In essence, King views the manner of Jesus' life and death as the embodiment of God's plan. Jesus not only teaches what God wants, Jesus, through realizing "unity with God and with the human race" (247) is what God wants. He shows God to humanity and, at the same time, "shows us what we are and what we ought to be" (247), fallen yet still capable of goodness and love and made for reconciliation with God and one another. King sets God's plan in a moral rather than doctrinal world, which grounds his depiction of true religion.

King continues his examination of Jesus in his second paper, "The Humanity and Divinity of Jesus" (257-262), offering a fuller treatment of his views. King accepts the humanity and divinity of Jesus, but, given his rejection or, at least, skepticism regarding some of the major doctrinal formulations of Jesus' divinity, King turns his gaze toward the ethical as an expression of divinity. The moral focus allows King to retain the concept of divinity without having to accept what he views as its unscientific formulations (see again "The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope" 268-273). It is probably correct to say that the humanity of Jesus is more important for King than his divinity, that Jesus' humanity explains or substantiates his divinity. King proffers two apparently contradictory statements about Jesus. First, to affirm the humanity of Jesus, King writes that "there is not a limitation that humanity shares that Jesus did not fall heir" (258). However, to attest to Jesus' particularity, King notes that "no corrupt stain existed in his nature to which temptation could appeal" (258). The first statement forms King's belief in the full and actual humanity of Jesus. Jesus is nothing if not a real person enmeshed in the patterns of human existence. The second assertion, given the use of the term nature, seems to imply that a divine element independent or separate from Jesus' humanity protects him from corruption or sin. Thus Jesus' divinity stands against temptation

and keeps him holy while his humanity faces temptation. However, King does not intend this conclusion. The nature that resists temptation is Jesus' own humanity. King rejects any semblance of an ontological or inherent divinity in Jesus, which he regards as "harmful and detrimental" (262) due to its abandonment of Jesus' humanity. Jesus challenges temptation through his humanity not in spite of it. Consequently King's Jesus "overcame his temptations not by reliance on some inherent divine dimension, but by the constancy of his will" (260). Jesus' humanity stands center stage for King. Yet he must still explain how Jesus "transcends the human" (260).

King views the divinity of Jesus as a fact, but not a given in the sense of an inherent divine nature in Jesus (261). Placing his Christology within the context of modern science and theological liberalism, King cannot accept Jesus as the "Pre-existent Logos" (261). He states that "most of us are not willing to see the union of human and divine in a metaphysical incarnation;" yet, "we must come to some view of the divinity of Jesus" (261). Where does this leave transcendence? How does it have meaning if not in an incarnational sense? King's moral focus again surfaces as the connective tissue that binds Jesus' humanity to a transcendent divinity. Jesus' life, completely dependent on God, sustains its own divine transcendence through this very dependence. Thus for King, "we may find the divinity of Christ not in his unity with God, but in his filial consciousness and in his unique dependence upon God" (261). How Jesus lives in the fullness of his relationship with God establishes his divinity more than any inherent divine nature. It is possible to argue that King's treatment of Jesus' divinity is too superficial and incomplete. While not necessarily an incorrect conclusion, it also misses the essential point of King's understanding of Jesus. His interest in Jesus is more moral than theological; King wants a Jesus that we can follow even if we do not achieve the same "uniqueness in the spiritual life" (260) as Jesus. Thus while King asserts divinity as an almost extreme form of humanity, it is a form of divinity that Jesus shares with the rest of humanity. "Christ was to be only the prototype of one among many brothers" (262). King's notion of divinity reverses the singularity of Jesus' divine-human nature and extends it, at least partially, to the moral actions of others. Thus human beings participate, however partially, in the actions of Jesus achieving some measure of their own divinity. King's conclusion implies this point. "This divine quality of this unity with God was not something thrust upon Jesus from above, but it was a definite achievement through the process of moral struggle and self-abnegation" (262). In King's view of true religion, moral action and discipleship matter more than doctrine. Thus his understanding of Jesus revolves around the effort to comprehend the nature of Jesus' actions and to prepare oneself to follow that same path. Doing so establishes the connection with Jesus and places the individual within the embrace of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God represents another element in King's analysis of true religion; it is a central part of his theology and the foundation for his understanding of human community and the moral demands necessary for its creation. Understanding the Kingdom provides the entry point for understanding what King will later call the Beloved Community, the fulfillment of his dream. In keeping with his modern perspective, King cannot accept a totally heavenly or extra-worldly construction of the Kingdom of God separate from any historical or social context. King proclaims that "a physical heaven and hell are inconceivable in a Copernican universe" (271). Instead the Kingdom resides in King's correlation of God's reality and Jesus' presence. If God works in history "through his spirit in the world" (248) and if Jesus reveals the

“character of God” (247, 287) then the work of God in Jesus manifests the visible, practical reality of the Kingdom of God, a reality King views as reconciliation and unity. Reconciliation and unity form the basis of God’s work as they characterize Jesus’ efforts to live out of and in God’s presence. “The coming of the Kingdom in the world” (283, see also 250) expresses God’s hope for the reconciliation of humanity to one another and to God in the world. King does not deny the notion of a heavenly Kingdom, but his core belief centers on the Kingdom of God as essentially the social consequence of God’s reconciling work that occurs in the life of Jesus, which leads to “a regenerated human society which will include all mankind in a common fellowship of well- ordered living” (250). However imperfectly realized, King places the presence of the Kingdom of God squarely in the midst of the world where the power of God’s love forms the Kingdom in the midst of humanity.

Given King’s identification of God’s work with Jesus’ life and death in describing the Kingdom, love becomes the core value and primary evidence for the reality of the Kingdom. If morality rather than doctrine characterizes King’s view of true religion then it should not be surprising that the morality of the Kingdom of God is more important than a theological or doctrinal referent. Thus King defines the Kingdom of God through God’s love for creation in general and through the love that King identifies with Jesus in particular. The cross is not a punishment for human sin; rather it is “the eternal sacrificial love of God” (267), the fullest expression of agape. As creator God imprints his nature on the process of creation and in the quality of existence that human beings share with one another. If “the motive of God in the universe is holy love” (244) then love must also serve as the basis for human activities and relationships and stand as the means by which to judge those same activities and relationships. Love’s absence signifies the human failure to understand the true nature of God’s kingdom; its presence testifies to the realization that the Kingdom of God engenders a transformation of individuals and social structures leading to “a society governed by the law of love” (273). For King, the Kingdom of God and, therefore, true religion represents a new, moral configuration of human existence where love rather than hate governs people’s lives together. The Kingdom arrives as a new world, as “a place in which God is preparing his children for membership in a society in which all the relationships of life will be controlled by love” (283). In the short essay “The Purpose of Education,” written during his undergraduate years at Morehouse, King argues that education must provide a “moral foundation in society” (122). That foundation comes through the presence of the Kingdom of God and its practical manifestation in love leading to the Beloved Community that anchors King’s social thought. The function, then, of true religion is to facilitate the transformation into the Kingdom. Here is the true revelation of God in human history. What remains is to say something as to how this movement occurs.

While seeing Jesus and the Kingdom of God as the theoretical components of true religion, King proffers two practical elements through his emphasis on moral character and prophetic consciousness. These two features stand as the visible expression of true religion. Drawing on his distinction between internal and external religion, King looks to personal, inner transformation as one of the main characteristics of what true religion accomplishes. If we are to become like Jesus and live the Kingdom then the kinds of persons we are, the lives that we lead serve as the evidence for the transformation King seeks. This focus on moral character expresses the deeper meaning and the spiritual significance that King associates with true

religion in contrast with the external, institutional forms of religion. Following Jesus implies, for King, a self-transformation that the individual undergoes in meeting the challenge that Jesus' life represents to those who claim to follow him. Discipleship requires an examination of the qualities that we employ to define our moral lives. If these qualities conflict with the agapaic presence of Jesus then we must recognize the fundamental need to change who we are. King's point here is not to establish a superficial perfectionism; rather, he presents discipleship as a both a process and a goal, a means as well as an end. It is not something that we fully attain as King's own life shows. Yet we can not follow Jesus without making the effort in what King calls "the cultivation of virtue" (285).

It is perhaps delicately ironic that King should focus on moral character as a central aspect of true religion given Crozer's Field Work Department's assessment of his work. While generally positive, the evaluation comments on King's "attitude of aloofness, disdain, and possible snobbishness which prevent his coming to close grips with the rank and file of ordinary people. Also a smugness that refuses to adapt itself to the demands of ministering effectively to the average Negro congregation" (381). Possibly a consequence of King's attempt to distance himself from the emotionalism of his own experience of church and to establish himself as more scientific and academic, these words represent only one facet of the dialectic that King constructs. He clearly wants to be academically credible; hence what may seem aloofness. Yet King also writes of "an inner urge calling me to serve humanity" (363), which demands another approach more conducive to personal relationships and connections that the emphasis on moral character makes possible.

For King, character is how true religion molds and defines the individual through the realization that God's presence and the experience of that presence work to "produce internal change" (187). Moral transformation is the direct evidence of the experience of God as the individual rethinks and reshapes his or her life in light of that experience. King examines this change through his distinction between internal and external. Since the internal referent is more important for King, he places character in the context of inner change where the individual personally appropriates the law of God. In his paper on Jeremiah, King writes that "the law written on the heart will become an inseparable part of man's moral being" (185), implying a "complete trust and harmony with God" (191). This inner law and personal change does have a specific content for King, not any sort of change or interpretation of God's law will suffice. The combination of virtue and King's emphasis on Jesus both animates and validates the union with God. Again the ethical rather than the doctrinal dominates King's analysis. King's paper "The Ethics of Late Judaism as Evidenced in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs" (195-209) offers a compendium of virtues that he associates with moral character such as love, temperance, simplicity, compassion, and forgiveness. Each revolves around "a conscious will to self-discipline" (202) and "a desire for high ethical character" (203). The personal nature of King's understanding of the experience of God necessitates a personal, moral change in the life of the believer through the acquisition of virtues or qualities that King associates with the nature of God. King's comment in the Jeremiah paper puts the matter clearly, "all this states one central truth, the inwardness of true religion" (185). Yet the inwardness is not without a normative measure. If Jesus reveals God's character (247,287) then Jesus also becomes the norm for any claim of moral transformation. For King, the second coming refers to the moral present of following Jesus' demands rather than any future, eschatological event as such. Moral character conforms to Jesus so that "we are celebrating the Second

Advent every time we open our hearts to Jesus, every time we turn our backs to the low road and accept the high road, every time we say no to self that we may say yes to Jesus Christ, every time a man or woman turns from ugliness to beauty and is able to forgive even their enemies” (269). For King, Jesus pushes moral character into its true calling, the prophetic challenge to a world too often shaped by violence and injustice. The prophetic call to re-imagine the world as existing within the boundaries of the Kingdom of God grounds the practical dimension of King’s vision of true religion and provides the relevance for faith in the modern age.

Although accepting the scientific worldview with its critique and even correction of religious doctrines, King cannot let science supplant religion. Religion, for King, is “an experience of value” that upholds a “faith in the friendliness of the universe” (409). The prophetic challenge arises from God’s “objective validity” (356) that the reality of Jesus and the Kingdom express. The moral and religious task is to live out this validity in the world. King’s paper on Jeremiah offers, again, a clue as to how he understands this task. King locates Jeremiah’s significance in the prophet’s “inner experiences” of God and his “deep love for his own people” (182). Possibly as a precursor to King’s own sense of the coming time for civil rights, these factors combine with Jeremiah’s presence in “a time which was ripe for a mighty appeal to the masses and to take advantage of a new spirit of the time that had taken hold of Judah” (181-182) to offer the message of “complete trust and harmony with God” (191). God is so present for Jeremiah that, in King’s view, “the prophet had literally nothing left but God” (190). This nothing, however, contains the seeds of the demise of national religion and projects the rise of religion as a focal point for social critique. This insight guides King’s belief that true religion always represents a prophetic challenge to a world that survives on the margins of the Kingdom of God. King’s basic point stands clearly expressed. “Again Jeremiah is a shining example of the truth that religion should never sanction the status quo. This more than anything else should be inculcated into the minds of modern religionists, for the worst disservice that we as individuals or churches can do to Christianity is to become sponsors and supporters of the status quo” (194). One consequence of King’s prophetic vision and its critical function is his comment from 1951 that “capitalism has outlived its usefulness” in that “it has failed to meet the needs of the masses” (436). While perhaps naïve in asserting capitalism’s decline, King’s main concern is to show how religion becomes true religion by remembering that the prophetic critique of the status quo offers the hope of living in the Kingdom of God.

The years 1944-1951 find King grappling with the meaning of religion in the modern age. From his own temperament and intellectual development, King seeks a way to reconcile science and reason with the essential truths of Christianity by emphasizing the moral and transformative nature of Christian beliefs, which he regards as more significant than doctrinal statements. King’s configuration of true religion delves beneath what he sees as the surface level of institutional religion to focus on the personal and experiential presence of God. Yet this presence also has a structure; it is not just a matter of individual expression. The Kingdom of God, Jesus, and the prophetic vision guide King’s image of true religion and, especially, its ethical dimension. At its heart, true religion contains both a personal and social critique that will eventually evolve into King’s theory of nonviolent social change.

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Cinematic Soul

By Tom O'Connor

(after the song lyrics of Barry Adamson & Barry White)

We broke into a march: misery & woe.
Like Barry says: just hopeless imitations
of the ones we most resembled.

*Deceived in the valley of dolls.
Did ya believe in the valley, doll?
Behind closed*

doors, eyes of the world
became my wallpaper
in a Cineplex of my own.

It screens matinees, main attractions, late shows,
the lot. Brigitte Bardot, even François Truffaut.
The monkey wakes and shuts its eyes.

Stuck at dysfunction junction, we sucked
on its backbone up, up to its mind.
Everyone but you & I on pedestal shoes.

Oh that monkey's bustin' mine and screamin'!
My head won't keep still. Like a lonely sun nailed
on a kitchen wall: can't you see?

It's like watchin' lilies flower while your hands are tied.
Cursing everyone, I saw the hands were
mine. Déjà voodoo.

You've been hangin' 'round
like a question mark. Let's go then:
you and I.

The monkey keeps bustin' mine and screamin'!

Let's leave this double bed—that smells of damp towels,
asthma inhalers.

The sleeping doll shuts her eyes.

We'll never walk with a king, a son,
and a whole damn ministry.

There's a bad dream creepin' in our scene.

Did ya freeze in the valley, doll?

Searching for the valley of dolls.

Silver screens can stop their flickering...

Sing: take my freaky hand.

We'll let the monkey out of the bag.

Nietzsche's Mother

By Tom O'Connor

My son wishes brimstone on every priest. Behind
his eyes: insanity pulses. Sleepless, he

can't afford the best treatment. I save him
from the Jena asylum. Home in Naumberg,

he throws out food by name—German, English,
God forbid Irish: *potatoes are the path to liquor,*

rice to opium. Squinting eyes condemn coffee's dark
habit, hell-worthy painkillers, even pure mountain water.

He proclaims he's Christ himself. All storm fronts
must agree before we step outdoors for an hour-walk

beneath cloudless skies. He breathes the humidity-free
air, stares ahead with blurry eyes. He thinks clearly

to preach only at the piano, holding my hand in his
against his chest for hours. His eyes dart, his next

thought untraceable. Again, quiet hands reach
for mine as if I had the touch of Jesus.

Picasso's Checks

By Tom O'Connor

through the door frame to square city grass

*

walks this man made of wire whose heavy companion rises

*

from the park path like an unsatisfied ex-lover—

*

she eclipses the evaporating petals a fountain's wet sprouting stone

*

as bare tree limbs misbehave like children swinging their arms

*

above the man gone wrong his razor's verge—

*

her lips hang like a framed check on a cafe wall

Houdini

By Tom O'Connor

My
many lives
 transform me to an actor. They fake
 well my trade's fable, sway
 every crowd with unthinkable tricks.

I
sink inside
 a packing crate in New York bay. Stitched
 inside: the key of her kiss.
 I unlock the chain, slowly surface...

and
sweat ion-
 ized air each time I bear their distress
 on the stage; I smile, bless
 them. Our doubt will drown in water.

Child-
ren quiet.
 Each time I kiss my wife good-bye, her
 tongue offers the key, sure
 to hide it from those eyeing lenses.

None
can sit down
 as I drown, motionless. They purchase
 suspense, sweating to sense
 their chains, their anchors becoming rust.

No
hunting bow's
 black arrow, no matador's thrust
 piercing the aorta's rush,

no 300-foot-deep free dive,
dares my impossible rise.

Generative Art: Music Generation, Digital Art Production and *Nebula*.

By Russell Richards

Abstract

This paper is concerned with exploring the concept of generative art. The purpose of this approach is to uncover methods of analysis that foreground digital art as a discrete mode of production as opposed to an adjunct of other art forms. This aspiration operates both at the level of art production itself and also at the level of critique. I make no apologies for using my own work as a series of examples to justify why digital art is a discrete mode of production. I had already begun some tentative steps in the field of digital art before I came across Brian Eno's analysis of generative music. I have widened the scope of analysis to draw upon my analysis of modes of interactivity. I argue that there is little point in either critiquing digital art as a 'noughts and ones' version of other art forms nor should a digital artist have to see their practice in those terms. Let us revel in the variety of creative forms, the range of treatments and the wonders of happenstance made possible through digital technologies. For me this means finding great pleasure in creating beautiful art while teasing away at the contradictions imposed upon this vibrant mode of production. This is not about emulating existing artistic styles but about investigating the myriad of different forms made possible by 'the digital.'

Introduction

Of course it is possible to find antecedents. Indeed, a small industry has developed, seeking to place 'the digital' simply as an adjunct to previous modes of cultural production. This is appealing because it means that we have to do no more than extend an existing field of analysis to include the digital. This can be promoted as a cost-effective and efficient way of dealing with what is a many-headed and dynamic phenomenon. An example of this approach will be briefly explored below to exemplify the field.

During the ten years that I have been tracking these attempts at academic hegemony I have become more and more convinced that ‘the digital’ is qualitatively (not to say quantitatively) different from other domains. A not so hidden sub-text of a number of my previous papers has been to attempt to map out why the digital is different. I have sought to ‘update’ Raymond Williams’ analysis of communication and control to include ‘the digital’ (Richards, 1998). I have examined the use of advanced 3D technologies in teaching and learning environments (Richards, 2001). I have written on digital aesthetics going back into the production processes of digital packages (Richards, forthcoming (a)). More recently I have attempted to redefine the methods of analyses as applied to the concept of interactivity (Richards, forthcoming (b)). All these examinations can be seen as mapping exercises in the area of the digital. Indeed, they are all asserting that there is an area there to examine. And generative art has a place in that area.

In addition to these academic examinations I have engaged ‘the digital’ in general and generative art in particular as a practitioner. I have used web site architecture to examine a specific concept, namely ‘memory’. I have used Newtek’s *Lightwave* to create 3D *Moire* objects. I have created a music generator: *DiskO*. More on this below. I have printed a 1m by 2m digital print of a recursively-reproduced image. I have developed a digital art creation application: *Covertor*. And more recently I have created *Nebula*. These excursions have taken me into a variety of realms from installation, to print, to on-line, to off-line, to pre-built, user-effected and user-generated art works. Furthermore, I have sought to examine specific issues that are pertinent in the digital domain. For example, the web used for explication of a concept not just representation and commercial exploitation; the simulation of a music machine rather than the emulation of a *Technics* deck; the creation of an application that can enable users to create their own digital art whilst at the same time carrying on with their daily tasks and most recently with *Nebula*: a critique of the ‘all content now’ imperative of the web, exemplified by the ‘skip intro’ convention. However, I have not until now sought to publish my thoughts on digital art in general and generative art in particular. It is now time to attempt to offer a perspective.

Music Generation and much more

Brian Eno, in a talk delivered to the ‘Imagination Conference’ in San Francisco, on 8th June 1996, examined the components of Generative music (Eno: 1996). His analysis in fact went far beyond music to include artificial life, screensaver art, architecture and the use of metaphor in art. The theme running through his talk was that of the inputting of simple rules/content into some form of responsive architecture enabling complex multi-layered output. What is refreshing about Eno’s analysis is that he plies a path through both the technical rigours of the digital and the prescribed conventions of music, art and architecture (to name but three). He conveys an enthusiasm for the generation made possible by the digital in terms of the alternatives it can offer us as users: ‘I realised that for me this was the future of computers. Computers seen not as ways of crunching huge quantities of data or storing enormous ready-made forests of material, but [that] computers are a way of growing little seeds.’(Eno: 1996) Eno identifies a shift here from computers offering pre-determined content to a user, to being able to offer facilities for generation.

I had come to the same conclusion from a different direction through my analysis of the concept of interactivity. I have extended the concept of ‘positioning’ explored by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu: 1993, 1998). I argue that interactivity should be assessed in terms of ‘the positioning of user’s in relation to the creation of content’. The implications of this approach are profound because it means that we can analyse ‘the digital’ through the experiences of users, not just at the level of usability but also ‘producability’. In this way we can move from a functional analysis of ‘task completion’ to a dynamic analysis of the variety of ways that digital packages facilitate various forms of generation. I have identified three modes that build each on the next i.e.

1. Consumer Interactivity – where the user is conventionally positioned in a reception mode with regards to the creation of the content i.e. a book’s contents cannot be changed by a user as a facility offered by the book (of course there are various attempts to actually offer this). However, all books, indeed all texts (following Fiske’s analysis of ‘inter-textuality’ (Fiske, 1987) interact in our heads, enabling the generation of new ideas/emotions etc.
2. Processor Interactivity – where the user is positioned so as to be able to process the content available but not fundamentally change it. An example being the early versions of amazon.com. Filters, search engines and agents such as EPG (electronic programme guide) offer processing opportunities to the user where they can input their preferences and generate an edited selection of content.
3. Generator Interactivity – where the user is positioned as the creator of content within a system. An example being later versions of Amazon.com where the user can contribute a variety of different forms of content into an environment.ⁱ

This analysis enables a number of fruitful investigations to take place.ⁱⁱ At a general level we can see that the forms of control that a user has over the generation of content change depending upon the facilities on offer and specifically how they are positioned by/through the environment. We do not have to get side-tracked over how many buttons can be hit or otherwise. Nor do we have to get caught up in attempting to list different forms of interactivity as new media are developed. More specifically, in the case of generative art we can examine what is being generated and to what extent that generation is in the control of the user. Eno offers examples of generative music in each of the modes i.e.

1. *It’s Gonna Rain* by Steve Reich. Two audio loops of a preacher slowly going out of sync over a 17-minute period. Simply a piece of music.
2. *Stained Glass* by Gene Tantra. Screensaver art that can be processed by the user using the screensaver utilities.
3. *Unnamed Generative Musical System* by the Sseyo group. A music composing application, controlled by the user, that once started will create an infinite variety of melodies, rhythms and harmonies.

This short talk by Eno has had a lasting effect on my thinking about digital art in general and specifically generative art. However, it was not in Eno's remit to define what generative music was/is, rather to make people aware of some of its components. It is clear to me that it is time to develop a definition of digital art as a separate domain within which generative art/music resides. Why is this so important? The lack of discrete definition has encouraged the development of methods of analysis that have been simply extended out into the digital from other domains. The classic analysis of this type is Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media*. Manovich sees Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera (1928)* as a database of techniques that can be used to define the digital. This might offer something at the level of an academic exercise, but this inter-linking of a movie with the dynamic of the digital is formalism taken to new depths. Yet these attempts at reductionism are, of course, tempting. They make life easy. They place the can of wriggling worms that is the digital back in the same cupboard as everything else.

Digital Art Production

It is interesting to compare this psychological need for difference to be described in existing frameworks with A. Michael Noll's description of early experiments in digital art back in the 1960s (Noll, 1995). Noll actively sought to reproduce Mondrian-style and Bridget Riley-style digital art works. This may in part be because he was trying to justify his research to his paymasters at Bell Laboratories. Again we can see that there are a wide range of pressures to prescribe new art forms with conventional art techniques and in Noll's case he had internalised that process. However, he quickly moved on from the emulation of other art works to create a wide range of digital art. Indeed, it can be argued (as Noll does) that he created the forerunner of virtual reality as a usable device. Noll was able to move on from the encumbrances of pre-existing domains and create digital art that was unprecedented. In fact, art that was unprecedented. A good proportion of this artwork was generative in the sense that small algorithms were employed to create it. Indeed, Noll had to cross swords with the Copyright Office at the Library of Congress in the US when he tried to copyright *Gaussian Quadratic*, a computer generated print. They initially refused to register it because 'a machine had generated the work' (Noll, 1995). When Noll countered that he had written a program that generated the artwork from a mix of randomness and order, the Copyright Office again refused him. This time on the grounds that he was not the author if the art form was randomly produced! Finally Noll managed to convince the Office by assuring them that, while the program appeared to act randomly 'the algorithm generating [the numbers] was perfectly mathematical and not random at all' (Noll, 1995). Noll alleges that *Gaussian Quadratic 1962* was 'the first registered piece of copyrighted art produced with a digital computer' (Noll, 1995).

It is fascinating, 40 years on, for me to examine the trials and tribulations that Noll had gone through. In so many ways the experience of a digital artist today is qualitatively different from those early days, not least in the sense that I can go anywhere with my digital creation soft/hardware. Yet, for example, the issue of emulation is still to the fore. I have produced digital art works that can be described as *Futurist*, *Bridget Rileyesque*, *Pointillist*, *Pop Artesque*, *Turneresque*, *Russian Constructivist* and so on. In none of

these instances was I endeavouring to create artwork in that style. So do I play that game and deliberately create/promote work in pre-existing styles to appeal to these conservative tendencies? Answer: No. I can honestly say that I find an increased enthusiasm for the original works of art as I create, often through happenstance, similar pieces of work. This is particularly the case with my latest work *Nebula* detailed below. For me the apt word here is ‘treatment.’ Computers enable a myriad number of treatments to be applied both to the medium and to the message. Representation, emulation, simulation are all possible, as is *innovation*.ⁱⁱⁱ The best way into my understanding about at least the issue of emulation can be illustrated by the development of my *DiskO Music Generator* (2003) fig. 1

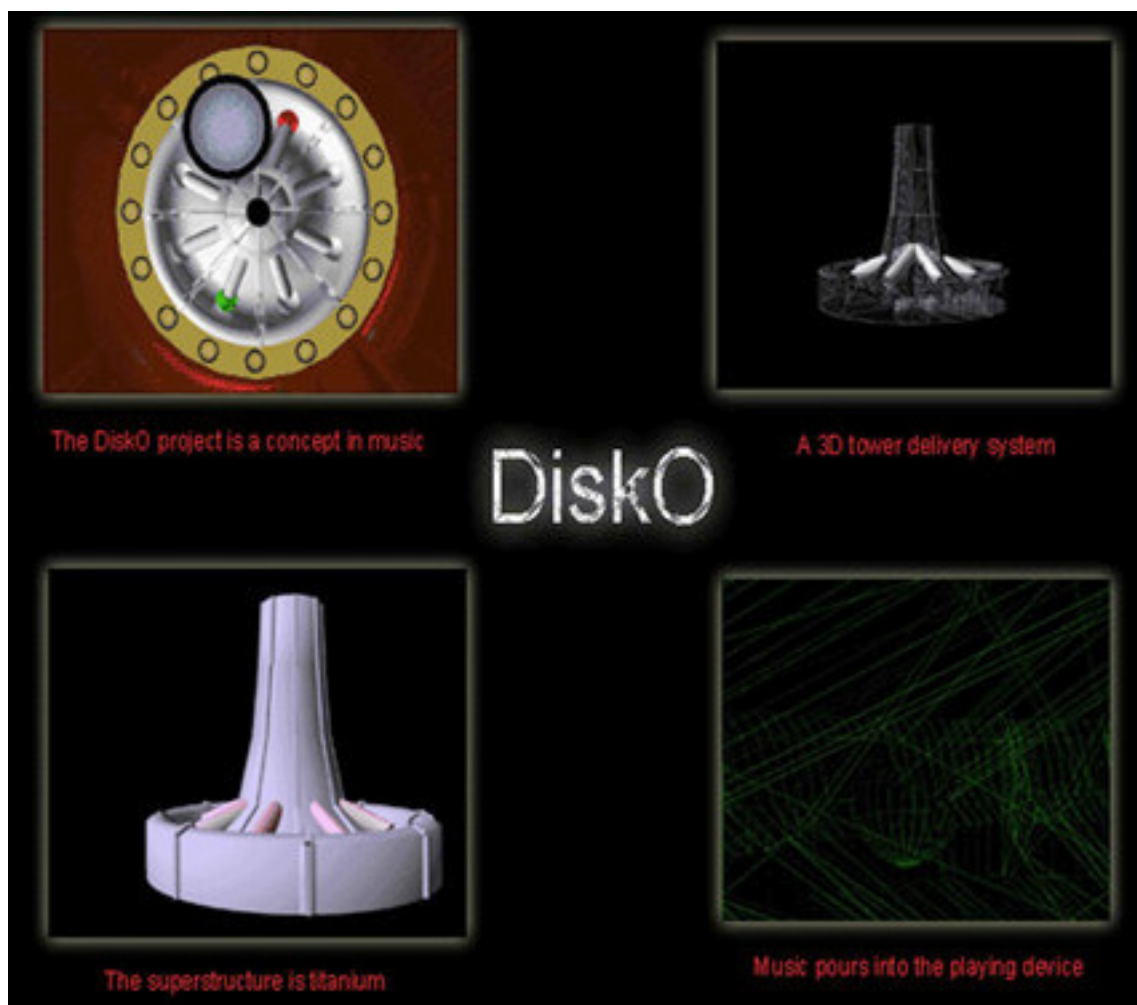


Fig.1 *DiskO Music Generator* (2003)

From mid 2002 to the early part of 2003 I had been building an emulation of a *Technics* deck (in fact three of them!) with the view to create a sample playing application that would make new music. This was designed with the three modes of interactivity in mind i.e. the initial version was automatic in its sample choice. This was quickly followed by a version that had 16 samples that the user could choose from to

create a multi-track and unique ‘song’. This output could be recorded and replayed. It was also envisaged that mates could e-mail each other their creations to swap and share. In addition to this processor level version, I also created a version that could import 16 samples of the user’s own making/acquiring thus the user could create, in both senses the track both in raw materials and in final outcome. This process seemed to be going along swimmingly until I suffered a moment of crisis. I suddenly became aware of the contradiction of emulation. Namely, that no matter how much I made *DiskO* ‘the same as’ a commercial deck, it would never be as much fun to use.^{iv} More importantly, in terms of my personal development, I decided that I needed to concentrate on creating and innovating in the digital domain rather than the unsatisfying mechanics of emulation. I decided to create a music generating application based on orbs filled with liquid music. I also utilised the z-coordinate to give the impression that these orbs were flying up and at the viewer. The whole thing was rendered in a bit-mappy way that referenced video games. And further, I created a myth to go with the *DiskO* i.e. that it actually existed and was the size of a house (see *DiskO* promotional material above, fig. 1). *DiskO* was premiered in July 2003 at the summer open exhibition aptly entitled ‘Disco’ in the Anthony Minghella Theatre, Quay Arts Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight, UK. It was projected on a three metre by three-metre screen with the samples playing through the house PA. And it rocked! The exhibited version was configured to create a three-minute ‘radio-edit’ then reset. As with Noll’s experience above I could not copyright what it played because it never played the same thing twice. Indeed, I found myself coming back to the theatre again and again so that I could hear/see it performing. It seems quite natural to compare this feeling of pleasure in having created something and set it free with being a parent. Yes that is sentimental but how else to describe the feelings of displaced authorship? Apart from being an ideological break from emulation, *DiskO* was also my homage to Brian Eno’s sentiments as expressed in his talk with specific regard to generative music.

Since then I have been engaged in a number of projects that have sought to challenge other conventions/expectations regarding digital art production. The two most significant are my *Covertor* and my *Nebula*.

The *Covertor* project came from my experiences with *Macromedia Director* and specifically I became intrigued by the notion of creating an application that ‘animated in the background’^v. From this facility I developed the concept of the *Covertor*. I reasoned that I could create an application that a user would have running behind their usual work- a-day applications like *Microsoft Word* or *Lotus Notes*. As they went about their duties the *Covertor* would track the mouse position and create a digital work. In the space of three weeks I produced in 27 iterations of the *Covertor*. A still from *Covertor_19* is reproduced below: fig 2. The *Covertor* project gave me a chance to examine the relationship that users have with their screens and encourage opportunities to be more than simply procedural with their computers. The added bonus here was that as they performed functions these movements were transformed into a creative and complementary act. The *Covertor* is shortly to be premiered on Hirdazone.com an on-line research hub for digital arts (Richards, forthcoming (c)). Here the project is not about simulation, emulation or representation but, if you’ll beg my pardon, ‘*conversion*’ of functional activity into creative activity. It is perhaps in the arena of arts installation that the practice of *conversion* has been most prevalent. However, this has often been simply at the level of a radar switch being triggered when entering the installation. I have decided to build a gallery-based version of the *Covertor* so as to examine how movements of the visitors to a gallery space



Fig 2. *Covertor_19* (2003)

can be ‘coverted’ into the digital art that they will then experience. As with previous work I have the dual aim of producing a pleasurable experience while at the same time illustrating in what ways digital art production can be qualitatively different from other art forms. Part of this process is also to build up the courage of my convictions. To this end, in concert with Graham Coulter-Smith, a Research Professor at Southampton Institute, I assert that I am engaging in *Digital Painting* as opposed to any other definition. Furthermore, this is often a generative experience with the digital paintings themselves dependent upon the users’ predilections.

Nebula

This brings us to *Nebula*. The eponymous art work that I started two weeks before receiving a listserv via Screen-L from this journal. (Takes positive synchronicity to a new level). Whereas the works detailed above operate in the fields of music and art generation the *modus operandi* for *Nebula* was that of an investigation into AI (artificial intelligence) and complexity theory. I have been investigating information visualisation (which can have an AI component) and complexity theory as part of my PhD research at the LSE (London School of Economics). However, I had previously done very little in either area with regard to digital art production. A paper by Paul Galanter entitled *What is Generative Art? Complexity Theory as a Context for Art Theory* (Galanter, 2003) provided a starting point for reflection on generative art from a

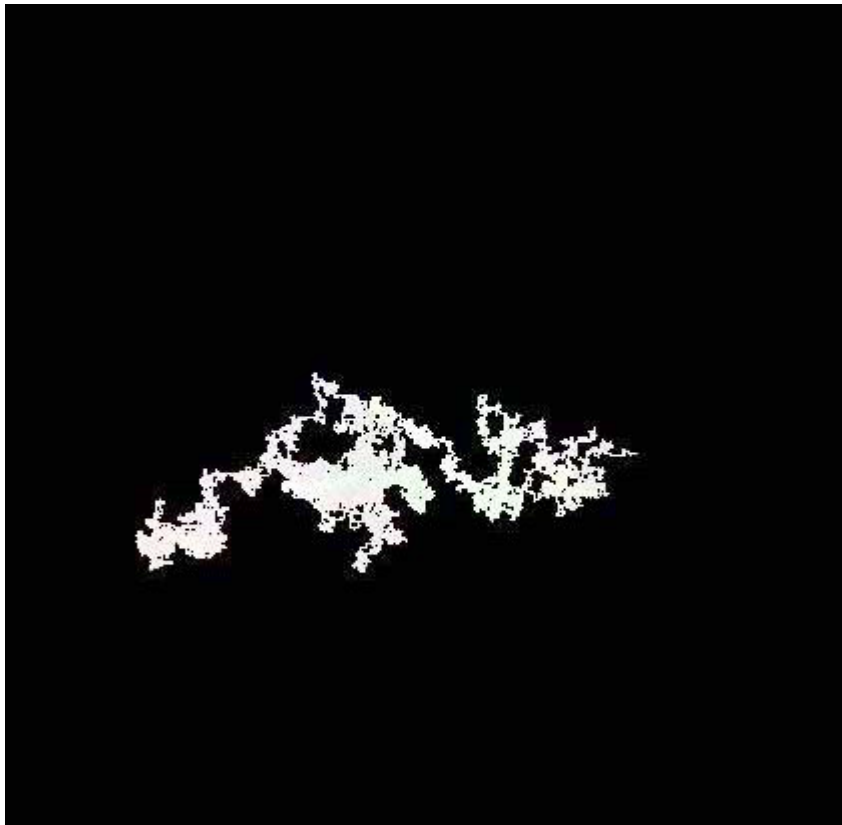
more scientific direction. Whereas Eno's description on John Conway's *Life* focused on the beauty of the resulting output from simple rules, Galanter's approach is to talk from the code up (and from art movements down)^{vi}. He writes of an optimum degree of complexity being required for a pleasing result between total order and complete randomness: 'effective complexity'. This seems plausible but then at this level of abstraction a mid-position is always to be preferred and is reminiscent of Aristotle's approach to questions of degree as stated in *The Ethics*. Of greater concern is Galanter's definition of generative art:

Generative art refers to any art practice where the artist uses a system, such as a set of natural language rules, a computer programme, a machine or other procedural invention, which is *set in motion with some degree of autonomy* contributing to or resulting in a *completed* work of art.

(Galanter, 2003)(Emphasis added)

The strength of this definition seems to be that it is inclusive, not just screen-based. However, the result is that prehistoric cave art that is 'systematic' and abstract falls, according to Galanter, under this definition. Yet it is unclear how such artwork can be described as 'setting in motion some degree of autonomy'. This can only be the case if, at the level of the communication of abstract ideas, painted systems on a cave are effective. But if this is the case then Galanter's stricture that any definition of 'generative art' must be 'restrictive enough that not all art is generative' (Galanter, 2003) has been under mind. From my perspective, Galanter is trying to incorporate 'intertextuality' (not by name) but limit it to only the (generative) texts he wants to include. Both a realistic and a schematic depiction of a horse will resonate with a pre-historic cave-person's experiences of real horses. Of further concern is Galanter's conviction that there should be a resulting *completed* work of art. This works for Reich's *Its Gonna Rain* and Noll's *Gaussian Quadratic* but what about screensaver art or my *DiskO* or *Covertor* in what sense are those applications complete? And further, Galanter is silent on users as generators of their own artwork or seeing artists as the creators of applications that could facilitate such generation. All in all Galanter provides me with a number of null hypotheses to work with regarding generative art.

Nebula came out of an attempt to manipulate individual pixels to create digital paintings. I had been stimulated to do this from observing Lisa Jevbrett's work using individual pixels to link out to web sites (Jevbrett, L., 1999). I decided to operate at an even simpler level than Conway and just get a pixel moving across the screen by using a randomiser to move one pixel at a time up/down/left/right continuously at 999 frames a second. I then added some randomised ink effects and the resulting digital painting is shown in fig. 3.

Fig. 3 *version 2*

I continued to add effects, more pixels and collision detection so that the pixels did not leave the area. Then I had my moment of intuition. I suddenly thought that I could use a low opacity level on the pixels ‘just to see what happens’. The result was a *Nebula*. Now exactly one month later there are over 50 distinct iterations of *Nebula*. In some cases, it takes over an hour for anything much to appear on the screen. In other cases large blood- red globules pulsate about. In all cases *Nebula* eloquently critiques the notion that on-the- web content must be delivered spontaneously (exemplified by ‘skip intro’). Obviously I have not had much time to examine the deeper implications of *Nebula*, but it is clear to me that it is an interesting area for further research and gives a different perspective on the notion of a digital painting: a different treatment. But note that I am living with the contradiction that I have called these objects *Nebula* but I do not see them as *emulations* of space-based nebula. Of far more interest is that so few protocols can produce such a variety of effects and such depth of field and beauty. This is a good example of complexity being the outcome of simple components as championed by Eno. These experiences have given me encouragement to look further into AI and digital art generation.



Fig 4 *Nebula_crbcw31*

Conclusion

In the three projects, *DiskO*, *Covertor* and *Nebula*, I have been able to develop digital art works that explore and critique a variety of conventions within ‘the digital’. These works challenge emulation, functionality, and content delivery but not by external referencing to films or other art forms. These investigations show that it is possible to both create and critique within the digital domain in its own terms. There is a continuing need for such investigations if the digital is to be acknowledged as a domain in its own right.

I would like to conclude this paper by quoting Michel Foucault who is here railing against formalism and arguing for a re-invigoration of art through the manipulation of the image. Here he is conceiving of a new space for production by critiquing hegemonic art forms and art criticism. This quote is a call that digital artists can respond to:

How can we recover the games of the past? How can we relearn, not just to decipher or to appropriate the images imposed on us, but to create new images of every kind? Not just other films or better photographs, not simply to rediscover the figurative in painting, but to put images into circulation, to convey them, disguise them, deform them, heat them red hot, freeze them, multiply them. To banish the boredom of Writing, to suspend the privileges of the signifier, give notice to the formalism of the non-image, to unfreeze content, and to play, scientifically and pleurably, in, with and against the powers of the image. (Foucault, 1999)

Glossary^{vii}

Concept of Interactivity. Many scholars in a variety of domains have attempted to define interactivity. I have come to the conclusion that ‘the position of the user in relation to the creation of content’ provides a way of analysing interactivity without resorting to stimulus-response models (the activity of interactivity) or listing of features (the properties of interactivity). From this perspective, users can be positioned as consumers, processors and generators of content in, and through, interactive environments.

Concept of Positioning. Pierre Bourdieu applied the term ‘positioning’ when analysing the variety of different perspectives 18th Century French novelists were adopting in their writings. The same author could have a class-originated position, a position on a specific issue and a disposition for further perspectives and all of which could be in tension. I have adapted ‘positioning’ to the concept of interactivity (see previous entry).

Covertor/Coversion. The concept of the *Covertor* can be summarised as a device that transforms the user’s functional operations with and through an interface into some form of creative output. The term *coversion* can be added to emulation, simulation and representation as a possible configuration for a digital application, i.e. the user’s actions are ‘coverted’ from one frame of reference to another.

Emulation. This is the process by which a (in this case) digital application is created to perform as if it was the same as an off-screen device.

Technics Deck. The accepted system of choice for DJs. Two record decks enabling the mixing, fading and scratching of records. Used in Rap, House, Dance, Electronica and Techno music forms.

Multi-Layered Output. The outcome of mixing a variety of elements in (in this case) a digital application. These elements can be very simple in construction. It is their placement within a dynamic architecture that can create extremely complex output. *Nebula* is an example of this: individual pixels creating complex gas clouds.

Complexity Theory. The theory that starts from the premise that simple actions can, in the right architecture, develop an intricate variety of output. This can be represented by the ‘butterfly effect’: a butterfly flapping its wings on one side of the planet can be the (alleged) root cause of a hurricane on the other side of the world.

Endnotes

ⁱ The summary is explained in close detail in a forthcoming article of *New Media and Society Journal*, (Richards, forthcoming (b))

ⁱⁱ Note that it is not my intention to claim that one form of interactivity is better than another, nor that there is a continuum from one end of a spectrum to another. Rather that the forms of generation are qualitatively different.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Margot Lovejoy's book (Lovejoy, 2004) for a detailed examination of the various modes/motivations of/for digital art production.

^{iv} I became aware of this when one of my teenage relations demoed the *DiskO*. He wanted to throw my little platter icons off the decks once he had finished with them – a quite natural requirement. However, the way the code was configured made this natural process completely impossible.

^v Upon recently rereading Eno's talk I noticed that he had referred to being able to have a music creation application 'making music in the background' as you use the computer as a word processor (Eno, 1996).

^{vi} John Conway's *Life* is built around the following rules:

1. Divide an area into squares
2. A square can be alive or dead
3. A live square with only one or zero neighbours will die
4. A square with two neighbours will live
5. A square with three neighbours will come alive if it is not already
6. A square with four neighbours will die.

(Eno, 1996)

Very simple rules but the result can be extremely subtle patterns.

^{vii} Please note that several of the terms are highly contested and that what is being offered here is what they are intended to signify in this article.

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History as Moral Commentary: Ideology and the Ethical Responsibilities of Remembrance.ⁱ

By Courtney Thomas

Abstract.

Many theorists and historians have advocated an ethical turn in scholarship within the recent past. The idea of the moral responsibilities of a historian extends back to scholars of the ancient world and early Christian writers but, until recently, had been minimized in favor of Enlightenment ideals concerning the existence of objective truth. Following upon the exposure of epistemological fragilities by many academics in the mid-twentieth century, the ethical turn has argued for a return to the attitude of the moral purposes of the historian. Academics espousing these views have asserted the existence of moral and ideological underpinnings in all historiographical works and have argued the benefits of scholars, openly acknowledging this aspect of their work. This paper seeks to investigate this recent trend among historians and suggests that, in spite of the persuasive arguments for the adoption of this methodological stance, there are aspects to it that are problematic and must be addressed. I will achieve this through an analysis of recent works that offer prominent examples of the “ethical turn,” and also through the work of a contemporary moral philosopher. My intention is to both examine this important direction in historiographical theorizing and to point to areas that demand more attentive examinations on the part of historians. It is hoped that this will encourage heightened awareness on the part of academics.

Within the recent past a certain trend in historiographical theorizing has emerged, one that is concerned with the ethical purposes of the historian and the ideological nature of historical texts. While this turn in the historical discipline has been recognized and analyzed by many academics, many of whom have described it as a new phenomenon, it can be argued that, in many ways, history’s ethical face is not a new development, but a much older tradition that extends back to the ancient world and to many early Christian writers. The ethics of the historian and the moral purposes of their works played a prominent role in the writings of Herodotus, Thucydides and other ancient historians and, likewise, many early modern English writers of historical texts urged the moral uses of historical study.¹ Nancy F. Partner has alluded to this feature of the ethical turn in relation to ancient texts in an essay from *A New Philosophy of History*, where

she entitles one of her text headings: “Is There Anything New Here? Ancient Prototypes and Modern Practices.” Likewise, the ethical turn is also prominent in the writings of religious writers.² Augustine’s sermons represent powerful examples of the moral underpinnings of historical accounts, all the more so because they are self-consciously composed within a visible ideological framework. The ethical concerns that feature in these texts are directed towards the exhalation of God and the certainty of a final judgment and eventual end. In this sense, “the goal of history is beyond history.”³

Despite the earlier widespread recognition of the ethical nature of historical work, scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries actively engaged in attempts to mould history into a formal discipline by aligning it with positivist methods, which had gained prominence through their use in the natural sciences. This shift in attitudes concerning methodology and epistemology resulted in the loss of the previously acknowledged ideological underpinnings of history. The conception of history has thus undergone a “translation from a moral to a social science.”⁴ At the close of the twentieth century, however, these ideas emerged again full force, due to the efforts of influential theorists who sought an “ethical turn in historiographical theorizing,”⁵ believing in “how thoroughly ethical the project of studying the past is, and how disabling has been its banishment from the waking life of working historians.”⁶ This new avocation of the ethical aspects of historical enquiry operates on the premise that all historical works, whether they are consciously structured so by their authors or not, possess ideological underpinnings. The ethical turn calls for a conscious and willing acknowledgement of this theme by historians, much as the linguistic turn sought an open awareness of the primary importance of language as a matrix that structures reality. This idea of histories being prefigured by ethical concerns is discussed most strikingly by Hayden White in his work *Metahistory*.⁷

This paper serves primarily as a historiographical review of some potent theorizing on this topic. As such it does not claim to be exhaustive. A great deal of critical discussion on the ideological and ethical nature of history has been generated in the recent past (when historians and theorists began to seriously question the traditionalist view of scholarship that stressed its value-free nature and its ability to discover “truth”) and a thorough discussion of all of these texts would be more appropriate for a book than an essay. Thus, only a few examples of this trend will be considered here, ones that have been selected as representative of wider issues. Likewise, one of the aims of this paper is to survey a wide range of works dealing with the theme of ethics in historical scholarship. The works of moral philosophers will be considered alongside those of historians. The breadth of schools of historical analysis being considered is also wide, ranging from works that are based heavily on post-structuralist ideas and literary criticism to those that adhere to a more traditional style of empirically based analysis. At this juncture it is necessary to state that the terms ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ have distinct and separate meanings. Morality can be viewed as a generalized code of conduct that guides an individual through daily life. Alternately, ethics represent a more formalized system of conduct. It is a systematized set of codified moral ideas that apply to specific situations. Many, especially those interested primarily in moral theory and not the practical application of ethics, conflate these two terms. As this paper is concerned with theory-driven positions concerning ethics and morality, I will likewise use the two interchangeably.

Theorists in the area of the ethical turn have stressed the importance of ethical considerations among historians, but have argued that these concerns have often been subordinated and not acknowledged by working practitioners within their texts. Moral beliefs have always permeated scholarship but have been denied by many historians because they challenge, if not utterly destroy, the epistemologic claims of the author. One has a sense of the “repressed moral dimension of historical inquiry.”⁸ In the interests of investigating this claim, an examination of Carlo Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms* will also be offered here. This is because Ginzburg’s ethical purposes are clearly evident in this text (as Dominick LaCapra has demonstrated), but are not investigated by Ginzburg himself, who maintained a vision of his work as value-free and epistemologically sound.

The ethical turn in historical scholarship has emerged primarily in response to the epistemologic debates that have shaped the discipline for the last forty years. The debate over the presence of “truth” and objectivity in historical scholarship has prompted many to arrive at a position where they recognize the impossibility of truthful representations of the past and have begun to question what, if not ‘truth,’ underlies the historical text. Likewise, if the historian (through a text) cannot present truth, what purpose does their work serve? It is these sorts of questions that have enlivened academics to the idea of the ethical turn and inspired many historians to treat history and ethics as intimately linked concerns that feature in all historical representations. The ethical turn demands a new discussion concerning the purposes and responsibilities of history, one that has moved beyond the simplistic equation of scholarship with the representation of the “truth” and the “facts” about the past.

The new theorizing builds upon the premise that “history is only present within language, and is thereby shaped by material conditions, politics, ideology, and the very form of its saying and writing.”⁹ If history can be seen as offering no objective truths concerning the past, then its ethical dimension takes on a new importance as the ultimate purpose of the historian. These thoughts have inspired recent theorists to face the ethical questions that underlie their profession. This paper will present some of these recent discussions. An attempt will be made to critically analyze recent theorizing on the ideological underpinnings of historical texts and to suggest the limitations of some of these ideas. Likewise, the implications of this new direction in historical scholarship will also be discussed with reference to two possible outcomes: the interminability of debate that could be generated through openly moralistic constructions of historical accounts and the issue of moral relativism.

The Cheese and the Worms is presented by its author, Carlo Ginzburg, as an account that recovers an aspect of the past that had been obscured and ignored, the life of a single individual – an Italian miller named Menocchio who was executed by the Inquisition in the sixteenth century. Throughout his text, Ginzburg attempts to represent his tale as one that he ‘discovered’ in the archives, a true story that needed only telling, not refashioning by the author. In this respect, Ginzburg aligns himself with traditional historiographical teachings, wherein “history has attempted to construct itself as a discourse that preserves a certain veracity to its knowledge claims.”¹⁰ Despite Ginzburg’s assertion of the documentary realism of his narrative (his reliance on the facts and the pure and unadulterated historical record) and his own objectivity, there is an ideological and moral undercurrent to his work that can be revealed through some

of the statements that he makes concerning Menocchio and the culture that he inhabited.¹¹

Ginzburg himself acknowledges the degree to which ideology and moral positions can figure into a historical work, he writes of “the fear of falling into a notorious, naïve positivism, combined with the exasperated awareness of the ideological distortion that may lurk behind the most normal and seemingly innocent process of perception.”¹² However, he does not openly acknowledge, much less discuss, the role that his ethical beliefs may have played in his construction of the narrative and it is left to the attentive reader to piece them together through some of the assertions that he makes.

One of the main goals of *The Cheese and the Worms* is to illustrate the oppressive dominant culture that was foisted cruelly upon Menocchio by his persecutors and to view how he, steeped in the liberating and often tolerant influences of popular culture, attempted to battle it. As LaCapra has insightfully noted, there is perhaps less of Menocchio and more of Ginzburg to be found in his construction and representation of the miller. Ginzburg’s account aims to liberate Menocchio from the culture that constrained him; it can be read as an attempt to rescue the individual from the harshness of the culture that he inhabited. History, for Ginzburg, thus has a very ethical purpose -- it seeks to give a voice to the voiceless, to tell tales of resistance in the face of adversity and the hegemonic pretensions of certain dominant cultural systems. Ginzburg writes that “culture offers to the individual a horizon of latent possibilities -- a flexible and invisible cage in which he can exercise his own conditional liberty.”¹³

Dominant culture, which Ginzburg describes in Menocchio’s day as rife with “dogmatism and conservatism,” constrains the individual, placing them in an invisible cage.¹⁴ Here, they are able to exercise a degree of liberty and agency, but the controlling institution of society always regulates these. For Ginzburg, Menocchio becomes a folk hero of sorts because he resisted the confines of dominant culture and formed his own, distinct, world-view that represented an opposition to the culture of the ruling classes through a manifestation of popular culture. In this sense, Ginzburg views Menocchio as “one of our forerunners.”¹⁵ Menocchio spoke up against oppression and, by liberating Menocchio from the authoritarian confines of the culture that oppressed him, Ginzburg likewise makes a statement on the injustice of subjugation and “mechanisms of exclusion.”¹⁶ The dominant culture executed Menocchio for his radical, liberating beliefs, so it has fallen to the historian, to Ginzburg, to resurrect them.

Ginzburg’s text stresses the importance of the individual in history -- the individual who thought for himself and rebelled against the corruption and control of culture. Ginzburg views Menocchio as one who did not engage in a “passive reception of someone else’s ideas.”¹⁷ Rather, he rallied against what he viewed as unjust within his own culture, even though society tried, and eventually succeeded, in silencing his challenging views. Menocchio, trapped in the invisible cage of culture, did not necessarily understand the “enormous play of forces that was silently conditioning his existence,” much as we today may not possess such an understanding.¹⁸ The point is that he developed his own ideas even when they stood in open defiance of accepted social norms. This aspect of Menocchio endeared him to Ginzburg, who raised him to the status of spokesman for the persecuted and downtrodden.

The moral underpinnings of Ginzburg are clearly visible at this juncture. So too is his stance on the role of the historian, which is to play the part of a liberator. The historian becomes a moral agent in Ginzburg's work. Through the act of restructuring the life of an individual through language, a moral purpose is achieved. History serves to redeem the past and many of its characters, and what is redeemed is "thus liberated."¹⁹ Ginzburg writes:

dominant culture and subordinate culture are matched in an unequal struggle, where the dice are loaded. Given the fact that the documentation reflects the relationship of power between the classes of a given society, the possibility that the culture of the subordinate classes will leave a trace, even a distorted one, was indeed slim.²⁰

The objective of the historian is to rescue these oppressed cultures, to illustrate to those in the present that there is always an alternative to the dominant culture, there is always a reason to think independently.

The work of the historian serves to liberate the individual from the past for the benefit of what their experiences of subjugation can tell us in the present and in the future. Thus, "the historian's work is begun for the future, and the future is the open possibility to which the historian's work offers the past as a gift."²¹ An examination of *The Cheese and the Worms* is illustrative of the moralistic purposes and stances that can be viewed in many historical texts. While Ginzburg does not deal openly with these issues, they are present in his work and have been pointed to by others, Dominick LaCapra most prominently. This paper will now turn its attention to historiographical theorists who have readily acknowledged the ethical dimension of historical accounts and have encouraged the so-called ethical turn. Of those to be considered, Dominick LaCapra again features prominently.

LaCapra conceives of the construction of historical accounts as an activity that highlights the "historian's obligations to the living on behalf of the dead."²² Essentially, history is "the project of working through the past in the interest of the living and still-to-be-born."²³ Both Ginzburg and LaCapra can be seen to have a view of history as an ethical activity that is intimately related to ideological concerns and moral purposes. LaCapra, however, openly and enthusiastically advocates this position while Ginzburg seeks to submerge it within his text and rely on an almost naïve positivism in his denial of the manner in which his own moral stances have informed his account. In *History and Criticism*, LaCapra argues for, among other things, the adoption of a view of history as a moral narrative in answer to his own question of "how can history be not simply a profession but a vocation?"²⁴ All history has an underlying ideological aspect to it, thus all historians have a certain ethical responsibility in their endeavors.

For those who seek to deny this aspect of their work, history will remain always only a profession, but through acceptance of the moral nature of historical scholarship, the historian's task can become a vocation, a *telos* of sorts. LaCapra is adamant about the need for historians to accept the moral nature of history because "historiography that turns away from critical reflection and ideological issues is not a craft. It is little more than a pampered profession."²⁵ For the historian to ignore the ideological issues of their own works is for their text to be "blind to its own rhetoric," their accounts thus becoming banal and devoid of

effectiveness because they themselves are devoid of critical thought and moral purpose.²⁶

In *History and Criticism*, one of LaCapra's main objectives is to illustrate the complexity of historical inquiry, to suggest that it is never a simple matter of unearthing a fact in the archive and attempting to explain it as a means of understanding the past. To this end, he speaks out strongly against "an archivally based documentary realism that treats artefacts as quarries for facts in the reconstitution of societies and cultures of the past."²⁷ In opposition to this, LaCapra stresses a view of history as a conscious entity, an ongoing dialogue with the dead. As such, the role of the historian is as a mediator between the past and the present, and the issues that he or she presents concerning the past are always bound up with concerns regarding the present. Thus, "any dialogue with the past in professional historiography takes place in a larger social, political, economic, and cultural context."²⁸ While the dialogue may seem one-sided at times, the dialectical nature of the historical enterprise must always be recognized and issues of representation therefore become central. LaCapra argues for enhanced critical insight on the part of historians so that historical scholarship can be comprehended for what it truly is.

History that simply tells a story about the past and goes no further in its efforts is, at best, dull and forgettable, at worst, reckless and irresponsible because it ignores the duties of the true historian. "The point of historical inquiry for him [LaCapra] is ...to arrive at 'meaningful guides to thought and practice' in the present for the sake of the future."²⁹ *History and Criticism* is therefore "obviously polemical in its attempt to rethink certain assumptions and procedures of the historical craft. It is intended as a critical intervention in a profession where debates about self-understanding and practice are not as prevalent as I think they should be."³⁰ It is a call to historians to acknowledge their ethical responsibilities, both to the past and to the present.

The ethical views behind LaCapra's work are laid bare for the reader, as opposed to forming a hidden, underlying structure as they do in *The Cheese and the Worms*. Indeed, a historical narrative that displays ideological stances above epistemologic certainties is true history for LaCapra, whereas Ginzburg argues for history as an expression of "truth" about the past and constructs his account so that it lacks an investigation, or even an acknowledgement, of his own moral views. The acceptance of the historian's ethical duties is key because, "historical comprehension, for LaCapra, ought never to be an end in itself. It should be but an element in the solution of present problems for the good of the future."³¹ Historical scholarship should function as "the articulation of ethical positions in contemporary social and political contexts."³² According to LaCapra, writing cannot be viewed as "an abstract thing of the mind – indeed it is never simply a thing of the mind."³³ Rather, historical texts, through the language and rhetoric that they employ, impart and reflect the beliefs of the historian. The difference between the responsible and effective historian, the one who practices a craft and possesses a telos, and the historian who relies on a simplistic conception of his task as a 'truthful' representation of the past, and only the past, is the difference between LaCapra and Ginzburg: Between the historian who acknowledges and readily accepts the ethical responsibilities of their profession and the one who attempts to submerge this aspect of their work and pass off their own ideological positions as truth.

Before LaCapra endeavored to awaken the historical profession to its ethical duties, Hayden White's *Metahistory* sought to expose the moral dimension of all historical scholarship, a task that resulted in praise from some and utter shock and denial from others. White's intention was for his groundbreaking work "to contribute to the current discussion of the *problem of historical knowledge*."³⁴ His characterization of historical knowledge as a problematical concept is an apt one and ultimately led him to deny entirely the existence of knowledge about the past in any sort of objective form. White's primary assertions were that there is no historical knowledge that exists outside of linguistic construction and that language usage reflected not truth but, rather, the preferences of the user. History is therefore little more than textual representation and narrative. *Metahistory* focused mainly on this issue of the "inexpengeable textuality of historical discourse."³⁵

As texts, historical studies strive to tell a story for the benefit of an audience, to represent events as orderly and in possession of meaning. The primary narrative aspect of historical scholarship led White to the conclusion that there was little difference between a work of history and any other literary work. As with any literary endeavor, the composition of a historical text constituted a deeply personal and poetic act that was based fundamentally on the author's ideological beliefs and moral understanding. What this all amounted to was the argument that the historian dealt less in fact and more in personal belief than the traditionalist view of history was prepared to acknowledge. White's text fundamentally shattered the prevailing notion of epistemologic certainty in history and exposed a picture of scholarship and representation that stressed the fragility of knowledge claims.

Metahistory argued that, because there were no epistemologically sound facts, historical scholarship was constituted primarily by the individual beliefs of the historian and that these differing conceptions of morality and reality underpinned all historical works. For White, "historiographical disputes on the level of "interpretation" are in reality disputes over the true nature of the historian's enterprise."³⁶ All historical texts were deeply informed, on a meta-level, by the individual concerns of the historian. This is because "commitment to a particular *form* of knowledge predetermines the *kinds* of generalizations one can make about the present world, the kinds of knowledge one can have of it, and hence the kinds of projects one can legitimately conceive."³⁷ It is because of this meta-level, intimately connected with the historian's own moral and ethical aims, that "there does, in fact, appear to be an irreducible ideological component in every historical account of reality."³⁸ Similar to LaCapra's beliefs (which strongly reflect White's influence), *Metahistory* argues that "the ideological dimensions of a historical account reflect the ethical element in the historian's assumption of a particular position on the question of the nature of historical knowledge and the implications that can be drawn from the study of past events for the understanding of present ones."³⁹ For White, history begins not in the past, but with "the historian living in the present."⁴⁰

White's text argues for recognition of the moral and ideological underpinnings of all historical works. Through the denial of objective truth in history, White advocates an interpretation of historical scholarship as an imaginative task that reflects an individual's conception of reality, the manner in which he or she has *prefigured* the field before they begin their analysis.⁴¹ Ideological stances underpin all historical accounts, in White's view. Because of the lack of objective truth and the moralistic nature of all historical works,

White ultimately argues that the only grounds for adjudicating between competing historical interpretations are moralistic and aesthetic, not epistemological. The ideological nature of all texts ensures that they can only be judged on an ideological basis, based on the ethical preferences and conceptions of the reader. By arguing for epistemological relativism, White sought to conflate the fields of history and philosophy, much as LaCapra later attempted. White's eventual hope was that "on the basis of this insight [historians] could rethink their representational choices in light of their political and aesthetic commitments," thus opening the door to a history that had realized its obligations to the present.⁴²

However, it was precisely White's intention to "lay the foundation for a new, creative, life-serving historiography" (through the denial of epistemologic certainty) that illustrated one of the most problematic aspects of the ethical turn: moral relativism.⁴³ It is on this issue that White has been most strongly criticized.⁴⁴ One writer has noted that, in this respect, "White almost bites the relativistic bullet,"⁴⁵ and Ginzburg has characterized his work as suffering from a "debilitating moral dilemma."⁴⁶ The issue of relativism is a very serious one within the context of a call for an ethical turn in historical studies and this paper will later examine it alongside another issue that springs from it, that of the interminability of debate that could possibly ensue if all historical studies were recognized as primarily representations of ideological stances. At this juncture, White's text will again be taken up as it has received some of the most cogent criticisms in these areas. At this moment, I will turn again to the manner in which many current historians have urged the re-adoption of history as an ethical activity that deals with the problem of moral choice.

Nancy F. Partner's essay in the volume *A New Philosophy of History* deals with the concept of ethics in history and the manner in which historical accounts are based on ideological beliefs.⁴⁷ Her piece functions to remind the historian of the manner in which narratives are constructed through both fact and fiction and how history serves a moral purpose within a wider social setting. For Partner, the existence of objective facts is highly debatable and contentious and most representations of reality have as much to do with intellectual construction as with faithful reliance on the "facts" and nothing but the facts. History as a discipline is in part fiction, but fiction with a purpose. Fiction is used by the historian in the interests of fulfilling "crucial and necessary functions in the cultural project which crystallized around the term history."⁴⁸ As with other proponents of the ethical nature of historical inquiry, Partner acknowledges the imaginative essence of scholarship and epistemologic pluralism. In her discussion of historical representation, as practiced by the early Greeks, she argues that "fiction, as deployed by Herodotus and Thucydides, raised history from a mere descriptive record of events in sequence...the fictions allowed history to be *about something*."⁴⁹

In agreement with other theorists, Partner takes the view that recognizing the fictive nature of history does not nullify it. In fact, it can raise it to a new level of purposefulness. Historical accounts can thus be structured in such a manner as to provide an inspirational level of meaning for the audience. For Partner, the key issue revolves not around the use of imagination in history but around its *responsible* usage. Her work deplores the use of invention as a means to create something that is deceptive and serves no ethical purpose. She writes "the blameless, shameless unselfconscious freedom to use fictions within the genre envelope of history belonged only to writers who were effortlessly confident of speaking from the moral center."⁵⁰ In this respect, a morally centred representation of the past can be viewed as an ethical duty of

the historian, who must be enlivened to the ideological components of their work so as to deploy a suitable level of responsibility in their use of fictions. The historian has a powerful obligation as “political and ethical observer.”⁵¹ It follows that their works should be attentive to their own ideological choices and present those choices as having something to offer the reader in terms of ethical instruction.⁵² History is invested with a profound purpose as a moralizing activity in this view.

Theorists discussing and endorsing the ethical turn in historiography have done so chiefly in the rhetoric of responsibility and duty and have emphasized the good that can arise from the historian’s recognition to of their status as a moralizing influence. Through adopting the idea that historical narrative can be used to represent “the good as well as the true, the historian’s moral imagination would be empowered to speak in its own voice and not just through epistemological surrogates that blunts its authority.”⁵³ And it is not just within the discipline of history that these views have been espoused. Recent practitioners of moral philosophy have also urged the ethical responsibilities of the historian. Edith Wyschogrod has argued for the emergence of a “heterological historian” in the aftermath of the rejection of the Rankean notion of history as an activity that tells of the past as it really happened.⁵⁴ This new history would acknowledge its moral imperative and strive to offer a voice to the voiceless. It would provide both hope and moral instruction. This, in turn, would provide the historian with a telos, with an overarching purpose. Alasdair MacIntyre’s work *After Virtue* likewise argues for the importance of morality to history.⁵⁵

The ethical turn in historical scholarship has been profoundly shaped by the work of philosophers and, recently, moral philosophers (such as MacIntyre and Wyschogrod) have made important contributions to the question of the moral purposes of history. For these writers, the historian also takes on the role of moral agent, their works having a prominent moral dimension. However, it is debateable whether or not such an ideal could ever truly be realized. MacIntyre’s work, particularly, is admirable for its phenomenological aspects, but the prescriptive suggestions offered by it remain doubtful. Likewise, it is arguable that the work of the historian can serve an important descriptive function in relation to moral and ethical issues but cannot provide adoptable solutions to ethical issues. Aside from this, MacIntyre’s work is also notable due to the extent that it echoes so many of the issues raised by historical theorists, and also because it raises the two primary criticisms to which the work of historians of the ethical turn in history are open to.

After Virtue conceives of history as a giver of moral and intellectual gifts and argues that the current debate about morality cannot be understood without a comprehension of the historical conditions and traditions that have fuelled it. MacIntyre asserts the ethical responsibilities of the historian and puts a great value on historicity. The work argues strongly for a historically based criticism of the Enlightenment project and present-day morality without the usual backing up of evidentiary claims found in most historical texts. *After Virtue* opens with a rather disquieting metaphorical tale regarding the sciences that MacIntyre suggests is paralleled by the situation in morality. He writes that “the hypothesis which I wish to advance is that in the actual world which we inhabit [,] the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world which I described. . . we have – very largely, if not entirely, lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality.”⁵⁶ MacIntyre argues for a conception that moves past Enlightenment ideals, one that actually moves backward to the teachings

of Aristotle. He states “every action is the bearer and expression of more or less theory-laden beliefs and concepts; every piece of theorizing and every expression of belief is a political and moral action.”⁵⁷ This is similar to the ideas of LaCapra and White that stress the ideological nature of all intellectual activity and the ethical responsibilities of the academic.

After Virtue suggests that the primary reason for the interminability of debate within morality has been occasioned by the loss of our understanding of the ethical within an ongoing tradition or narrative. MacIntyre argues for a view of “the unity of a whole human life [as] a narrative unity.”⁵⁸ He stresses “in particular the unity of a certain kind of narrative, the narrative of life as a quest for the human good.”⁵⁹ MacIntyre’s discussion of narrative and its importance aligns his text prominently with historical scholarship. *After Virtue* suggests that the way to recapture this sense of a narrative tradition, and the place of the human within it, is to situate our conception of morality within a larger context, as an imparter of communal standards and values. This is reminiscent of Partner’s arguments for the role of history as a vehicle for the espousal of civic values. MacIntyre asserts that in past societies morality was a fundamental part of a larger tradition and that this tradition “provided a moral background to contemporary debate in Classical societies.”⁶⁰ He suggests that the interminability of the debate will end when we are all directed to a common moral center, just as Partner argues that responsible, ethical history arises from a historian speaking from a moral center.

To be effective, the moral center must provide “a notion of a public good which is prior to [,] and characterizable independently of [,] the summing of individual desires and interests. Virtue in the individual is nothing more or less than allowing the public good to provide the standard for individual behaviour.”⁶¹ For MacIntyre, the moral center can be provided by Aristotle and his moral philosophy: this will put a stop to the emotivism that he sees as embedded in our culture. He defines emotivism as “the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character.”⁶² According to MacIntyre, emotivism ensures that there is “no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture.”⁶³ Essentially, what he describes is relativism.

As has been noted, Hayden White has argued that all historical accounts have an ideological underpinning and are prefigured by the moral preferences and epistemological beliefs of individual historians. Thus, the only grounds for advocating the claims of one historical account over those of another are moralistic and aesthetic, not empirical or epistemological. Dominick LaCapra, Nancy F. Partner and Alasdair MacIntyre have argued for an open acknowledgement of the moral aspects of history and a vision of the historian as having certain ethical responsibilities, while Carlo Ginzburg has shown that ideological stances are often present in historical texts. This is an intriguing suggestion and it has received both praise and criticism from theorists and practicing historians alike. However, it seems to me that, if all history truly is an exercise in morality, the debate between competing claims must be interminable.

If all claims advanced in historical texts are ethical in nature, then the current situation, in which “an endless supply of competing, verifiable accounts, the significance of which is always in question”⁶⁴ are

produced, will never abate because it cannot. There will never be one ideological stance or epistemological conception that extends to all. Hence, claims can never be adjudicated and there is no basis on which to possess standards for deciding between claims other than one's personal beliefs. This ensures that a degree of moral relativism will always prevail in historical scholarship because competing accounts are rooted in a morality that will be particular to the individual and thus cannot be denied on any empirical or methodological grounds.

MacIntyre argues that a return to the ideas of Aristotle can provide society with a moral center that will end the interminability of the debate, but it is itself arguable that his avocation of Aristotle represents only one more competing claim.⁶⁵ The debate is already never ending, with a plurality of interpretations constantly being argued, and placing it with the context of a debate over morality, ethics, and ideology would make it not only interminable to an even greater degree, but also more contentious. Through asserting the moral nature of history, we arrive at a situation that is constituted chiefly by "the necessary interminability of historiographic writing."⁶⁶

This interminability will be characterized by the constant advancement of differing conceptions of moral truth and ethical behaviour and there is always the danger that such activity can result not in fruitful debate, but in hegemonic pretensions. This is an unsettling idea, perhaps the most unsettling, that arises out of the ethical turn. "What is morally right in relation to one moral framework can be morally wrong in relation to a different moral framework,"⁶⁷ and this ensures that, not only will a consensus never be reached, but also that the situation might even degenerate to a point where the claims of one moral viewpoint are enforced on individuals over and against their own moral beliefs. This is an issue that I feel that no theorists and advocates of the ethical turn have adequately considered. In addition to this concern, the ethical turn also carries with it the possibility that, given that there is no epistemologically sound ground upon which to assert claims of reality, certain historical events (if they do not fit within an individual's ideological framework) can be ignored.

White's *Metahistory* argues that, "the ideological dimensions of a historical account reflect the ethical element in the historian's assumption of a particular position on the question of the nature of historical knowledge and the implications that can be drawn from the study of past events for the understanding of present ones."⁶⁸ The ethical dimensions of a historical text thus arise because the historian, according to White, prefigures them, on a preconscious level. Most theorists of the ethical turn are accepting of this notion, but it is arguable that it is an overly simplistic one. It represents the ideological considerations of the historian as the foundation for all of their texts but says nothing of the other, often overlapping, concerns, which can be seen as impacting the formation of texts, just as much as moral ones. The role of cultural and social factors in conditioning the perception of reality of the historian is thus utterly overshadowed. This represents another area in which the ethical turn could benefit from more focused theorizing.

The recent arguments for the presence of moral and ideological underpinnings of historical texts and for recognition of the ethical responsibilities of the historian are provocative issues that have commanded much attention and are deserving of more. The importance of moral philosophy on the ethical turn cannot

by ignored and texts such as that by Wyschogrod are deserving of a great deal of analysis and considerations from historians. The ethical turn, as this paper has endeavored to show, commands the attention of scholars both from within the discipline of history and outside of it. I must confess that I can find no rational or methodological reasons for disputing the claims of the theorists that have been discussed within this essay. However, on an almost intuitive level, I am deeply hesitant and conflicted concerning their assertions. I perceive, firstly, a danger in viewing all historical accounts as essentially moral activities, and secondly, fear, on some level of ethical and ideological pluralism – to say nothing of the hegemonic pretensions that can often be bound up with such systems of thought. I see this recent (not so recent, really, when one considers ancient and medieval views of history) development in historiography as an intrinsically complex one that needs a great deal of consideration and careful meditating upon. It may, perhaps, carry with it some unforeseen implications and open new and unstable avenues of debate.

Notes

¹ For his generous support and insightful suggestions, the author would like to thank Dr J Kitchen. His thoughtful criticisms have helped to improve this paper from its initial inception to its finalized version.

¹ Beverley Southgate, *History: What and Why? Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2001 [1996]), 32-41.

² As this development in the discipline has been termed by Michael Dintenfass, “Truth’s Other: Ethics, The History of the Holocaust, and Historiographical Theory After the Linguistic Turn,” *History and Theory*, 39 (2000), 1.

³ W.H. Dray, “The Philosophy of History,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Paul Edwards ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 251.

⁴ Dintenfass, “Truth’s Other,” 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹ Mark Jackson, “The Ethical Space of Historiography,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 14 (2001), 468.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 467.

¹¹ Dominick LaCapra has offered a great deal of insightful criticism surrounding many aspects of Ginzburg's account, including its underlying moral position. See Dominick LaCapra, "The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Twentieth-Century Historian," in his *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹² Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992 [1976], xvii).

¹³ *Ibid.*, xxi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xvi.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155, nn. 58.

²¹ Jackson, "The Ethical Space of Historiography," 471.

²² Dintenfass, "Truth's Other," 11.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

²⁹ Dintenfass, “Truth’s Other,” 9.

³⁰ LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 135.

³¹ Dintenfass, “Truth’s Other,” 18.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 52.

³⁴ White, *Metahistory*, 1, author’s italics.

³⁵ Dintenfass, “Truth’s Other,” 3.

³⁶ White, *Metahistory*, 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21, author’s italics.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁰ Russell Jacoby, “A New Intellectual History?” *American Historical Review*, 97 (1992), 408.

⁴¹ White, *Metahistory*, 30.

⁴² Wulf Kansteiner, “Hayden White’s Critique of the Writing of History,” *History and Theory*, 32 (1993), 278.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁴⁵ Jacoby, “A New Intellectual History?” 411.

⁴⁶ Kansteiner, “Hayden White’s Critique of the Writing of History,” 274.

⁴⁷ Nancy F. Partner, “Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions,” in *A New Philosophy of History*, Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, author's italics.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² Nancy F. Partner has, in accordance with her views on the purpose of historical writing, produced work that is ideologically driven and openly acknowledged by its author as such. See Nancy F. Partner, "No Sex, No Gender," *Speculum*, 68 (1993), as an example.

⁵³ Dintenfass, "Truth's Other," 20.

⁵⁴ Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 66.

⁵⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984 [1981]). A number of excellent critiques, both on MacIntyre's prescriptive suggestions and his historicism can be found in John Horton and Susan Mendus, eds., *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives of the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

⁵⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁸ R. Jay Wallace, "After Virtue and Whose Justice?" *History and Theory*, 28 (1989), 334.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 121.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 236-237.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁴ Hans Kellner, "Never Again Is Now," *History and Theory*, 33 (1994), 127.

⁶⁵ as Jackson asserts in "The Ethical Space of Historiography": "Historical writing continually engages in its own contestation and rewriting of previous discourses about the past" 469.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Jackson's piece deals extensively and persuasively with this aspect of the ethical turn.

⁶⁷ Gilbert Harman and Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 3.

⁶⁸ White, *Metahistory*, 22.

War of Words: Language Policy in Post Independence Kazakhstan.

By Luke O'Callaghan

Abstract

This paper focuses on the language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the era post- Independence to the modern day. The policy of bi-lingualism with a state language and language of inter-ethnic communication has been pursued since the break up of the Soviet Union in an attempt to include Russified nationalities in the nation-building of Kazakhstan. I compare Kazakhstan's policy with two other models of state language policy, Ireland and Norway. Both Ireland and Norway have built up their state or indigenous languages in their nation building process, but the languages have lost out to the imported language of their former occupants, English and Danish. Many experts in the field are predicting that Russian will become the dominant language in Kazakhstan, but I hope to show that while this may be possible, it may also be possible for Kazakh to dominate given the right conditions. The impact of possible language planning will also be examined and outlined. My research is based on the findings of scholars such as Dave, Laitin, Brill Olcott, Kolstoe and Lanadau in their published and private work. I will also draw heavily on census figures of all three countries and show through social experiments how census figures have distorted the reality of the state which national languages find themselves in.

Introduction

This paper aims to take a closer look at the language situations in Ireland and Norway and to demonstrate the relevance of these particular language situations to independent Kazakhstan's language situation. The main body of this research is based on my own experiences which have combined my Irish/Gaeltacht roots with my studies of Russian, leading me to live in Kazakhstan and the Former Soviet Union (FSU) for over 5 years before finally travelling to Norway on a government scholarship to investigate the language situation there. The paper is not intended to be a stand alone scholarly work, but rather an invitation for

the broadening of the debate on the issues raised. All of the opinions offered here are of course those of the author and I maintain full responsibility for them.

Political nationalism and linguistic nationalism normally go hand in hand, but not always. Some countries can often have very strong political nationalism, but very weak linguistic nationalism and this can be seen in many of the newly independent states emerging in the 20th Century. Almost all over the world we can find a multitude of languages and/or linguistic varieties of the same basic language, each of which may be elevated to a status as standard language for a given geographical or political unit. The choice of one particular language or dialect is therefore always made at the expense of other, potential candidates. The choice, then, is *interest-driven*, and—by definition—political.

Nationalism is one of the least precise and most abused terms bandied about in social sciences, often one is left with the impression that it may refer to all kinds of things, and hence refers to nothing in particular. A convenient and generally accepted definition, however, is that nationalism is a political program according to which a certain culturally and ethnically delineated group, called the *nation*, must acquire a political entity of its own, often, but not necessarily, its own *state*. Precisely which characteristics or criterion that set this cultural group apart from other groups may vary. In earlier centuries religion usually played a prominent, even decisive role, but as secularisation set in and religious identities became less salient in the modern world, *language* acquired increasing importance.

My aim is not to examine the nation-building process taking place in Kazakhstan or elsewhere, but to take a closer look at how language planning and policy are being implemented there and to show some of the interesting parallels from Ireland and Norway, and their relevance to Kazakhstan. The language issue has been used with great effect as a political lever or weapon for mobilising large sections of the population on behalf of the nationalist cause all over the world.

Language planning is defined by Wardhaugh¹ as an attempt to deliberately interfere with a language or one of its varieties; it is human intervention into natural processes of language change, diffusion or erosion. The planning focus may be either on the status of the language or on changing the condition of that language or both, as they are not mutually exclusive.

The motivation behind language planning and policy is quite often unclear. One reason frequently given is that the population has a better command of one of the languages, but people can choose to promote a language of which they have either little or no knowledge. Or they may be interested in *leaving the impression* that this is what they are doing while simultaneously, and often unbeknownst to themselves, undermining the standardisation program they ostensibly are backing. This somewhat lengthy excursion into the language policy of Ireland and Norway serves a purpose and leads up to the central question of this paper: Will Kazakhstan follow the example of Irish- Norwegian language policy?

Ireland:

The most recent census in 2002 put the number of Irish (*Gaeilge*) speakers at almost 1.5 million in the Republic of Ireland,² which would seem to put Irish in a very strong position. However, this figure does not differentiate between native speakers; those who use it as their primary language, and those who speak a *cupla focail* or couple of words, such as greetings and other civilities. It would be most naïve to accept this figure without some further investigation.

A more realistic, if somewhat less optimistic figure, was arrived at by Reg Hindley³, who reduced the number of speakers illegible for count, by redefining the borders of the Gaeltacht, determining who used the language everyday as their primary language. He also used these figures to declare that the language was dying.

Hindley's figures are also those which were taken into account by the UN Red Book on Endangered Languages, which lists Irish as a language in serious danger of becoming extinct. Strangely, few in Ireland seem phased by this, putting it down to the fact that these negative figures were compiled by non-Irish scholars, who were thought to lack intimate knowledge of the situation. In a separate investigation, using Hindley's figures for native Irish speakers, it was found that there were in fact more native speakers of Russian in Ireland than there were of Irish.⁴

Jim McCloskey, one of the more optimistic voices on the current state of the Irish language, uses figures based on competent L2 speakers, and claims Irish is in a much healthier state, with several hundred thousand speakers. He makes the case that Irish is not moribund.

These differing opinions and figures are arrived at due to the lack of an accurate means of measuring the number of native speakers of Irish. This problem, especially with census figures, is often caused by those who mean well, but who are either confused by the vague nature of census questions, or who deliberately exaggerate their language abilities for their own personal reasons, such as national pride. The state's attempt at a more accurate census question on language, introduced in 1996, has actually added to the confusion. Regardless of all of the varying facts and figures currently available on Irish, one must accept that the language, as a native one, is certainly in decline.

To demonstrate the inaccuracies of the census figures, an experiment was conducted on the national police force, or the Garda Síochána. After teachers, police were the professionals with the highest number of Irish speakers. Over a series of two weeks, I asked 100 Dublin Gardai⁵ for directions in Irish and the results that followed made for some interesting reading.

Answered in Irish, and gave directions	5%
Answered in Irish, but could not help any further	2%

Did not recognise the language	93%
Total	100%

The first major setback for Irish was the Great Famine which claimed over a million lives and led to almost another million leaving Ireland.⁶ This tragedy affected both urban and rural areas and decimated the ranks of native Irish speakers, particularly monoglots, not to mention the severe psychological damage suffered by an entire nation.

The word for English in Irish is *bearla* and this actually means literary language and refers to the language of the Irish bards of yore⁷, who composed epic verse for their patrons. Therefore Irish speakers viewed English as the written language, the language of knowledge, education, wealth, progress and power and it is no surprise that Irish language policy took the path it did when generations later, these perceptions, and the people governed by them, formed a national language policy for independent Ireland.

Irish was actually given a certain amount of autonomy in Ireland while it was under British control, with Irish being permitted to be taught in schools. This of course does not reflect on the perceptions most Irish people had about their native language, as they increasingly came to see English as a language key that could open the door of opportunity for them, and Irish as a backward peasant tongue.

English in Ireland in linguistic terms is the H (higher) variety of language and Irish the L (lower) variety. A H variety usually enjoys power and prestige while the L lacks these qualities. In Ireland the H variety was originally taught in a formal setting, e.g. classrooms, and the L variety learned, e.g. at home. This concept has now been turned on its head and directly contradicts the constitutional status of Irish as Irish had reverted to being a H but lacking power and prestige.

Much of the damage in the Irish language revival must be attributed to the state's policy on language when Ireland first achieved independence. Through the hard work of Irish language revivalists, Irish had gained ground before the 1916 Easter Rising but the state's policy did not build on the foundation. Ardent nationalists began to readjust their thinking on Irish as they attained more political autonomy, and with it cemented the formation of a national identity. Daniel O'Connell, one of the heroes of the Irish nationalist cause, actually called for the people of Ireland to abandon their native language in favour of English for the sake of progress.

In Ireland there is much confusion surrounding identity, but there seems to be general agreement that the national language of Irish is one of the key defining characteristics of "*Irishness*". The *Irish people* have been referred to as indigenous or autochthonous⁸ by various groups with nationalist sentiment but neither of these terms sits well when one considers the countless invasions of Ireland through the ages by Celts, Vikings, Normans, Catholic missionaries, British colonizers and so on.

The Irish language was simply bereft of adequate leaders in its time of need; the years following independence, the most intense phase of nation building in independent Ireland. The civil service resisted the implementation of Irish as the official working language, insisting that this could only be done when the population at large had been educated in Irish in the school systems. The numbers of native speakers dropped steadily from here on and has never recovered.

The state has been the main anglicizing force in the Gaeltacht⁹ by providing services in English without a suitable Irish equivalent, using English as the language for state jobs and by providing grants and infrastructure conducive to movement of English speakers to Irish areas. The state's attempt at industrialisation of the Gaeltacht in the seventies was a disaster, which led to large numbers of Anglophones moving into Irish speaking areas and putting pressure on Irish speakers to use English for trade. The markets created by these industries were also English speaking and required Irish speakers to speak, read and write English.

The lack of economic development has led to the Gaeltacht becoming an isolated and economically depressed fishbowl from which people wish to escape. Irish speaking parents who want their children to have any sort of quality life and a good career are forced to send their children to English speaking universities outside the Gaeltacht, often never to return. Those who wish to have a Western European/modern lifestyle have no choice but to leave and come in contact with English. The decreasing numbers of Irish speakers leads to a decline in of media readily available in Irish. This has been combated slightly in recent years with the creation of TG4, an Irish language TV station.

Attempts were made by various governments to promote the use of Irish in schools up until the 1940s. A u-turn in policy took place in the 1950s, due to claims by the national teacher's union that using Irish as the medium of instruction with children who did not speak Irish as a first language, was damaging to their education.¹⁰ Nationalisation of education in the 1960s led to further closures of Irish medium schools, particularly in the Gaeltacht.

Worse came when the Language Freedom Movement (LMF) claimed¹¹ that use of Irish as a matriculation subject in secondary school was hindering students from passing their exams, and as a result, the requirement to pass Irish at Intermediate Certificate level was dropped in 1973. The politicians who forced through this change claimed it would help the teaching of Irish if the compulsory element was removed. The result was a predictable disaster. By 1980 the proportion of Leaving Certificate candidates, taking the higher level paper in Irish, fell from one half to one quarter. The proportion who failed Irish altogether, or who didn't bother to sit the exam, rose from 5.5% to 20.3%.

MacCartney noted that with "declining levels of competence in Irish among the English-speaking population, Irish-speakers [became] ever more marginalised in Irish society. That could only have re-enforced the belief that Irish was useless & [encouraged] Irish-speakers to abandon their language in favour of English."¹² The standard of Irish being taught, and the grades being achieved by those tested, has continued to decline as have the number of Irish medium schools.

A policy of linguistic assimilation in favour of Irish has never been pursued by the Irish state and this has led to a linguistic pluralism where the languages should co-exist freely. As a result of this, many Irish linguists have been eagerly encouraging the state to promote bilingualism. However in doing so, they give no clear definition of what bilingualism should mean in the Irish context, and how it can be achieved. Should the two languages be used equally and should people have an equal knowledge of both? Or should Irish children continue to learn Irish at school, leaving their Irish in the classroom when they finish? Should Irish be given special protection by the government?

Bilingualism has often been confused with the concept of *diglossia*, whereby the two languages show clear functional separation, such as English for trade, and Irish in the home. Bilingualism in contrast, is quite an unstable situation, where one section of the population is usually composed of monoglots, and the minority composed of polyglots. Without widespread bilingualism the monoglots gradually take over, as in Ireland, where no one needs to be able to speak Irish to communicate with other Irish people.¹³

This otherness sees Irish speakers marginalised and this has been reflected in the state's attitude toward the teaching of the Irish language. The ability to speak Irish well, then, has become something of an oddity in modern Ireland and this has simply contributed to the misconception that aptitude in more than one language is a strange or unusual talent reserved only for those who are "good with languages." This *otherness* of identity of Irish speakers has marginalised them within Irish society. Irish is associated with rural areas, poverty, famine, social, economic and cultural backwardness, traditional music, traditional dance and the traditional rural way of life.

The norms of social behaviour in Ireland also further marginalise Irish. Irish usage is governed not by language domain, but by networks; that is to say, to whom Irish is being spoken. Research has shown that if even one English speaker joins a large group of Irish speakers, those speaking Irish will revert to English. Speakers of Irish command little respect among non-Irish speakers¹⁴, who immediately see Irish speakers as outsiders or others, and make Irish speakers feel embarrassed or awkward.

It should be pointed out that some Irish speakers have done little to ingratiate themselves with English speakers, or Irish speakers of lesser ability, by taking a lofty, snobbish and elitist manner when it comes to language. As one native speaking friend pointed out, the language belongs to all the people, not just those who can speak it.

Irish has the status of being the national and first official language of Ireland and this is enshrined in Article 8 of the Irish constitution. Earlier this year, the debate began on whether Irish should be an official working language of the EU. This question raised many issues in Ireland, especially when people were reminded that this option had been refused by the Lynch government in 1973. While it remains to be seen what the people of Ireland will decide on the status of Irish in the EU, the debate may be successful in persuading the government to rethink how they approach the language question. Some see the use of Irish in the EU as a continuation of the fossilisation of Irish in a useless "*officialese*" and the creation of jobs, which lack vibrancy and put nothing back into the local Irish speaking community, more of which, everyday users do

not need and do not want.

The challenge for Irish speakers is not on an international (or even national) level, but in the simple day to day usage of their chosen language. As we have seen, status planning is not always paired with corpus planning. Quite simply put, bilingualism is not working. Irish is a minority language in Ireland no matter which figures one chooses to use; it is not offered enough protection or funding by the state. In fact the state's inability to choose a clear policy of either linguistic assimilation or linguistic pluralism, with special measures to protect Irish, has led to major Anglicisation of Irish speaking areas by the state, consolidation of English as the primary language outside these areas, and in turn, a steady decrease in the numbers of fluent Irish speakers.

Irish as a language taught in Ireland's schools seems set to last for many years, but Irish as a living language, a language passed from parents to their children, is another matter. It may well be too late to do anything to save the language in this sense and a great deal of responsibility lies with the government in ensuring its survival or extinction.

Norway:

Another example of a country with strong political nationalism combined with weak linguistic nationalism is Norway. Norway has several official languages which include Bokmål, Nynorsk, Saami (the language of the indigenous Saami or Laps of the North of Norway, Finland and Sweden) and Sign Language. My argument focuses on the struggle between Bokmål and Nynorsk. The jury is still out for some as to whether these are in fact two separate languages or two varieties of the same language, as in the cases of Hindi and Urdu, or Serbo-Croat.

When after four centuries of Danish rule, the Norwegians managed to achieve political independence in 1814, they found themselves with a variety of Danish and local dialects, but no national language. In the nineteenth century attempts were made to develop a national language and two of these have had a lasting effect. Knud Knudsen (1812-95), a school teacher, modified and "*norwegianised*" the Danish spoken by the upper-class in the urban centres of Norway, to Norwegian spelling rules and pronunciation which became known as *Riksmål* "state language." Since 1928 this has been known as Bokmål "book language."

The other attempt of note was that of Ivar Aasen (1813-96) who developed a language based on the dialects of Western and Central Norway known as *Landsmal* "language of the country" which is now known as Nynorsk: "new Norwegian". His research was conducted over a four year period in the 1840's, and became the blueprint for Norwegian dialectology. Using this material and aided by methods developed by internationally known linguists of the day such as Rasmus Rask and Jacob Grimm, he developed a standard written norm for modern Norwegian presented in a grammar and dictionary in 1864 and 1873 respectively.

During the twentieth century, various attempts were made by successive governments to unite the two languages. The attempt to amalgamate the languages in a common Norwegian (*Samnorsk*) was abandoned, permanently or temporarily, in the 1960s, though spelling changes to both languages (Nynorsk 1917 and 1938 and Bokmål 1907 and 1917), seem to have brought the two languages closer in similarity.¹⁵ Some Norwegians maintain that Nynorsk is archaic, backward and awkward, due to its origins in Western and Central rural dialects. Consequently, *they* choose the more “civilised” Bokmål, while defenders of Nynorsk claim it is more Norwegian in spirit than Bokmål, and that Bokmål, with its Danish origins, can never become a fully Norwegian language.

Part of the problem in understanding the difference between the two forms is that neither of them are essentially spoken languages, but rather, each serves as a blueprint or framework which allows Norwegians to choose a standard written variety, with which they feel an affinity to how they speak. Asking someone in Oslo whether they are speaking Bokmål or Nynorsk, as I discovered to my embarrassment, is more often than not a question without an answer. It is only in writing that the languages differ to a significant degree.¹⁶ This has been the main attraction for proponents of Nynorsk, as it allows dialects to be written as they are spoken, thus portraying itself as a language full of freedom. One supporter of Nynorsk¹⁷ demonstrated how the word “possible” could be spelt twelve different ways in Nynorsk, depending on your dialect, and this helped me to understand a central part of the problem for the non-Nynorsk user in learning it; the language lacks unity.

Nynorsk, as a movement, has lacked unity politically and linguistically since its foundation. Ivar Aasen’s language was not the only attempt at creating a Landsmal and it can now be presumed that Aasen, from a rural farming background, was politically motivated in creating his language. Aasen made a point of using the Western and Central dialects, which were mainly rural areas, as the basis for his standard form, and his decision to do so excluded a large number of potential users, mainly from the urban elite. The reason for this choice was simple: he was aiming for linguistic autonomy from Danish to coincide with the political autonomy of Norway from Denmark.¹⁸ Simultaneously this created a distinct identity for the language as that of the rural way of life.

Nynorsk and Bokmål both exist today in several sub varieties; some traditional such as Aasen’s original version of Nynorsk, some radical. This lack of unity in usage, particularly by the Nynorsk side, has been problematic in creating a modern standardised form, as some choose to use a more traditional version of Nynorsk in an attempt to assert their identity. The freedom of choice afforded to users of both Nynorsk and Bokmål has also done much to undermine the attempts of supporters of Nynorsk to have a unified political linguistic movement.

Of Norway’s 435 municipalities, 117 have chosen to use Nynorsk, 165 Bokmål, and the rest remain neutral. Neutrality in the majority of cases means that Bokmål is the prevalent language. This is the case in most major cities like Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim. Citizens are entitled to receive correspondence in their chosen standard form and parents in any community are free to choose the language of instruction for their children’s schooling.

Nynorsk also has a thriving theatre and publishing house producing quality works of prose and poetry as well as numerous newspapers, magazines and journals. In 1969 the Primary School Act required all text books for use in primary schools to be available in Nynorsk and Bokmål before being published. This was followed up with second act five years later, putting the same obligation on those wishing to publish text books for use in secondary schools. Since the 1980s parliament has been required to produce a report on the usage of Nynorsk and Bokmål biennially.

All of this would seem to put Nynorsk in a relatively strong position, but this is not so. Much has been made of the Norwegian model of democracy, particularly in reference to language choice, but it is exactly this democratic freedom which is so strongly influencing the language struggle, and the decline of Nynorsk. Norway's official languages are protected by law, but little has been done to enforce sanctions of any consequence on those who choose to break the language laws. For example, the NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Council) is obliged by parliament to broadcast at least 25% Nynorsk, but this level has never been reached, and the level has often been between 15 and 20% without any repercussions.

No census has been taken in Norway to estimate numbers of Nynorsk users versus Bokmål, but it is clear that Nynorsk is a language under threat and in decline. 15% of all children are taught Nynorsk as their first written variety and it would be realistic to estimate the number of users, if we chart the decline from the zenith of 30% reached in the 1940s, at about 10-12% today, which is roughly somewhat less than half a million people.

Bokmål has now cemented its position as the language of the towns and cities. Nynorsk is in use in various regions as the first official language, but it has failed to conquer any major urban centre. Bergen is a Bokmål dominated city and at the same time a regional centre serving a large Nynorsk area. This is most evident in Bergen, a city located well within the traditional Nynorsk stronghold, where Bokmål is the language of local authorities and administration. It has also been shown through social experiments and surveys that most Nynorsk children will become Bokmål users if they move to large cities or towns. This failure to conquer urban centres sums up the Norwegian language struggle in a nutshell.¹⁹

Nynorsk is still seen as the language of rural and agricultural communities, and a hindrance to those who wish to leave those communities; communities which suffer from a lack of economic and social development. Nynorsk is a symbol of regional pride and identity in its core areas and it would not be correct if I omitted that dialects in Norway are afforded much more respect than in other Scandinavian countries, and Nynorsk is used by all walks of life. It is increasingly becoming a symbol of national pride as Norway resists the mounting pressure to join the EU and its cultural melting pot, a step some would see as a potential threat to the loss of Norwegian identity.

Proponents of Nynorsk, such as Noregs Mallag, soldier on particularly through their youth section,²⁰ but they are losing ground. The topic of the day on my most recent trip to Norway was whether or not the Nynorsk exam should be obligatory for secondary school and the general feeling in the media and on the streets is that a large part of the youth population are in favour of removing Nynorsk from the curriculum.²¹

Following the Second World War, Nynorsk has continued to lose ground to Bokmål, and Bokmål is now in the much stronger position. Proponents of Bokmål claim that it conforms more closely to standard colloquial Norwegian, while “true” nationalists still insist on Nynorsk. Today Bokmål is the language of the national press as well as the majority of books (the medium of instruction for most schoolchildren), while official documents still employ both varieties and children must learn to use both. The search for a compromise goes on, but it is unlikely that Norwegians will easily agree on one variety to the exclusion of the other.

Kazakhstan:

Of the fifteen states, which made up the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was the most multiethnic and had been hailed as a “planet of a hundred nationalities” by the Soviet propaganda machine. It was the only Soviet successor state where the titular nationality did not constitute a clear majority²² upon achieving independence.²³ In the period following independence, the population’s make up has become more strongly Kazakh, and this has been attributed to the outpour of non-Kazakh groups from the country combined with the return of the Kazakh diasporas from abroad. President Nazerbayev has portrayed Kazakhstan as a melting pot of peoples, languages and cultures and insists that Kazakhstan is a Eurasian state, home to Slavic and other ethnic groups.

However the rising Kazakh population majority in the country seems to confirm the concept of Kazakhstan as a homeland of autochthonous Kazakhs. The ongoing emigration of non-Kazakhs and the sharp increase in Kazakh representation in state bureaucracy, government and most state-controlled sectors and enterprises, have strengthened nationalising trends.

The demographic preponderance of Russian speakers in Kazakhstan led to Kazakhs becoming the most linguistically and culturally Russified of all Central Asian ethnic groups.²⁴ The destruction of the nomadic way of life and elimination of the Kazakh language elite by various Soviet purges, severed Kazakhs from their traditional culture and heritage. New Kazakhs raised in the Soviet system had little choice but to learn Russian.

By the 1980s, many Soviet scholars began to draw attention to the high degree of native language loss among Kazakhs. Census data for 1989 shows that 98.5% of Kazakhs indicated Kazakh as their native/mother tongue.²⁵ This data was misleading, as respondents answered based on which language they saw as connected to their ethnic group. In contrast, less than 1% of Russians in Kazakhstan claimed ability in Kazakh, the lowest level of proficiency in the titular language of any Soviet republic. The disparity between the figures and the actual language situation led to the general acceptance at least that there was a serious problem.

The debate on a suitable language law began in the Soviet period and can be said to have finished in 1995

when Kazakh was claimed the sole state language. Russian has the status of a language of “inter-ethnic communication.” The language law, and the subsequent language policy due to interpretations of the law, made most non-Kazakhs, particularly European²⁶ nationalities uneasy because of their lack of proficiency. It also unsettled the Russified Kazakh elite who had little or no knowledge of their native language. Their ethnicity at least offered them some cover from non- Kazakhs, but this did not prevent attacks from their ethnic kin who accused some of being *mankurts*.²⁷ This, seemingly, paved the way for Kazakh nationalists and national revivalists to begin a policy of linguistic assimilation.

However, the outward migration of Slavs and Germans did much to establish a stable ethnic situation, while those who remained acted as a buffer for ethnic conflict, particularly linguistically Russified groups, such as the Koreans. The economy slowly stabilised thanks to expert manoeuvring by President Nazerbayev in the energy sector and strong control of the political reigns of power.

The President is no longer greatly interested in the language issue. The introduction of proficiency tests or the proposed introduction of Kazakh as mandatory, for certain positions in the state administration, have both been rejected. The presidency and the chair of both houses of parliament require the incumbent to be fluent in Kazakh,²⁸ but a requirement that state officials learn Kazakh within ten years has now been dropped. The law which requires 50% of all media broadcasting to be in Kazakh has also been weakly enforced with most channels broadcasting in Kazakh at non- prime time slots, though this is set to change this year. The state has also made the stipulation that school books be made available in Kazakh if they wish to be published.

International firms, and others dealing with the state apparatus, are required to make all documentation available in Kazakh. This has led to the creation of a large number of jobs, which some would see as unnecessary, but which will promote use of Kazakh in the work place and as a language of bureaucracy.

The official government line on the mass migration of non-Kazakhs has been deemed to be economically and not politically motivated.²⁹ Whether this is true or not, the flow of people seems to have stabilised somewhat. Although Kazakhs now make up the majority of the population, their political clout seems to be running ahead of their demographic weight.

Current circumstances indicate that an ethnic nation-building process is underway, but it may simply be a smokescreen for transference to civic nation-building, which may become more acceptable at a point in the future. President Nazerbayev has made it clear that Kazakh has a central role to play in the creation of Kazakhstani patriotism, but Russian also has an important role to play. An article in the Kazakhstani social science journal *Saiasat* in 1996 noted that ‘today, it is the Russian language that creates the basis for the unity of all Kazakhstanis. It functions as a means of communication all over the republic and enables social interaction among all citizens in the country,³⁰ across social, demographic, territorial and professional group boundaries.’³⁰

There has been little opposition to the state’s version of nation building, as most of the opposition groups

concerned are badly organised, and those that are seem too extreme, e.g. Lad or Edinstvo, (Alash and others on the Kazakh side). Part of the reason for the lack of opposition can also be attributed to the respect President Nazerbayev commands among all ethnic groups. Most of all, those who do not speak Kazakh can get by without knowledge of Kazakh for the time being, while their children, regardless of whether they go to Russian or Kazakh medium schools, will have some knowledge of Kazakh in the (Kazakh) ethnically dominated Kazakhstan of tomorrow.

Attitudes among Kazakhs, particularly as only about 50% of Kazakhs speak their mother tongue fluently, recognise the need for Russian for stabilising Kazakhstan's development. Russian is not only the language of Slavic groups, but of almost all non-Turkic minorities, who clearly will not be returning to their homelands en masse. Ethnic groups such as Koreans are clearly here to stay in Kazakhstan, and have been slowly laying foundations for their own cultural revivals.

State language policy in Kazakhstan, when taken at face value, has been successful so far. Kazakh is now recognised as the sole state language under the constitution. Kazakh's status has been greatly boosted and Kazakh usage has increased both among Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. This seems set to increase as Kazakhs hold sway in the population stakes. On the ground there is a serious gap between the long term goals of state language policy and their implementation. Many Kazakhs, particularly in cities, recognise the usefulness of being able to issue basic pleasantries in Kazakh, but will often switch back to Russian. The increase in non-Kazakh users of Kazakh must be attributed to the schools and military, where Kazakh is obligatory, but the standard of Kazakh taught here is poor, and once out of the army or classroom, most non-Kazakhs continue to use their own native tongue such as Russian

In conclusion, President Nazerbayev in 2000 claimed that the language issue had been solved in Kazakhstan.³¹ He went on to encourage Kazakhs to speak Kazakh with their children and reminded all citizens that it was their duty to learn the state language. Responsibility for advancing the cause of language has now been shifted to the intelligentsia, and all eyes will now be on the power struggles of the people of Kazakhstan to see what the outcome will be.

Conclusion:

The conclusions drawn here from the viewpoint of those backing Kazakh language revival are not necessarily the author's own personal opinions. They have also been made as compact as possible for the benefit of this paper. For a more in-depth understanding of language revival and nation-building the bibliography should be consulted.

In all three countries it would appear that state language policy have been too ambitious and at times lacked sincerity. The idea of linguistic assimilation should be a gradual one, and should begin with consolidation of those who use the language already. If the long term goal in Kazakhstan is to make Kazakh

the real primary language of all ethnic groups within Kazakhstan, then they should first concentrate on Kazakhs. Once the majority of Kazakhs are using language freely it will come to play a dominant role in society. Then and only then can a case be made for assimilation.

A redefining of language policy in all three countries is needed. Is the aim linguistic assimilation or linguistic pluralism in Kazakhstan? Is the goal to introduce Kazakh as a language of bureaucracy or as a spoken language of the Kazakh people?

As we have seen in all three countries, once the independent state has stabilised politically and economically, and in the case of Kazakhstan, ethnically, interest from the state in language planning eases off and the onus is shifted to the people of the state. When the individuals make the choice, one language is often chosen at the expense of the other. The factors governing language choice, particularly in Kazakhstan, are something I hope to look at in future research.

Estimating the status and numbers of speakers of any particular language, particularly when completing a census, is very rarely an exact science. Direct and precise questions on language should be asked at census time, and I have my own suggestions on how this can be done, but each country must formulate questions specific to their own circumstances. If an accurate language policy is to be formulated then this issue must be addressed so that those responsible for language planning will have the most reliable information available. UNESCO has given guidelines for estimating the endangerment of language and these guidelines would also be appropriate for those who wish to formulate a successful and just language policy. These are:

1. Intergenerational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers
3. Proportion of speakers in the total population
4. Trends in existing language domains
5. Response to new domains and media
6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use
8. Community members attitudes towards their own language
9. Amount and quality of documentation

UNESCO does not offer a definition of what people's linguistic human rights are, which is unfortunate. The lack of democracy in Kazakhstan may actually force people to use a language rather than choose it, and this may work in favour or against the Kazakh language revival.

Once language laws have been made and a language policy has been begun, they must be followed through diligently and rigorously. More often than not, languages have suffered as a result of contradictory educational policies, feeble enforcement of language laws and state usage of the languages in question in state bureaucracy, administration and state enterprises.

Kazakh should be maintained in its traditional strongholds in the south of Kazakhstan, but these areas should be simultaneously developed economically and socially; if they are not, they may become "fish-bowls" from which Kazakh people wish to escape.

Nynorsk and Irish have not managed to conquer any urban centre and this has been critical in their decline. The continued use of the languages in isolated rural areas has been a worrying trend. Seosamh Mac Grionna once said that the rebirth of the Irish language would not happen in the Gaeltacht, but in the streets of Belfast, and this is a telling statement for all three languages. Language use can be maintained, in a somewhat artificial way in these areas, but if language revival is to be a success then it must be taken to the cities.

While it might be too early to say that the rebirth of Kazakh is happening on the streets of Almaty, Kazakh is clearly growing in stature in the cities of Kazakhstan and the number of Kazakhs arriving from the countryside is increasing all the time. There is a risk that they may be swallowed up in Russophone cities like Almaty but the government has had a clear role to play in the urban fight of the Kazakh language. The relocation of the capital to Astana in the Russian dominated north, has also meant the relocation of state bureaucracy en masse, and with it, all of those Kazakh users working for the state departments, ministries, enterprises and so on.

The state has created opportunities for Kazakh speakers in all cities by the insistence on Kazakh as the official language. If they persist with this then cities like Atyrau, Aktau, Uralsk, Aktobe and even Astana, may become Kazakh language dominated cities. In the future, oblasts of administration may be given the choice of choosing their language, as in Norway, and this might provide a more stable and realistic situation for both Russian and Kazakh. A decentralisation of government may also cause Kazakh to spread through the country.

As we saw with all three minority languages (Irish, Nynorsk and Kazakh), there is often a dearth of educational resources. The link between nationalism and languages is so much to the fore in minority languages that most literature has a tendency to be based on the traditional way of life, national heroes, etc. and this has caused a backlash among youth, who do not wish to be reminded of bygone days or that they have failed their forefathers by having a poor command of their native tongue. There is much work to be done in addressing the apolitical attitudes of youth in all three countries.

Media usage of Kazakh should increase in quality. As we have seen in Ireland, the lack of good media will only deter people from using their native language. However quality programming in TV,³² radio and other media has had very positive results.

Minority languages need to be modernised, and this will come at a price, if they are to survive for the long term. Kazakh is a young language in terms of literary history, but little is being done to make it possible to use Kazakh by all walks of life. This is essential if people are to choose Kazakh as a language of instruction in school, language of the workplace and so on. Languages evolve and borrow from other languages and fear of loan words often comes from traditionalists or nationalists whose ideologies will only see the language go backwards in terms of development.

Stereotypes of identity associated with the languages are obstacles to be overcome. The identities people choose often contradict the identities offered by their national language, so state language policy, and language revival, must ensure free usage and identity of language as people choose it. In all three countries national identity is being redefined in the context of a global community. More and more emphasis is being placed on state creation of a civic identity (e.g. Kazakhstani) which transcends nationality, race or ethnicity.

In conclusion, to plan an entire country's language policy based on the nation, an imagined community, or governed by nationalism is flawed and leaves language policy with no firm root in reality and can only lead to minority language decline. Language planning will most certainly be the domain of nationalists and politicians in the nearest future in Kazakhstan, but language revival need not be solely their domain. Nazerbayev may have hit the nail on the head when he put the onus of language revival on the people in 2000. Language revival should not come from the top down as we have seen in Ireland, but from the bottom up and it will be the people, whether they knowingly accept responsibility for it or not, who decide the fate of the Kazakh language.

Endnotes:

¹ Wardhaugh, Ronald (2002) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Fourth Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. P 353

² This paper will not attempt to deal with Irish in the North of Ireland, and all opinions and data are based on the current linguistic situation in the Republic of Ireland.

³ Reg Hindley "the Death of the Irish Language"

⁴ Red Star Research Project: Provision of Services for Russian Speakers in Ireland 2003 professional property of the author

⁵ Garda Experiment conducted by Red Star in 2003, professional property of the author

⁶ This is an interesting parallel with the situation in Kazakhstan during the 20s and 30s when the ethnic Kazakh population was decimated by famine as a result of bad harvests, forced collectivisation and settlement of nomads.

⁷ Author's private correspondence with Ros Mac Thoim in March 2004.

⁸ Greek = literally sprung from the land

⁹ Irish speaking area, but also Gaeltacht, English speaking area where the state has also ensured that English is the primary language.

¹⁰ In 1957/58 there were 232 all-Irish and Irish medium primary schools in the state, outside designated Gaeltacht areas; by 1969/70 this had fallen to 43. Post-primary Irish-medium schools fell from 81 in 1957/58 to 15 in 1980/81.

¹¹ For more on the LFM see "The Celtic Revolution" by Peter Berresford Ellis (1985) p123

¹² R. A. MacCartney "A Plan to save the Irish Language by creating a New Town in the Gaeltacht" <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/r.a.mccartney/>

¹³ The last Irish monoglots died out in the 1960s

¹⁴ It is noted that attitudes to Irish speakers in the North of Ireland differ significantly and Irish speakers are respected in working class catholic areas.

¹⁵ An attempt was made to reverse this convergence with a spelling change to Bokmål in 1981

¹⁶ Author's interviews with students at the University of Oslo, 2004

¹⁷ Author's interviews with Noregs Mallag employees in Oslo, 2004

¹⁸ Peter Trudgill "Norwegian as a Normal Language" taken from the paper available on www.sprakrad.no

¹⁹ Prof. Lars S. Vikor "Nynorsk in Norway" taken from the paper available on www.sprakrad.no/nynor.htm and reasserted by Prof. Vikor in an interview with the author in Oslo, Norway, May 2004

²⁰ The youth wing of Noregs Mallag, with 1,400 members under 26, is politically active campaigning against Microsoft and Dagsbladet, though this is in opposition to the majority of its members. Field Research, Oslo, Norway, 2004

²¹ I surveyed a group of 20 students from the University of Oslo and asked them whether Nynorsk should be an obligatory subject in non Nynorsk areas and 18 answered that it should not be taught in non-Nynorsk areas, with several students claiming that it was a difficult and pointless language for modern Norwegians. Field Research, Norway, May 2004

²² 1989 Census showed that Kazakhs made up 40.1 percent of the entire population.

²³ On the 16th of December 1991, Kazakhstan became the last Soviet Republic to declare independence from the crumbling remains of the Soviet Union.

²⁴ Bhavna Dave “Minorities and Participation in Public Life in Kazakhstan” for the Commission on Human Rights

²⁵ The term used in census questions was the Russian “*rodnoi iazyk*”

²⁶ European in this context and the broadest sense of the term is given to mean Slavs, Germans and other ethnicities.

²⁷ *Mankurt* is a term which alludes to sense of rootless-ness and cultural amnesia, and is taken from the novel “The Day Lasts Longer Than a Hundred Years” by Chingiz Aitmatov, and refers to a mythical character who could not remember his past.

²⁸ Many have questioned the current President’s Kazakh proficiency

²⁹ Author’s interview with Mr.Erlan Idrissof, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the UK in 2004

³⁰ Berik Abdygaliev, ‘Iazykovaia politika v Kazakhstane: sostoianie i perspektivy’, *Saiasat*, 1996, no 5 (12), pp. 31-38, on p. 37.

³¹ Available on <http://eurasia.org/ru/2000/>

³² This refers to the Irish TV station TG4 which has had huge success in attracting viewers who do not necessarily have a good command of Irish. A particular coup was the decision to show rugby, a game associated with English traditionally, on TG4 with Irish commentary.

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