Structural Idealism

by

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Abstract

My thesis presents a model for social theory and for historiography that amalgamates structuralism (i.e. the notion that ideas and cultural values are the product of social structures) with historical idealism and sociological interactionism (i.e. the notion that ideas and values guide and create social structures). One of the core theoretical ideas in my doctoral thesis is the "structural ideal", which is a modification of Max Weber's *ideal type:* a **structural ideal** is a rule or norm that produces "structured" action in people's everyday lives, and thus produces (and reproduces) social structures.

My two chief theoretical sources here are Anthony Giddens's structuration theory and R. G. Collingwood's historical idealism, although I discuss many other theorists, including Kenneth Burke and Pierre Bourdieu's views of language as they relate to social consciousness, contemporary continental thought from Nietzsche to Baudrillard as a form of intellectual production, and cultural theory from Lasch to Saul as potential "models" for a structural idealist theory of culture. My overall goal is to present, at least in the form of what is admittedly a rough sketch, a unified theory of social and historical explanation.

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Prologue

Go, gentlemen, every man unto his charge:
Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls:
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devised at first to keep the strong in awe:
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
March on, join bravely, let us to 't pell-mell;
If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.

Richard III, Act V, Scene iii

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Structural Idealism: Introduction

General Comments

One of the most enduring divisions within metaphysics and in a more vague sense within philosophy as a whole is that between those who posit mind and those who posit matter as ontological starting points. This division gets played out within sociology as the debate between *agency* (the focus on individual decision-making, with the associated assumption of a relatively free, rational subject) and *structure* (the focus on the social, economic, and in general the material forces that shape, guide, or determine human behaviour). It also gets reflected in the philosophy of history and in historiography in the debate between historical idealists like Hegel and historical materialists like Marx, the progeny of each to this day debating the basic motive forces in history.

It may seem trivial to point out that both the idealists and the materialists have grasped but part of a larger truth. However, only a few social and historical theorists have attempted to put forward a position that encompasses both of these poles (Anthony Giddens, the English social theorist, attempts to do just this with his *structuration theory*, an approach that parallels my own). This is precisely what I will do in this thesis: put forward a *structural idealism* as a model for both social theory (speaking synchronically) and for historiography (speaking diachronically). *Structural idealism* is an expression I have coined to refer to the need to explain human actions simultaneously in terms of the ideas that human actors bring to the situation and to the way that previous actions have created social structures which condition the ideas of present actors. My goal will thus be to bring together idealist and materialist ways

of explaining social action.

At the core of my structural idealism is what I call "structural ideals", which I take to be micro-phenomenological cases of Max Weber's ideal types. They are the missing link on the one hand between the historical idealism of Collingwood and the focus on agency and individual reasons for acting in Peter Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science* and in symbolic interactionist theory (e.g. the work of Herbert Blumer), and on the other the social structuralist approach of the Marxist tradition (e.g. as carried on by Sartre in his *Search for a Method* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*). Human beings are beings who by reflex are intentional (as the phenomenologists observe) and meaning and value-creating (as Nietzsche made clear *ad nauseam*). Yet the flowing of human intentions into meaning and values is not an isolated, solipsistic process, but a social one. We produce and reproduce patterns of behaviour that are embodied in legal and moral codes, standard operating procedures (e.g. filing systems, timetables, stopping at a red light and going on a green, etc.), rules of etiquette and politeness, "rational" ways of attaining goals, and so forth. We can speak of all these patterns of behaviour as pointing towards ideals (e.g. of perfect politeness, social order, or ethical behaviour) that are seldom if ever reached, yet all the same inform at both the surface and at deeper psychological levels our everyday thought. The search for these ideals is the task of the social theorist and the philosopher of history, just as the task of the empirical sociologist and the working historian is to describe the way that these ideals manifest themselves in practice in specific temporal and spatial locations.

Yet all this intentionality flowing into values and into the production of

meaningful social objects does not come from perfectly free, unrestrained, and creative individual human spirits. Instead, the *social structures* bequeathed to us by past efforts at the creation and preservation of social meaning and values stand before us, to no small degree like those ancient Mayan pyramids that emerge from the jungle of the Yucatan to startle the explorer or traveller, covered with obscure hieroglyphs that only the expert can decipher. We know, more or less, *what* these structures are, but few of us question *where* they come from, *how* they affect our social actions, or whether they have any value for us in the present. Like those Mayan pyramids, social structures have solid material bases, in the way that economic arrangements are constituted in the society in question, an observation long familiar to historians and sociologists, but one that is all too often forgotten by philosophers in their almost single-minded preoccupation with *the argument itself* divorced from the social and historical context from which it came. Thus in arguing for a structural underpinning for social rules I am at the same time arguing (in part) for an *historicist* foundation for philosophical argumentation.

Yet having said all of this, I believe that Collingwoodian idealism (and its allies in social theory, e.g. Weber, Winch, and the symbolic interactionists) has something important to say to the social structuralists. "All history is the history of thought" is Collingwood's famous dictum: we can understand the past only by rethinking the thoughts of past actors, of the *agents* of history, by telling the story of past *acts*, not just of *events*.[1] Of course, these thoughts must leave behind them

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[1]See my article in *Eidos* (11: 1993), "Collingwood's Hermeneutic of Acts and Events in Hisorical Explanation", for an outline of this distinction.

palpable evidence for us to rethink them, i.e. documents, buildings, art, coins, etc. We *think through* these objects to the thought behind them. So far, so good. But too many interpreters of Collingwood's method (if indeed it is a method and not just a description of the *a priori* conditions of history in general) have claimed that it closes the door to social and economic interpretations of the past due to its methodological individualism, its ignorance of the role of unintended consequences, and its excessive rationalism. I would like to suggest instead that if we are prepared to play somewhat roughly with Collingwood's central doctrines, and to do a bit of extending and reshaping, we can indeed tie in his idealism to a social structural interpretation of human behaviour. This is and will remain to the end the basic telos of my thesis, although it may seem at times forgotten in my sideways explorations of a number of connected issues over the next couple of hundred pages.

Before I go on to a chapter-by-chapter summary, I would like to bring to light a spectre that will periodically haunt my work, that of postmodernism. Although a many-layered social, cultural, and intellectual phenomenon, the specific spectre I have in mind here is that which whispers to the social and historical theorists that there is no truth, that all values are equally valid, that meta-narratives are ailing, that the author is dead, and that the individual human subject is an illusion. Although I will address postmodernism as a social phenomenon in my sixth chapter, it is important to note early on how postmodernist doubts about our capacity to either understand the social present or to reconstruct the historical past lurk phantom-like in the wings of this intellectual production. I now turn to the promised chapter-by-chapter breakdown.

A Summary of Each Chapter

One. The Nature of Social Consciouness: A Theory of Mind

Here I will sketch out a theory of social consciousness, one that in later chapters (especially chapter four, on reconstructing the past) will feed into the broader model of social and historical explanation I wish to put forward in this thesis. Drawing on (among other sources) R.G. Collingwood's *The New Leviathan* and *The Principles of Art*, Anthony Giddens' social theory, Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*, and in a backhanded way on Hume's *Treatise*, I will suggest a four-part division of our social consciousness, between embodiment, passionate action, purposive action, and intellectual action. My theory of social consciousness will provide a phenomenology of mind for the historical and social theory to come. Part of this will be to take seriously Collingwood's suggestion, at the beginning of *Speculum Mentis*, that all thought exists for the sake of action, which finds echoes in Gilbert Ryle's social and action-orientated concept of mind. In addition, I will look at theories of rhetoric and language like Kenneth Burke and Pierre Bourdieu to suggest social consciousness involves the use of language as a symbolic form of social action, which produces social rules, social roles, and hierarchic structures.

Two. Intention, Meaning and Structure in Social Explanation

In this chapter I outline what I take to be the basic elements of my structural idealism by presenting a tripartite model of social explanation. This model encompasses the intentions of the actor, the (social) meaning of the act, and the social structures implicating and implicated in that act. Also, I will lay out in some detail

what "structural idealism" means, including a preliminary definition of "structural ideals". Overall, I will argue that social explanation requires an account of each of these three elements (i.e. intentions, meaning, and social structure) to be complete.

Three. A Structural Idealist Analysis of Theories of Deviance

Here I will apply the intention/meaning/structure model to two theories of deviance: the labelling or transactionalist view of deviance found in Howard Becker and Stan Cohen, which sees deviance as the product of a "labelling" process undertaken by various "moral entrepreneurs" (i.e. the state, the church, the media) that control most of public discourse, and what I term "new subcultural theory", which sees deviance, especially as found in subcultural groups like the Mods and the Punks in Britain, as the product of an attempt by largely working-class youths to resist the (ideological) hegemony of the ruling classes. By matching up these two approaches to the template of my structural idealism, I show how they are each only partial theories that blend into each other at their methodological edges, i.e. somewhere within the "meaning" band of my intention-meaning-structure theoretical spectrum.

Four. Reconstructing the Past: A Structural Idealist Approach

This is my central historiographical chapter, in which I "rehabilitate" Collingwood's philosophy of history by reshaping it into my structural idealist framework. The basic focus of this chapter is Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, taken both as an *a priori* condition for historical knowledge and as a concrete

methodological tool. Secondary to this discussion is a brief restatement of my theory of the four levels of social consciousness as they relate to historical theory and further remarks on what I mean by "structural ideals".

Five. The Search for Depth Meaning as the Essence of Late Modernity

In this chapter and the next I attempt to do some large-scale sociology of knowledge within the spirit of my structural idealism. Here I will look at the general social and intellectual contours of modernity, claiming that the "essence" of modernity (roughly speaking, most of the the last hundred or so years) is the search for meaning in depth, taking Nietzsche, Freud and the sociology of knowledge as case studies of this search. I will try to show how this search for depth meaning is connected to the structural meta-ideal of rationality.

Six. The End of the Search for Depth Meaning as the Essence of Late Modernity

I then go on to try to show how the essence of the postmodern condition is the abandonment of the search for meaning in depth, speculating on the social and economic conditions that gave rise to this abandonment. I look at Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Baudrillard as cases in point. This chapter ends with a glance at four of the "selves" that dominate the contemporary social/intellectual landscape, the performing self, the cynical self, the narcissist, and the private self, thus allowing a smooth transition to my last major chapter on cultural critique.

Seven. The Contribution of Structural Idealism to Cultural Critique

Here I will look at the potential of my structural idealist model as a springboard into cultural critique, by examining the social critics Christopher Lasch, Frederic Jameson, Albert Borgmann, Charles Taylor, and John Ralston Saul. I will also look at critical discourse analysis and at what I call the "Canadian school of cultural critique". I believe that the dualistic and fluid nature of my model, one that gives credence to the reality of both the material basis and the intellectual and ideological aspects of social consciousness, opens the door to wider possibilities of cultural critique than are possible in more monistic and rigid modes of social and historical understanding, e.g. varieties of economic determinism. I end by making some suggestions of what a unified social theory might look like, calling for a revival of the expansive eighteenth-century use of the term "morals".

I will now turn my attention to a theory of social consciousness, of the human mind acting socially and historically, that will act as the "metaphysical" foundation for my structural idealism. I begin by asking the question, "how do we approach the social mind?"

Chapter 1. The Nature of Social Consciousness: A Theory of Mind

1. The Sympathetic Social Mind

At the end of Book I of what is perhaps the greatest single philosophical work in the English language, Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature,* the author expresses his frustration at his failure to reach the comforting port of certainty after his circuitous voyage through the rough waters of a sceptical metaphysics:

> But before I launch out into those immense depths of philosophy, which lie before me, I find myself inclin'd to stop a moment in my present station, and to ponder that voyage, which I have undertaken, and which undoubtedly requires the utmost art and industry to be brought to a happy conclusion. Methinks I am like a man, who having struck on many shoals, and having narrowly escap'd ship-wreck in passing a small frith, has yet the temerity to put out to sea in the same leaky weather-beaten vessel, and even carries his ambition so far as to think of compassing the globe under these disadvantageous circumstances. My memory of past errors and perplexities, makes me diffident for the future. The wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of the faculties, I must employ in my enquiries, encrease my apprehensions. And the impossibility of amending or correcting these faculties, reduces me almost to despair, and makes me resolve to perish on the barren rock, on which I am at present, rather than venture myself upon that boundless ocean, which runs out into immensity. (Hume 1888: 263-264)

Hume would have to try another route to reach that port, through an analysis of the human passions, eventually ending up in moral waters (taking morals in the expansive, Enlightenment sense of the term). When navigating through these waters his guiding sextant is the concept of sympathy. He took it as obvious that:

> In all creatures, that prey not upon others, and are not agitated with violent passions, there appears a remarkable desire of company, which associates them together, without any advantages they can ever propose to reap from their union. This is still more conspicuous in man, as being the creature of the universe, who has the most ardent desire of society, and is fitted for it by the most advantages. We can form no wish, which has not a reference to society. A perfect solitude is, perhaps, the greatest punishment we can suffer. Every pleasure languishes when enjoy'd a-part from company, and every pain becomes more cruel and intolerable. Whatever other passions we may be

> actuated by; pride, ambition, avarice, curiosity, revenge or lust; the soul or animating principle of them all is sympathy; nor wou'd they have any force, were we to abstract entirely from the thoughts and sentiments of others. Let all the powers and elements of nature conspire to serve and obey one man: Let the sun rise and set at his command: The sea and rivers roll as he pleases, and the earth furnish spontaneously whatever may be useful or agreeable to him: He will still be miserable, till you give him some one person at least, with whom he may share his happiness, and whose esteem and friendship he may enjoy. (363)

Without getting into Aristotelian teleology, it seems fairly obvious that we human beings are social animals and that we have some awareness of what can be done and cannot done *as* social animals. The seas and rivers may indeed roll as we please, but the first step on the long road towards a complete explanation of human social behaviour must be the assumption of shared sentiments.[2]

There was a methodological side to Hume's view of the power of sympathy: we can explain the similarity of manners and customs within a nation or people in terms of the principle of sympathy. He starts by saying that "the minds of men are mirrors to one another": we reflect each other's emotions, passions, and sentiments, presumably through discourse (365).[3] Indeed, Hume finds there to be no quality of human nature "more remarkable... than that propensity we have to sympathize with

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[2]Thomas Nagel seems to be suggesting the exact opposite in his *The View from Nowhere*. He says there that my point of view is only one among many, and that his cherished centerless conception of the world must see all the other points of view as on roughly equal footing (1986: 57). Instead, I suggest that social consciousness must be seen as precisely a *centered* point of view, centered in a given time and place (or, as I will outline in chapter 2, in structural ideals).

[3]Pierre Bourdieu (1992: 91) repeats this point in outlining his language-centered theory of social practise: "The mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors." He was, no doubt, unaware of Hume's prior formulation.

others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own." To this principle "we ought to ascribe the great uniformity we may observe in the humours and turn of thinking of those of the same nation", even over the influence of soil and climate (316-317). So Hume uses the principle of sympathy in a non-determinist, almost idealist sense (i.e. in the sense that people's actions are determined by ideas, not material circumstances) to account for the uniformity of social behaviour within a slice of space/time.

Adam Smith agreed with Hume wholeheartedly in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Even in the case of the self-interested egoist, there is a principle of sympathy that moves us to be concerned with the plight of others:

> How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it... That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it. (Smith 1908: 3)

Like Hume, Smith moves his discussion of sympathy from seeing it as a salutary psychological principle to seeing it as a means by which moral and other social beliefs are communicated. According to Smith, moral approval and disapproval are based on the degree of synchronicity of sentiments between the actor and the person judging them: "If, upon bringing the case home to our own breast, we find that the sentiments which it gives occasion to coincide and tally with our own, we necessarily approve of them, as proportioned and suitable to their objects; if otherwise, we necessarily disapprove of them, as extravagant and out of proportion" (18). So in

judging others, we try their words and actions in the court of our own sympathetic minds. It will be the principal concern of this thesis to determine the best theoretical methods we can use to try these words and actions, including sorting out what counts as evidence in this courtroom.

The social mind is structured in many ways. But to even begin to understand this structure, we must assume that Hume and Smith were to some degree right in seeing social consciousness (part of what Hume would term "human nature" or "morals") as founded on sympathy. By "sympathy" I do not mean a sort of weepy hand-holding of a friend in pain, but the social-psychological connection with others and a communication of sentiments (moral, political, aesthetic, and so forth) by means of this connection. This connection, as we will soon see, is effected by and large by means of language as a symbolic form of social action. Thus by sympathy I mean simply a *pre-rational communication of sentiments of judgment.* It is the basis of the individual human consciousness of self as social beings. As Collingwood puts it, the relations "between sentient organisms as such are constituted by the various modes of sympathy which arise out of psychical expression of their feelings" (*PA* 248).[4] We can only understand the words of others by attributing to them the idea or ideas which these words arouse in ourselves, by treating them as our own words (*PA* 250). To understand the words or actions of others, we must first "sympathize" with the motives, reasons, feelings, and so on affecting the person being judged, and make judgements based on this constellation of prior factors. In short, judgement abhors a

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[4]I shall refer to Collingwood's works, which are central to many of the arguments I make in this thesis, by initials. In this case *PA* refers to *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1938).

vacuum: it requires a network of shared social meanings between judge and judged.

So social consciousness involves the sympathetic communication of sentiments of judgement. This communication is at the heart of the social mind. Consciousness can be defined as "social" (as opposed to personal) in so far as it (1) *intends* (in some fashion) objects, (2) which objects are social in the sense that they are *shared.* To intend purely private objects is to be non-social (if not anti-social). Thought and action in the social realm cannot be clearly separated: hence I will use the term "thought/action" to refer to the various ways of acting socially. Thought in solipsistic isolation may either intend nothing, nor "act" in any way, but all social consciousness, to be social, is both intentional and active. And, as previously argued, social consciousness is *sympathetic* in Smith and Hume's sense: our minds reflect their judgements back and forth in an endless swirl that acts as the raw material out of which is constructed social rules, roles, structures, and hierarchies.

Anticipating what is to come in the remainder of this chapter, my model of social consciousness can be represented as a sliding scale of forms, with each form linked in an equilibrial flow with the forms before and after it. We start with the individual **sympathetic social mind,** which acts in the social world and produces meaning through **discourse** (chiefly by means of using language as a symbolic form of social action). Discourse produces **social rules** of many varieties, some of which flow together into constellations we call **social roles,** sets of rules which define a person's lot in life (e.g. in terms of their profession, their being a husband or wife, a friend or enemy, etc.). Finally, some of these constellations of rules issue in uneven relationships between one type of role and another, in which case we see how some

people have **power** over others. And when power comes into play, it is inevitable that **hierarchies** are constructed. And these hierarchies cycle back, reshaping the various forms of action of the individual social mind. Here is the model of social consciousness I will defend in this chapter in diagrammatic form:

A Model of Social Consciousness

*The individual **Sympathetic Social Mind** [consisting of Bodily, Passionate, Purposive, and Intellectual Thought/Action]* <---->
***Discourse**, which creates social meaning; including **Language as Symbolic Social Action** [studied in rhetoric and hermeneutics]* <---->
Social Rules <---->
***Social Roles**, which are stable, spatio-temporally situated collections of rules semi-consciously followed by a social agent* <---->
Power <---->
***Hierarchy**, and other forms of social structure* <---->
[back to the individual mind]

2. Embodiment

The phenomenological starting point of any model of human consciousness or existence is the body. As James put it, the "sense of my bodily existence, however obscurely recognized as such, *may* then be the absolute original of my conscious selfhood, the fundamental perception that *I am*" (1904: 41). Embodiment is the basic level of social interaction. We exist as a body in a space filled with other bodies. Possessing bodies is precisely what people do, what they are (Ricoeur 1992: 33). We are, to use religious language, *incarnated* into the world.

We can speak of bodily thought/action in so far as our body has basic needs

and drives, such as hunger, thirst, sexual desire, security, etc., and seeks to fulfil these needs and drives in its social interactions. Of course, the dialectic of social interaction drives us instantaneously beyond the unsullied pursuit of physical satisfaction in all but the most extreme cases (e.g. the man dying of thirst who stumbles half-dead into a bar in the desert and gropes for a glass of water), leading us to express our bodily drives in passions and purposes that transcend in part these drives. We do not, under normal conditions, simply lunge at objects of sexual desire, hunger, or thirst without plan, purpose, or etiquette. Indeed, there are usually elaborate social conventions and rules surrounding the pursuit and consumption of these objects.

On this level we are directly aware of our body and its surrounding environment. It is the sensuous and perceptive flux considered in and of itself. Freud's tripartite division of levels of consciousness comes in handy here. Bodily action straddles the psychic dimensions *unconscious* (that which is not before the mind but is operative all the same) / *preconscious* (that which is not before the mind but is recoverable by "paying attention") / *conscious* (that which is before the mind), but excludes *self-consciousness* (being aware of something that is before the mind). Of course, these divisions are rather artificial. But they are heuristically valuable as a way of spelling out the different psychic foundations of each level of thought/action.

As Collingwood points out, it is probably most useful to see mind and body as the same "thing", expressed in two different ways (*NL* 2.43).[5] This is a point that Ryle echoes, *ad nauseam* perhaps, in his *The Concept of Mind*. Mental categories are distinct

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[5]I will adopt Collingwood's own numbering system to refer to the paragraphs of his *The New Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1942).

from physical ones, and there is no point in looking for universities or team spirit in academic buildings or cricket bats. Similarly, we can speak of a given human action using either mentalistic or physicalistic language without being entirely "right" in either case. As Ryle points out, if we form an antithesis of the mental and the physical, muscular doing cannot itself be a mental operation (1949: 32). Instead, it is probably more accurate to see even muscular actions as performed by an incarnated self saturated with ideas.

But all the same there is a sense in which bodily action is unwilled and prepurposive. We should not abandon ourselves to a total epistemological relativism on this point, and ignore the analytic value of postulating distinct levels of thought/action. On its most primitive level, the psychical expression of feelings is uncontrollable. A grimace, physiologically speaking, is indeed an action, but it simply comes and overwhelms us (*PA* 234). Our embodied selves exist prior to reason, intention, or purpose. In terms of distinguishing feeling from thought (which should not be seen as anything more than useful analytic fictions), we can follow Collingwood (*PA* 159) in comparing the flux of feeling to the flow of a river, and thought to the relative solidity and permanence of the soil and rocks that make up the channel. Similarly, in terms of distinguishing our incarnated from our passionate, purposive, and intellectual selves, the separation is no clearer than that between the watery flux of our bodily drives and the sandy banks of the passions and purposes that they give birth to (not to mention the rocky islands of the intellectual apparatus that we invent to glorify, excuse, or justify them).

When we write the "history" of embodiment as a pure and separate form of

human experience, we cannot do anything more than record what Benedetto Croce called a "chronicle", a recitation of various states without any conceptual or narrative structure to tie them together. Unless we describe embodiment in purely physicalistic language (i.e. "grimace X was caused by psycho-chemical reaction Y"), to form such a narrative we need to postulate more or less reconstructible passions or purposes on the part of the agent. The reconstruction of these passions and purposes moves us beyond pure incarnation, to my second and third levels of thought/action.[6]

3. Passionate Action

On this level of action, which subsumes embodied drives at the same time as it reaches out to purpose and the intellect, people act on the basis of the passions. This is not to suggest that purposive and intellectual action, contra Hume, is not driven in some way by the passions, but instead that we can analytically separate the passionate aspect of purposive and intellectual action from their other components. But all the same there would be no human acts at all if it were not for the passions that drive us to act (whether it is to court a woman, conquer a province, or invent the atomic bomb), just as there would be no human passions if it were not for the living body that serves as their locus.

At its most basic level, we can speak of a feeling as having two elements: a *physiological or sensuous element* (such as sensing a colour, or the twitch that causes one to grimace) and the *affective charge* attached to that element (e.g. the unpleasant

[6]I deal more extensively with the question of what types of historical thought/action can be reconstructed in chapter 4.

sense that accompanies the grimace) (*NL* 4.1) When we have a feeling, there is some element within us that responds to a physiological change emotively. We can also speak of feelings as radiating out from a central focal region, where they are more precise and intense, toward an outer zone of dimness and confusion (*NL* 4.44). This regionalization of feeling is both spatial and temporal: one's hatred of a despised enemy decreases as he leaves the room and walks away; it also fades as time passes, unless he reappears to excite it once again. When a given feeling, whether of cheerfulness, whimsy, or depression, invades our consciousness and colours our entire present experience, we can speak of a meta-feeling, or *mood,* as dominating us. But moods, like feelings, eventually fade away too, although unlike feelings they are usually nonspatial, i.e. not dependent on any physically immediate cause (although they can certainly be triggered by such a cause).

A person emerges from a state of simple feeling by an act of conceptual and practical consciousness: they identify the feeling that is affecting them, and decide to do something about it (*NL* 7.2,7.21). Collingwood said that appetite "is what thought makes out of feeling when thought develops by its own activity from mere consciousness to conceptual thinking" (*NL* 7.6). We can call an unreflective practical decision to act on an appetite or bodily drive a *passionate decision,* and its result a *passionate action.*

At this level we see human beings passionately acting on embodied drives in the social world. It is here that we can speak of *desire,* of projecting onto some object (the "object of desire") some passion or other (whether it is love, hate, possessiveness, hunger, or even indifference). The difference between appetite and desire is that

whereas appetite is a mere *wanting* X, desire is *knowing* that you want X (*NL* 11.1). Borrowing from Freud, passionate action is where *cathexis* takes place, where the amoeba-like arms of the human passions reach out into the world to embrace the desired object over some period of time, with some degree of consistency. Again, as with embodiment, passionate social consciousness straddles the mental spectrum unconscious/preconscious/conscious.

It would be lax at this point not to address one of the central issues of psychoanalytic theory, in so far as it is of great importance to the way that passionate and purposive thought/action interface with each other. In his passing salute to psychoanalysis, Collingwood speaks of its value in exposing the various ways in which consciousness can be *corrupted*. Specifically, he mentions the disowning of experiences, which we call *repression*; the ascription of our experiences to others, *projection;* their consolidation into a homogeneous mass, *dissociation;* and the building up of a bowdlerized experience which we take for our own, *fantasy-building* (*PA* 218-9). The classic case of a corruption of consciousness is the first, repression, a forced return of our basic sexual and aggressive drives to their home in the underworld of the id. Freud's conscious and perceptual part of the mind, the ego, acts as a constitutional monarch over the psyche as a whole, "without whose sanction no law can be passed but who hesitates long before imposing his veto on any measure put forward by Parliament" (Freud 1962: 45). It is a psychic figurehead as far as repression goes: it has to use borrowed forces (aided by the internalized punishing father, the super-ego) to keep in hand the reins of psychic power and hold in check the id.

The result of repression on a social level is a discontented civilization, one where our incarnate drives, especially our sexual ones, are frustrated by social mores (Freud 1969: 58). As Freud says, it is easy for a barbarian to be happy, but much harder for a civilized person (42). A purely passionate actor would be a free and happy social agent. But a society of such actors would, no doubt, be full of nasty, brutish, and short lives. So we must adopt purposes to regulate our passions, to give those passions a chance to be satisfied in a social environment full of other actors seeking to fulfil their own passions.

4. Purposive Action

So human beings are incarnated things who desire various objects to satisfy their bodily drives. But not only do we desire various objects, we form *plans* to obtain these objects. We act according to preconceived notions about the point of our actions. When we act by forming plans to attain an object of desire, whether we successfully carry out the plan or not, we can say that we are acting *purposively*, or, more simply, that we are doing something *on purpose*. This purposiveness can be either conscious or self-conscious. Needless to say, not all acts are purposive (e.g. the unconscious swatting of a fly that lands on the back of your neck), and not all purposes are clearly thought out before we take action. But once we decide to formulate a plan that involves one or more future actions directed towards an object of desire, we can say that we have a "purpose" in mind.

Indeed, once we achieve the level of purpose we can speak of an action being moral or immoral, for we can identify a prior state of mind (whether we call it a

reason, cause, or purpose) that led to the action and which can be judged as fair or foul. "Goodness" is a thing of the mind bestowed upon whatever possesses it by the mind's practical activity in the form of a desire, and discovered by the mind's reflective activity which, as acting purposively, now for the first time assumes the form of knowledge (*NL* 11.68). Collingwood suggests that we can answer the question "why did you do that?" three ways: (a) because it is useful, (b) because it is right, or (c) because it is my duty (*NL* 11.65-11.68). Whether this list is exhaustive of all possible descriptions of human purposes is hard to say. But we can say that social consciousness is easiest to understand and reconstruct as rule-governed, involving people collectively doing or not doing "the right thing"; while personal or biographical consciousness is more easily described in terms of people acting according to utility or duty.[7] But in general, there is an important sense in which past human acts must have a purposive component to be fully reconstructible (see chapter 4 for the full story in this regard). Thus social theory usually assumes a teleological component in human acts if these acts are to be understood.

We can explain human purposes either in terms of reasons or causes. As Ryle notes, when we explain an action in terms of a person's character or motives, we are identifying a *reason* for the action (1949: 89). Indeed, both Collingwood and Peter Winch prefer rational to causal explanations of action, Collingwood partly on the ground that the point of history and philosophy is to study mind in its logical and rational mode, leaving to psychology a study of its irrational, sensuous elements. Yet

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[7]Of course, these divisions are not mutually exclusive or ontologically "real": personal and social consciousness are joined inseparably in the same mind, while "right" actions can also be useful or dutiful, both for the individual and for society as a whole.

just as purposes cannot be reduced to purely physical processes, we cannot understand them purely in term of reasons either. As Ricoeur suggests, "one can see how fluid the border is between reason-for-acting, forward-looking motive, mental cause, and cause as such (a grimacing face made me jump). The criterion of the question "why?" is therefore firm; its application surprisingly flexible" (1992: 69). Indeed, the grammar of notions like "drive", "affect", "disposition", and "emotion" can force us to articulate the rational and intentional character of an action into a type of causal explanation, the teleological (78). Perhaps it is better to echo what Ryle and Collingwood have said about the mind/body split: that rational and causal explanations of human purposes are just two different ways of describing the same thing.

However, only once we have gotten to the level of purposive thought/action in our journey through the levels of the social mind can we speak of choosing reasons for action at all, for only here does a judging consciousness first appear. Our passionate consciousness does not reason, but grasps, gropes, or lunges. Our intellectual consciousness *only* reasons, from time to time recording these reasonings on paper or some other medium (as I am doing right now). It is our purposive consciousness that *chooses* one reason to act over another, although only the most dogged defender of free will would suggest that this choice is undetermined by physical and psychological background factors. I now turn to the fourth level of social consciousness, the intellectual, and to a summary of the sympathetic social mind as a scale of forms.

5. Intellectual Action

Last but not least, we come to intellectual action, or thinking abstractly. Intellectual action is at least conscious, if not self-conscious (as it should always be within the realm of philosophy). It is usually associated with theorising about the world in some sense, as when a sociologist "theorises" about society, a psychologist about the mind, or a historian about the past. So this is "reason" taken in the good old rationalist sense, the sort of reason that Hume tried to deconstruct in the *Treatise.* Hume was right in saying that our reason is the slave of our passions, but wrong in thinking that this was the end of the story. It is best to see reason as a sort of travel-guide for our passions and purposes: the tourist (i.e. the person of passions and purposes) decides what province or country to visit, the guide (i.e. our reason) makes the travel arrangements and chooses the most interesting local sites to visit. More generally, intellectual action, "reason" in the traditional sense, is an analytically separable form of thought/action, but one which very much rests on the foundations of our incarnate selves guided by passions and purposes.

How does rationality enter into individual social consciousness? We can sum this up in terms of a "Rubric of Rationality", which follows:

Given purpose X motivated or driven by passion Y, what is the best, i.e. the most rational, means to fulfil this purpose and therefore satisfy this passion?

I believe that (outside perhaps of someone solipsistically contemplating a purely intellectual problem) this rubric governs all human thought/action, and is thus the principal way that rationality enters into social consciousness. The problem which arises in debates over social rationality comes when we try to define the word "best"

in the rubric above: do we mean by "best" that which is instrumentally efficient? or that which tends to produce a whole and authentic self? or aims at some sense of communal organic good? or at a transcendent religious sense of the good? These are questions concerning the moral *content* of rational decision-making, a content which varies, but all of which can be theoretically contained within the structure suggested by my rubric of rationality.

We can follow Collingwood's distinction (*NL* 14.3) between *theoretical reason,* which reason involves making up your mind *that* (e.g. a given proposition is true or false); and *practical reason,* the sort of reason which involves making up your mind *to* (e.g. fly a kite, invent a perpetual motion machine, etc.). Intellectual action can be conveniently fitted into Collingwood's category of theoretical reason, while practical reason covers purposive action (and perhaps the fringes of passionate action). So even theoretical reasoning (whether orientated to immediate movements in physical space or not) is a form of action, is directed towards purposes, motivated by passions, and taking place, in a curious way, "within" a body. The failure to see human beings as either integrated wholes or as (to use a Freudian metaphor) fields where our various psychic and physical forces do battle led to Descartes' famous dualist dilemma, and Ryle's somewhat less famous attack on the Cartesian solution as a category mistake. Just as idealism and structuralism each paint only an element of a larger picture with respect to social and historical theory, dualism and monism each capture only an element of a larger truth with respect to being human.

Intellectual action takes place through various forms of discourse, the most important of which is symbolic language. Spoken or written languages are the most

important cases of such symbolism, although not everything within a spoken or written language is symbolic. Symbolism is intellectualized language (speaking figuratively, the "expression" of intellectual emotions). Intellectual language has both expressiveness and meaning: as language, it expresses emotion; as symbolism, it refers to the thought whose emotional charge it is (*PA* 269). And we must not forget that there are many activities that displays qualities of the mind, but are not intellectual operations e.g. playing a sport (which can display strategy) or singing a song (which display emotional depth) (Ryle 1949: 26). Having said all this, intellectual action refers to the level of social consciousness which involves theorising, in Collingwood's terms knowing *that*. It is the symbolic expression of feelings, passions, purposes, and facts, and the relations between them.

In *Speculum Mentis*, Collingwood speculated that the map of the mind could be divided into five provinces of knowledge: art, religion, science, history and philosophy. He saw these five provinces as distinct concrete forms of experience and activities of the cognitive mind, but at the same time as not autonomous or mutually exclusive, but as dialectically linked together (*SM* 39, 306).[8] To bring together my discussion of the social mind, I will mirror Collingwood's dialectical scale of the forms of knowledge by suggesting that we see the four levels of social consciousness as a dialectically linked scale of forms that interpenetrate each other in real human actions. Contra Sartre's rigid division of the *in-itself* (which is inert and determined) from the *for-itself* (which is the very essence of free human activity) as a description of being-in-the-world, social consciousness is a continuum of these four levels

[8]I refer here to Collingwood's *Speculum Mentis* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924).

dialectically linked to each other. I separate them only because I believe this separation to be heuristically useful when trying to build either a social theory or a philosophy of history. When we try to understand *what happened* or *is happening* for a group of human beings in a given place and time, we should allow ourselves to make the sort of distinctions which I have outlined here so that we can know what elements of human action can be described, explained, and/or reconstructed, and which ones cannot.

Analytic separations in the philosophy of mind are only useful against the background of the realization that human thought/action takes place within an arena where physical, psychic, and spiritual forces are constantly warring, where even sleeping and perchance dreaming offer no escape from the conflicting drives of being human. Be that as it may, they can help the theorist to understand how human beings behave, and should be at the core of any truly persuasive social or historical hermeneutic.

As Ricoeur observes (1992: 58), action is that aspect of human doing that calls for narration, story telling. And it is the function of narration to determine the "who of action", to construct a self. When we write a narrative, the internal dialectic of character transmutes chance into fate, constructing the identity of the character (147).[9] The fate of an individual character, or social actor, is constructed out of speculations on and reconstructions of their goals, purposes, and ideals. Life plans take shape

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[9]MacIntyre (1984: 211-212) agrees, noting that we render actions intelligible only in the context of a set of narrative histories. This leads him to conclude that the "unity of a human life is the unity of narrative quest" (219). I will argue in chapter 2 that narrative provides the middle element in social explanation, meaning.

"thanks to a back-and-forth movement between more or less distant ideals, which must now be specified, and the weighing of advantages and disadvantages of the choice of a particular life plan on the level of practices" (157-158). These ideals are partly individual and intentional, partly structural, as we will see in the next chapter. But they are mostly expressed in language as a symbolic form of social action, to which I now turn.

6. Language as Symbolic Social Action

At it most basic level, language is an imaginative activity that expresses emotion by means of some bodily organ (*PA* 225,235). If we engage in a bit of whimsical archaeology surrounding the origins of language, we might guess that the first attempts at regularized communication between proto-humans involved physical gestures accompanied perhaps by grunts and squeals. It is in this sense that Collingwood might not be too far off the mark in calling *dance* the mother of all languages (*PA* 244), in so far as dance expresses emotion through purely physical gestures. As we move from practical to theoretical consciousness, language becomes more and more symbolic, torn from the somatic and passionate foundations that fuel this expressiveness. Symbolic, intellectual language presupposes imaginative language. But those who call for a purely symbolic language, where each symbol has a single invariant meaning or use (as in symbolic logic), tend to forget this: without a significant emotion to express, even the most pristinely perfect symbolic language is

pointless.[10] "The grammatical and logical articulations of intellectualized language are no more fundamental to language as such than the articulations of bone and limb are fundamental to living tissue" (*PA* 236).

If we call any attempt to communicate meaning to other living beings, by whatever means, "discourse", we can call "language" any attempt to formulate discourse into a formal code of marks, sounds, or gestures with which diverse people can communicate with each other, whether they are friends, enemies, or strangers. It might sound almost trivial to make this claim, but human thought/action for the most part becomes meaningful only when it expresses passions and purposes by means of some form of symbolic language. As Wittgenstein observed, the meanings of words and phrases uttered or written in everyday life varies with their use. They are not rigorously invariant (as in formal symbolic languages like logic and computer codes). But their use shares family resemblances to the degree necessary for others to comprehend our actions as the expressions of passions and purposes.[11]

We can establish a link here with Gadamer's hermeneutics, taken with a grain of salt. He suggests that language "is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world" (1976: 3). If we mean by "world" our social world as constituted by symbolic and expressive

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[10]A conclusion that Wittgenstein also came to as he moved from his earlier logical atomism to his notions of meaning as use and of language as based on forms of life in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

[11]Of course, the degree of understanding varies widely with circumstances, the skill of the interpreter, and the sanity of the agent. If we say that an insane person is one whose passions never reach the level of purposes, then this makes those purposes unformulatable and thus makes them all the more difficult to understand.

language, then our being-in-the-world is indeed constituted by language. He further suggests that it is not our judgements but our prejudices that constitute our being (9), and that language is a reservoir of tradition whereby we exist and perceive our world (29). I believe that Gadamer is half right here: it would be more proper to say that our judgements and our prejudices (which come from tradition) are indissolubly interconnected, assuming we take the word "prejudice" not in its English sense of "unfair bias", but in the French sense of *préjugé*, pre-judgment. Our pre-judgements, our basic presuppositions, affect our judgements, and vice versa.[12] When we make a judgement we do not make it in a vacuum, but draw from a reservoir of past judgements that have congealed into social rules and norms. Judgements are ontologically grounded in this reservoir, but can also transform it (or else social changes would never take place).

Another useful way of seeing language as a form of symbolic action is through rhetorical theory. Kenneth Burke, who originated the notion of language as symbolic action, has put forward a rich set of theoretical notions that have significance outside of his ostensible subject-matter, rhetoric. For Burke, "Man, *qua* man, is a symbol user. In this respect, every aspect of his "reality" is likely to be seen through a fog of symbols" (Burke 1969: 136). Our being-in-the-world, to engage in Gadamerian excess, is thus both linguistic and symbolic. Within a symbolic system, we transcend animality and become human, entering the realm of symbolic action (Foss 1985: 166). Within this system we often attempt to persuade others to do things. And wherever

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[12]A process which Anthony Giddens calls *the duality of structure*, as we shall see in chapter 2.

there is persuasion, there is rhetoric, just as wherever there is meaning, there is persuasion (160).

Burke's definition of rhetoric combines the classical notion of rhetoric with modern social scientific ideas: rhetoric is "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or induce actions in other human agents". It is "rooted in an essential function of language itself... the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (quoted in Foss 1985: 157). Social consciousness is not entirely symbolic, although in so far as we can understand it, it is.

Burke suggests that a complete understanding of the motive of a given rhetorical act, a given act of persuasion, can only be given in terms of his *pentad,* which consists of *act, scene, agent, agency, purpose.* The *act* is any conscious, purposive action; the *scene* is the ground, location, or situation where the act takes place; the *agent* is the group or individual who acts; *agency* refers to the means or instruments used to accomplish the act; and the *purpose* is the overt or covert purpose the agent has for performing the act (Foss 1985: 168-170). Burke is describing rhetorical acts with his pentad. But it could be adapted quite neatly to social and historical explanation, especially a Collingwoodian or Winchian sort of explanation that emphasizes conscious and rational action. Similarly, it could be used to explain at least what I call purposive thought/action along the structural idealist lines that I will argue for in this thesis.

So Burke's pentad offers the social theorist a rhetorical model to explain human motivation. But human beings for Burke are not only symbol using animals,

but also beings that aspire towards perfection in word and deed. We have *ideals*. In fact, we are haunted by these ideals in our everyday actions, only rarely living up to them. Burke's definition of a human being incorporates this striving for perfection:

> Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal
> inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative)
> separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making
> goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)
> and rotten with perfection. (Burke quoted in Foss 1985: 182)

The fact of our being rotten with perfection, through the use of the "negative" in judgement, plays a structuring role in social consciousness, by shaping ideals that help collectively guide human action.

Pierre Bourdieu expands on Burke's notion of language as symbolic action by pointing out how this action, by creating a symbolic capital that gives different weight to the linguistic actions of different agents, creates a symbolic domination (1991: 72). Bourdieu points out that from a strictly linguistic point of view, anyone can say anything. But from a sociological point of view, they cannot, except at their peril. A private in the armed forces cannot order a general to attack, nor students correct their own tests, nor children tell their parents that they cannot have dessert if they do not behave. One cannot separate an act of speech from its conditions of execution, from the social world that it is part of. The claim to act on this world "through words, i.e. magically, is more or less crazy or reasonable depending on whether it is more or less based on the objectivity of the social world" (74-75). So the use of language as symbolic action is not just a freely willed, spontaneous, creative act, but also a tapping into already existing rules to express an emotion or achieve a

purpose, which (as we will see) produces hierarchical structures.[13]

But before we leave this discussion of language, it is important to take note of Ricoeur's ontological vehemence in favour of the priority of the flesh as a mediator between the self and the external world. It is upon a prelinguistic relation "between my flesh localized by the self, and a world accessible or inaccessible to the 'I can' that a semantics of action is finally to be constructed which will not lose its way in the endless exchange of language games" (1992: 325). Our embodied selves are always "there", at the core of social interaction and consciousness. The body, the repressed, always returns, in the form of embodied drives and the passions they support. The most sublime mathematical thinking is quickly interrupted by a sexually attractive passing body; the deepest metaphysical speculations are dissolved by a pang of hunger at lunchtime. Indeed, symbolic language is often merely a sophisticated means by which the flesh seeks out its objects of desire.

7. Social Rules and the Creation of Social Roles

But language games move us to another level of social interaction, where conscious and unconscious social rules are constructed, obeyed, or violated. Social action is governed by what Ricoeur calls "constitutive rules", rules which turn what in itself is a meaningless physical or linguistic act into a social meaningful one. An example is the gesture of shifting the position of a pawn on a chessboard: it would not count as a "move" without a constitutive rule that gives the gesture its

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[13]This is what Bourdieu means by the "objectivity" of the social world. I decline to use this notion myself because I think that it is more accurate to describe social structure as a virtual reality, not as objectively real.

meaning as a move (1992: 154). Constitutive rules are not moral rules; they simply rule over the *meaning* of particular gestures, making them "count as" waving hello, hailing a taxi, etc. But they point towards moral rules (155). Constitutive rules *constitute the meaning* of a given act as a social act. Without constitutive rules, no one could use language as a symbolic form of social action, nor could the theorist or historian reconstruct social action as meaningful.

We can observe many intelligent performances in social life without their involving formulated rules or criteria (Ryle 1949: 30). Indeed, the following of rules often becomes second nature in a skilled performer: we know that someone understands the game of chess and is a good player by observing the moves he makes and avoids (41). But there is more to social action than the mere following of rules. In the chess example, we can follow Ryle in noting there is a great difference between following the rules of the game and applying tactical principles to the game to achieve victory: we cannot reduce chess strategy to a mere following of rules (78). Similarly, most social action is not merely the following of rules, although it in some sense *instantiates* these rules. It instantiates what Giddens calls "practical consciousness", which refers to "the tacit knowledge that is skilfully employed in the enactment of courses of conduct, but which the actor is not able to formulate discursively" (1982: 31).

Rule-governed social action, the product of practical consciousness, can be contrasted with other sorts of action. As Collingwood observes, regularian explanations are partial ones: they never explain why someone does this specific act, just why they do an act of *this kind* (*NL* 16.63). We can speak of regularian social

action when a person in situation X decides to perform action Y because *it is the right thing to do*, given these circumstances. One contrast to regularian thinking is a consciousness of duty, where one might think of oneself as an individual, unique agent in an individual, unique situation performing an individual, unique action because one is compelled by duty (*NL* 18.52). We can still attempt to understand this way of thinking as a case of a person acting purposively without ever reaching the level of instantiating a social rule in their acts. But even dutiful actions take place against a social background of rule-following actors and acts. It would not be too hyperbolic to metaphorically describe social consciousness as a web of social rules which we agents have spun for ourselves, over time, only to find ourselves later caught in this web.

Social roles are more or less stable, spatio-temporally situated collections of rules followed by individual social agents, for the most part only semi-consciously. One can play the role of a student, a professor, a mother, father, chess player, artist, and so on by following the rules associated with each social game (e.g. the artist by living in a garret, painting and trying to sell their work; the mother by caring for her children, etc.). One's life is usually a constellation of these roles locked together, like links in a chain. Erving Goffmann's sociology is helpful here in showing how social roles are constituted. For Goffmann, when actors take on a social role, they find that a particular front has already been established for it. The actor must both perform the task they aim at and maintain the front (1959: 27). They also project a definition of the situation that attempts to buttress the legitimacy of their front/role. This projection involves an implicit or explicit claim on a person of a specific kind, which

"automatically exerts a moral demand upon others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect" (13). In other words, a person performing a social role is making a moral claim that others obey the rules associated with this role (e.g. in the case of the teacher, listening attentively to her lecture; in the case of the policeman, according him the respect associated with an agent of law enforcement).

The performances of social roles, in Burke's sense, are rotten with perfection: they project idealized versions of the agent and his or her acts. But they also invoke the negative, again in Burke's sense, by concealing or underplaying those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with this idealized version of the agent and their products (Goffmann 1959: 48). Through the arts of impression management, the social agent constructs a series of roles by which they constitute themselves, in large part through using language as a symbolic means of social action. And those around the agent engage in a similar attempt at self-constitution through impression management. Through this impression management, communicative acts are translated into moral ones: the "impressions that the others give tend to be treated as claims and promises they have implicitly made, and claims and promises tend to have a moral character" (249). These claims are claims to some degree of perfection, to an ideal or ideals embodied in the agent's social acts.

The result of all this rule-following and role-creation is social consciousness. In its simplest terms, we can see social consciousness as a will to exist socially, as a form of practical consciousness *to* become a member and to go on being a member of that society (*NL* 20.2,20.2). This does not mean that social agents sign some sort of social

contract, either really or tacitly, but that in so far as their actions involve the following of social rules or the co-operation with others, they embody a social consciousness. As Ricoeur notes, to a large extent "the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, *in* which the person or community recognizes itself" (1992: 121). Social practices can be seen as moments when the character of the individual and the roles and structures of that individual's society mesh together in a multitude of ways. The result is social consciousness, as evidenced in social rules and roles. But these roles do not exist on a level playing field. Inevitably, some roles are constituted as having power over others, and hierarchies of roles (and thus of social agents) are formed.

8. Power, Hierarchy, and Social Structure

When we link together discourse, rules, roles, and dominance in social interactions, we need some sort of theoretical interface. Van Dijk, a critical discourse analyst,[14] suggests that such an interface can be provided by what he calls "social cognition". The exercise of power involves control of the public mind, of these social cognitions:

> Socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking, and arguing, inferencing and learning, among others, together define what we understand by social cognition. [They] mediate between micro- and macro-levels of society, between discourse and action, between the individual and the group. Although embodied in the minds of individuals, social cognitions are social because they are shared and presupposed by group members, monitor social

[14]I will have more to say about critical discourse analysis in my last chapter.

> action and interaction, and because they underlie the social and cultural organization of society as a whole. (van Dijk 1993: 257)

One of the major functions of dominant discourse is to manufacture consensus, the acceptance by the relatively powerless of the legitimacy of the dominance of the powerful. We can speak of *hegemony* when the minds of the dominated are influenced to accept the interests of the powerful as their own (255).

Van Dijk's definition of social cognitions and his description of how these contribute to hierarchies of dominating and dominated plays neatly into what I will term "structural ideals" in my next chapter. Both van Dijk's social cognitions and my structural ideals structure social consciousness and thus social action by providing actors with a series of presuppositions (usually in the form of social rules and roles) that they take for granted when engaging in social interactions. They also contribute to the formation of social hierarchies. Kenneth Burke suggests that in using rhetoric, we inevitably invoke the principle of hierarchy: the "hierarchic principle is inevitable in systematic thought. It is embodied in the mere process of growth, which is synonymous with the class divisions of youth and age, stronger and weaker, male and female, or the stages of learning, from apprentice to journeyman to master." The "naturalness" of the hierarchy's grades rhetorically reinforces the protection of privileges, the series often being transformed into rigid social classifications (1969: 141). In as much as a rhetorical act can be defined as an attempt to use language to persuade others to act, then these acts are a core element of social action, and contribute largely to the formation of social structures and hierarchies.

Bourdieu attempts to link language, social rules, social structure and hegemony in his theory of practice in a way that echoes both van Dijk's critical

discourse analysis and Burke's theory of rhetoric. His ontological premise is that the whole social structure is present in each linguistic interaction (1991: 67). Bourdieu sees this social structure as transmitted by means of *habitus* and *doxa*, roughly social habits and ideological beliefs, which I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 2. Bourdieu rejects the idea that interpersonal relations are ever purely individual. Echoing Ryle (probably unconsciously), he concludes that "it is their present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times and in all places, in the form of dispositions which are so many marks of *social position* and hence of the social distance between objective positions" (82).[15]

Bourdieu envisages a sort of "linguistic market" wherein social agents attempt to exercise their linguistic competences in a competitive struggle for *profits of distinction*. Extending the Marxist analysis of capitalist economic competition to social interaction, these profits of distinction cause linguistic capital to accrue to successful competitors (1991: 55). Once established as dominant, the linguistic practices of the upper classes are deemed "legitimate", against which are measured all other practices (52).[16] This acceptance of linguistic dominance of the upper classes becomes rooted in

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[15]Giddens notes in a similar vein that institutions and societies have structural properties in virtue of the continuity of actions of their members; but that those members can carry out their day-to-day actions only in virtue of their capability of instantiating those structural properties.

[16]For example, in Britain the Oxford/Cambridge English accent (as heard in BBC broadcasts) is considered the touchstone against which regional dialects are measured, to the detriment of these dialects (e.g. the cockney slang, the Scottish brogue, the Irish lilt, etc.). Similarly, Parisian French plays a similar role in Québec. However, in each case this may be changing, as the linguistic dominance of the metropolitan upper classes erodes in the face of displays of regional pride, often thanks to popular culture (especially

bodily dispositions, expressed in what Bourdieu calls "bodily hexis" (86). The everyday order of things imposes, through these bodily dispositions, thousands of "seemingly insignificant constraints and controls of politeness", different ways of talking and of bodily deportment that exact recognition of hierarchical differences between the classes, sexes, and generations (88). Thus for Bourdieu hierarchy penetrates all levels of social action, right from embodiment to intellectual action (although his clear emphasis is on how hierarchies are constituted by the linguistic marketplace).

Bourdieu's analysis of language, structure, power, and hierarchy is useful in its synthesizing mode, although he reifies his concepts and over-objectifies the controlling influence of linguistic social power on individual lives. Like Foucault, Bourdieu looks for insidious hegemonies in every nook and cranny of social interaction. But nevertheless, he is right in linking language as a form of symbolic social action to the dominance of powerful groups and classes within a society. Bringing together van Dijk, Burke, and Bourdieu, the spirit of hierarchy naturally invades the constitution of social roles and the social cognitions that support them. When we symbolically express our allegiance to a social role through language, we feed symbolic capital into that role, thereby supporting any claims to dominance it makes over other social roles. Social agents, by adopting given roles, find themselves situated within a hierarchy that is usually not of their making, but which they all the same support in so far as they play their role according to the rules established for it.

To put what I have said in this chapter in a broader perspective (and thereby

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television and pop music).

to build a bridge to my theory of social explanation, as outlined in the next chapter), the general presupposition of my structural idealism (following Giddens) is that action and structure dialectically presuppose each other, and that action is not a series of discrete acts, but a continuous flow of conduct (1979: 53, 55). This flow of conduct aspires towards ideals that are both individual and structural, channelled by "interpretive schemes", standardised elements of stocks of knowledge applied by actors in the production of interaction. These form the "core of mutual knowledge whereby an accountable universe of meaning is sustained through and in processes of interaction" (83). These social cognitions, otherwise known as "paradigms" (Kuhn), "absolute presuppositions" (Collingwood), "forms of life" (Wittgenstein), "epistemes" (Foucault), or "structural ideals" (me), are sustained and reproduced in the flow of social encounters (86).

Our interpretive schemes sustain our social consciousness through all four of its levels - the body, the passions, our purposes, and our intellect - as it expresses itself symbolically in language, and by so expressing itself creates social rules and roles. This whole process creates an external social world structured in various ways. Ultimately, as Collingwood noted early in his career, this external world is a picture of the mind itself, one that with time grows firmer and harder, takes surface and polish and steadiness, eventually becoming the Mirror of the Mind, reflecting in detail the mind's own face (*SM* 313). Of course, material reality is worked and reworked by social action. But the "the construction of external worlds - works of art, religion, sciences, structures of historical fact, codes of law, systems of philosophy and so forth *ad infinitum* - is the only way by which the mind can possibly come to that self-

knowledge which is its end" (315). When we do social theory or reconstruct the past, we are investigating social and historical consciousness, investigating the human mind as an incarnate, active thing. We are mirroring in our own minds the past and present thought/action of other social agents. Such theory can do no more.

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Chapter 2: Intention, Meaning and Structure in Social Explanation

Prologue

In this chapter I would like to propose a tripartite model of social explanation. My goal here is to produce a bird's-eye view of the archaeology of a social act within what I term a "structural idealist" model. Like Schliemann at Troy, where he discovered seven distinct levels of the ancient city, layered one on top of another, the social archaeologist can, I believe, unearth three distinct strata within any given social act: the *intentions* of the actor, the *meaning* of the act independent of those intentions, hermeneutically defined, and its *structural* context.[17]

"Intention" is univalent, and can usually be identified on a surface level with verbal utterance alone (assuming truth-telling actors), and is a good part of what Weber refers to as "subjective meaning".[18] An intentional account of an act must take

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[17]MacIntyre (1984: 206) hints at a theory that roughly parallels my own in suggesting that we cannot characterize behaviour independently of intentions, nor intentions independently of the settings which make them intelligible to both social agents and to those who observe them. He then goes on to note that to "identify an occurrence as an action is in the paradigmatic instances to identify it under a type of description which enables us to see that occurrence as flowing intelligibly from a human agent's intentions, motives, passions and purposes" (209). This multifaceted understanding of the origins and nature of human action is a useful starting point. MacIntyre goes on to construct a virtue theory of ethics on these foundations: I will save such questions for another day, preferring to stay within the realm of social theory here.

[18]For Weber subjective meaning can be broken down into *Ansich*, or what appearance means for me, and *Wissen*, or what that appearance means as a *certainty*. These two come together for Weber as *Begriff*, something grasped *in itself*. We can indeed collapse, on the most general level, our whole intention/meaning/structure spectrum into Weber's sense of meaning, but I would instead like to parallel Weber's *Ansich/Wissen* distinction with my own intention/meaning one, keeping in mind that I define the "subjective" meaning of an act in our most immediate awareness as *intention*, as what motivated the act in the mind of the actor. Thanks to Richard Helmes-Hayes of the University of Waterloo for clarifying this and other points concerning Weber.

the actor at his or her word as far as motivation goes. But "meaning" is another matter. I take it in a broader sense, as a series of bivalences (i.e. those between stated and unstatable intentions, conscious and unconscious thought, nature and nurture, or rationally justifiable political beliefs and disguised class interests, etc.) and requires a penetration beneath the surface intentionality connected with the act. This middle term I see as "hardwired" into the everyday sense of what an statement or action "means" over and above the conscious intention of the actor, as when we say, for example, that "her expression of anger towards her friend *really means* that her marriage is on the rocks and she is taking out her troubles on those around her", or "his libertarianism on the surface may be an expression of his love of freedom, but on a *deeper level* shows that he is an apologist for the rich", i.e. this belief *means* something other than that which its holder intends it to mean. Meaning comes to light through a narrative that embodies these bivalences.

"Structure" I take as multivalent, subsuming both intention and meaning, but not submerging them. It illustrates how the concrete individual act is connected with other individual acts. Social structures can affect individual intentions only through "structural ideals" (to which I will return later in this chapter), which we explain in large part by penetrating into the social *meaning* of an act or series of acts by individual agents. The methodological individualist vs. holist debate in social science is thus a false dichotomy, for social theory should be, at different moments, both individualist and holist. If it were solely individualist, it would be merely biographical, or at best the political history of the great. If it were merely holist, it would represent a retreat to early nineteenth-century positivism or to the grand

conceptions of the "laws of history" based on an excessive enthusiasm for the power of natural science to explain human events.

Structural ideals are those ideas that "intend" social objects, whether to create, shape, maintain, or destroy them. They are the rules that a social actor considers to be "givens" (whether morally, aesthetically, or practically) within their given situation. One could imagine the existence of personal ideals, i.e. those ideas that do not intend social objects, as a noumenal ground for structural ideals; also, there are certainly many "ideas" (or thoughts) that are non-intentional e.g. me simply picturing a canoe gliding across a Northern Ontario lake. However, as soon as this picture is charged with a longing to be in that canoe, it becomes in some small way intentional, expressing perhaps a vague desire to escape the noise of bustle of the city for a week or two.

I will term the theory I sketch out here "structural idealism" (although "structural interactionism" may have been just as appropriate) because I see social structure as expressed first and foremost in the collective and shared *ideas* that constitute social reality for a group of actors, but as being a real institutional horizon for social action all the same.[19] Of course, these shared ideas can lead to social stratification, to the social power of dominant economic classes and the hegemonic power of dominant cultural actors and groups (keeping in mind that these two forms

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[19]Of course, these "shared" ideas are held to differently by different people within a collectivity; also, individuals may hold only certain elements within a congerie of ideas concerning a given social object. For example, the average suburbanite might *generally speaking* share the ideal of a "law and order" society, but upon occasion speed or smoke marijuana. The policeman might be less lenient on such matters, the college student more so.

of power interact). In using each of these three central terms, I hope to stick as closely as possible to their ordinary English-language meaning, with suitable clarifications.

This model will be meta-theoretical, a prelude to social theory in general, in short, a sort of "critique of sociological reason". The point of this chapter will be to show how to arrive at a complete case of social explanation. As to *what* such a case involves, it must explain in a satisfactory way the human acts under investigation in the sense of telling a true story of these acts. The truth of this story should rely on an interpretive web the theorist casts over events, involving narrative on some level, that is intended to convince the reader while relating the events being considered to other (similar) events. I will not argue for sociological or historical laws here, and for causal explanations only in a limited sense i.e. in the sense that we can say that human "purposes" (whether conscious or unconscious, intended or unintended) "cause" events to happen. Instead, I believe that social theory should aim at a true interpretation of human actions that in some way generalizes their meaning beyond their original narrow temporal and spatial context.

I will discuss each of my three methodological levels in turn. In the next chapter I will discuss a major issue in sociology, deviance and subcultures, in terms of how well two major schools of thought on this problem fit my model. Here I will analyze two approaches to social deviance, i.e. in terms of labelling theory and interactionism, and in terms of the neo-Marxist New Subcultural Theory of the seventies and eighties. My point in doing this is to set up an enriching equilibrium between my own meta-theory and these two approaches within the theoretical province of social theories of deviance. But before doing this, I will first sketch out a

structural idealist model of social explanation.

1. Intention

A convenient starting point for social explanation is Weber's own starting point, the subjective meaning the social actor attaches to his or her act, especially within the social matrix that links it to the acts of others. As he himself puts it, we can only speak of a social action in so far as the actor attaches a subjective meaning to his or her act (1978: 4). And part of this meaning is the actor's taking into account the attitudes and actions of others. Human intentionality on this level of analysis is univalent in the following sense: the observer must accept the actor's own definition of the intention behind the act. There is no depth to be plumbed in the analysis of intentionality: although the *meaning* of an act may refer to something lying below the surface of an actor's stated reason(s) for acting, the actor's *intention* is simply the statement of that reason.

Proceeding forward from this Weberian axiom of social explanation, Peter Winch (1958) notes that the categories of meaning that underlie sociological investigations are dependent on social interactions between human beings. Further, the problems generated by these investigations are in fact philosophical problems, with such terms as "language" and "intelligibility" requiring prior philosophical analysis before we proceed along the road to social theory (43-44). Even at this early point in the process of theory building, in the analysis of human intentionality, philosophical considerations intrude themselves. Winch makes the point, in the spirit of Weber, that understanding social actions involves grasping the *point* or *meaning* of

what was done or said, and that this has nothing to do with causal laws, but is methodologically closer to the way we look at realms of discourse (115). We can take Winch at his word on the level of intentionality: to understand human intentions we must indeed grasp the point of what was done or said, and if we do not take this first step, our explanation of social action is doomed from the outset. Needless to say, we must go beyond this unidimensional grasping of the intentional "point" to completely explain a given social act.

Anthony Giddens (1982: 49) points out that if we want to connect human action with structural explanation we need firstly a theory of the human agent or subject, secondly, an account of the conditions and consequences of actions, and thirdly, an interpretation of "structure" as somehow embroiled in these conditions and consequences. All of this seems obvious, but I believe that Giddens' "theory of the human subject" should have a dual nature, that of intentionality and meaning, if it is to be a complete theory and if it is going to be able to provide a link to the third level of analysis, social structure. Human intentions, however, are not discrete things. It would be more proper to say, following Giddens (1986: 543), that there is a context of intentionality and practice that "saturate" any given social product. Human thought and human interaction are in reality processes, not collections of atomic units, although the analyst must, to some degree, treat them as such units to get on with his/her analysis. As Giddens (1982: 31) reminds us, intentional behaviour is itself a process, and takes place in the *durée* of everyday life. Each decision, thought, or act that we can reflect on and isolate from the others surrounding it is all the same saturated with the physiological grounding, emotive colouring and mental logic of its

neighbours when experienced in its immediate and original location in time/space.

Consciousness is intentional in so far as it is directed towards objects, whether physical or ideal. For the purposes of understanding a section of the flux of consciousness and the way consciousness is played out in social acts, it is useful to introduce an "analytical atom" that the social theorist can focus on and manipulate. This atom I will call *the phenomenological moment*. It is an act or series of acts that the social theorist accords unity for heuristic purposes. It is a slice of space/time containing a discrete quantum of human interaction. The size of this slice varies according to the interests and purposes of the social theorist. Within each such moment, we can discern the intention/meaning/structure network. A given phenomenological moment can be understood *synchronically*, as crossing the three elements of our theoretical network at a given point in time. Or it can be understood *diachronically*, within one level of analysis alone (say, just in terms of the actors' intentions), by showing how it is connected to prior and later moments in the same local series. For the social theorist, history and sociology are methodologically indistinguishable, although they are too often assigned the separate tasks of analyzing social diachrony and synchrony respectively in the traditional academic division of labour. A full analysis of a given phenomenological moment should include both history, with its more diachronic flavour, and sociology (at least taken in its structuralist mode), with its greater sense of synchrony.

One interesting analysis of a province of intentional discourse comes from Scott and Lyman (1968), who discuss the "accounts" people attempt to give of their untoward behaviour. They divide these accounts between *excuses* and *justifications*,

detailing several types of each. Their more general point is that the success or failure of an account offered to a given group, subculture, etc., will depend in part on the background expectations of each party (i.e. of the person offering the account and those listening to it). The point that Scott and Lyman make with respect to accounts can be generalized in a discussion of all sorts of behaviour: that the "success" or "failure" of actions often depends on a correct reading by the actor(s) of the background expectations, or structural ideals, relevant to the situation. Thus the success of intentional discourse can to a large degree be measured by the social meanings attributed to it by its intended audience, with these meanings being themselves to some degree structural products. The wrong meaning attached to a given discursive effort may doom the actor to being misunderstood or ignored.

Blumer's presentation of the premises of symbolic interactionism act as a useful methodological sextant with which to navigate our way through this level of analysis to the next, i.e. through *intentionality* towards *meaning:*

> (i) Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them.
>
> (ii) The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
>
> (iii) These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (1969: 2)

Blumer is further right to castigate what was traditional social science in his own day, e.g. the positivists and functionalists, for failing to go directly to the empirical social world in its work (32) (although any attack on functionalism today might seem to be little more than a red herring). This critique is especially well-taken on the level of intentionality, for it is easiest to get at the actual reasons that these actors have (or

would give, if asked) for their acting by asking them directly, or by using reliable written accounts of their actions.[20] So intentionality always exists in concrete human social interactions, which are themselves mediated by the meanings brought to these interactions. Part of this meaning is the stated (or statable) conscious intention of the actor.[21]

Another part of this meaning, however, is things like the unconscious drives of human actors, their metaphysical and ideological presuppositions, the social space and "spirit of the age" that the act takes place in, and the unintended consequences of the act. All of these phenomena (and others too) are tied to, but in some way transcend, the intentionality of the individual (the classic case of the unintended consequence showing how a series of individual acts can carry a social meaning intended by none of the individual actors). It is true, as Giddens (1979: 5) notes, that all actors have a degree of "discursive penetration" of the society in which they live. They are aware, on the level of discursive consciousness, of the social rules of the

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[20]Blumer's interactionism is such an effective bridge from intentionality to meaning in part because he himself does not rely on just the actor's "word", i.e. on their intentions, to get at the "meaning" of a social act.

[21]However, we must be aware of Bourdieu's critique of interactionism here, one that plays into my own thesis about the tripartite nature of social explanation. He chastises the interactionists for failing to realize that the truth of the interaction is never contained entirely just in the interaction: "In fact it is their present and past positions in the social structure that biological individuals carry with them, at all times an in all places, in the form of dispositions which are so many marks of *social position* and hence of the social distance between objective positions..." (1992: 81-82). Elsewhere, he makes the associated point that the whole social structure is present in each linguistic interaction, a fact ignored by interactionists, who treat each interaction as a closed world (1991: 67). Needless to say, the important question here is just *how* we carry these social structures that we are a part of within us.

game. But this awareness is inevitably less than total, both because of the cognitive limitations on the individual's being aware of all the discursive knowledge that there is out there, and also because his or her awareness is channelled or dammed up by the phenomena I see as central to the second level of social analysis: the unconscious mind, our basic presuppositions, the limited social and mental space that acts take place in, and the unintended consequences of our acts.[22]

To illustrate how this model of social explanation works, allow me to introduce two fictional characters. Tom is an impressionable young undergraduate at a local university; Mary is a professional woman in a dual-income suburban family. Whenever Tom encounters Professor X at school, he automatically and unconsciously treats him with deference, with a degree of *formal respect*. Similarly, when Mary encounters a police officer on the street, she accords him the same sort of respect. Built into these interactions are the subjective intentions of the actors in each situation, of course, but also something more. This formal respect paid to authority figures is a sort of *status*. The intentions of each actor explain only in part the according of this status. Tom may indeed ridicule Professor X behind his back for his clumsy and forgetful manner, but abandons this attitude of ridicule in his presence. This respect is "structural" in the sense that it is shared by Tom with most, if not all,

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[22]Under the rubric of unintended consequences we can distinguish two distinct types: those consequences that were merely unanticipated, which I will term *surface unintended consequences*, and the consequences of those events of which we have no consciousness but affect social reality all the same, which I will term *deep unintended consequences*. Both the surface and deep unintended consequences of our actions force social theory away from strictly intentional accounts of human behaviour towards an account of the social *meaning* of that behaviour, and eventually, I believe, towards an account of structural ideals (or at least some concept with the same denotative content).

of his fellow undergraduates as a given notion and is ingrained in Tom's practical consciousness. It is anchored in the reality of concrete interactions with the Professor. Its "meaning" may reflect on Tom's public character ("he's such a polite young man"), on his upbringing, on an unconscious projection of a stern and scolding father-image onto the Professor, etc. But both the meaning and the structure of Tom and Mary's respect for authority figures are tied to the phenomenological moments when each encounters these figures in a given time and space, i.e. in interacting with them, whether passively (e.g. in avoiding walking by the Professor's office when one's assignment is late) or actively (e.g. in politely asking a traffic cop for travel directions).

I conclude by noting that such a simple and common feeling as respect for authority can assume a multi-dimensionality when we try to bring it within the realm of social theory. In a sense, we can *enter into* any of the common notions associated with social interaction on any of the three levels I discuss in this paper, in terms of the actors' intentions, the act's meaning, or in terms of the associated social structure, and from that initial "slice" spread out our analysis into the other two terms. I suggest that none of the three levels of analysis has any special privilege, either methodologically or chronologically, although it seems more pragmatic to start with the subjective intentions of the actor(s) in explaining "what happened" in a given case because (a) this avoids the holist bias endemic to social sciences and (b) we are both morally and epistemologically obliged to take into account the individual actor's view of themselves *before* we impose any social meanings or structures upon that self-understanding. To continue my archaeological metaphor, when the social theorist

"digs" into a given social act, all three strata of explanation are simultaneously available if he or she works hard enough to get at them. The stratum investigated depends on the particular interests of the theorist, though I would like to claim that a complete archaeology of a social act should investigate all three strata, not ignoring the rubble covering his or her primary object of interest (as Schliemann did at Troy).

2. Meaning

When we leave the conscious intentions of the actor behind and ask "what is the meaning of his/her act?", we are forced to consider a series of bivalent sources of that meaning. These include (although this list is by no means exhaustive) conscious intentions vs. unconscious drives, conscious and truthfully stated intentions vs. conscious but falsely stated intentions, intended vs. unintended consequences, the prior conditions of the act of which the actor was aware vs. those of which the actor was not aware, the actor's reflexive interpretation of his/her own past acts vs. others' interpretations of it. Meaning, roughly speaking, encompasses both sides of each of these binary pairs. This leads us back to Weber. He claims that actions that cannot be related to an intended purpose are devoid of meaning (1978:6), but two pages later tells us that there are two types of understanding (*Verstehen*): Direct Observational Understanding and Explanatory Understanding. This latter mode of *Verstehen* is what he terms a "rational" understanding of motivation which involves "placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning" (8).[23] My claim here is that this

[23]Of course, prior to the use of *Verstehen*, Weber outlined social explanations that were adequate at the level of cause i.e. explanations that outlined general empirical regularities such as "events of the type 'A' tend to cause events of the type 'B'". These

very explanatory understanding (leaving aside the questionable validity of a separate "direct observational" understanding of a social act) is analytically distinct from an understanding of the actor's intentions, and can be better understood in terms of an analysis of the "meaning" of the act.

As Parkin (1982: 26) points out, in one sense *Verstehen* seems based on the idea that actors are typically aware of their motives and of their subjective states of mind, thus having no place for Marxist (or other) notions of "false consciousness". Yet Weber himself admits that only rarely is the subjective meaning of an act present in the consciousness of the actor:

> The theoretical concepts of sociology are ideal types not only from the objective point of view, but also in their application to subjective processes. In the great majority of cases actual action goes on in a state of inarticulate half-consciousness or actual unconsciousness of its subjective meaning. The actor is more likely to "be aware" of it in a vague sense than he is to "know" what he is doing or be explicitly self-aware about it (1978: 21).

This tension built into Weber's analysis of subjective meaning can be dispelled if we are willing to admit into that analysis "meaning" as a separate category from "intention". Meaning can go beyond the strictly intentional to the unintended and the unconscious. The constitution of "meaning" as a separate level of analysis frees us from Weber's self-contradiction on the question of how to understand the subjective meaning of an act as at the same time both intentional and unintentional.

The way that the meaning of our social acts escape us leads me back to Blumer and symbolic interactionism. The philosophical premise of the interactionist analysis of the social act is Winch's observation that our social relations with our

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were necessary for social explanation for Weber, but not sufficient.

fellows are permeated with ideas about reality, and thus we can say that social relations can be seen as ideas about (social) reality (1958: 22). Blumer moves forward from this Wittgensteinian premise to suggest that the "worlds" we live in consist of "objects" created by symbolic interaction (1969: 10). Human life is one vast process of forming, sustaining, and transferring these social objects, which have no fixed status unless their meaning is sustained (12). The social object is the focal point for the production of any meaning in a social act over and above that contained in the conscious intention of the actor.[24] The social meaning of an object, for example this essay, cannot be exhausted by even a thorough examination of my intentions in writing it. It is a social object at all only in so far as others read their own meanings into it (keeping in mind that these meanings might parallel quite closely my own in writing it), and also in so far as we allow the circumstances (including biographical, political, and economic) of its production to be part and parcel of its social meaning. We can speak of what the author "meant to say" in a given text, but also of what that text "means" in the greater context of his/her life, the "historical meaning" of the work, or even what the ideas contained in the text "meant" to the lives of its readers. That is, unlike an actor's intentions, the meaning of a social object must be *interpreted* (either reflectively by the actor, or by someone else, perhaps the theorist).

Meaning is constructed by means of a narrative of human action. The narrator

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[24]Bourdieu (1992: 79) agrees, saying that each social agent, "wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning", and that his or her actions are the product of a *modus operandi* of which they have no conscious mastery, containing an "objective intention" that always outruns their conscious intentions. He concludes that because social agents do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing, and what they do has more meaning than they know.

transforms constellations of intentions, consequences, unintended consequences, unconscious drives, background factors, and purely structural factors like social status and class origin into a historical narrative which hopefully compels the reader's attention, and which asks them to make a cognitive judgment as to its truthfulness (or at least its likelihood). Once this transformation takes place, the narrator has produced the social *meaning* of the actions in question. To merely list a series of the actors' intentions would hardly constitute an adequate narrative of events. Similarly, just to provide a record of the structural causes of behaviour without taking into account the actors' purposes would be too reductionist to be either true *or* useful. A narrative can present the social meaning of a series of actions only in so far as both the actors' intentions *and* the relevant structural factors are accounted for.

We are now pushed to consider the sociology of knowledge, which is so vital to an understanding of the "meaning" of social acts. Berger and Luckmann (1966: 1) take as their basic premise the notion that reality is socially constructed, and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process whereby this occurs. For the sociologist of knowledge, over and above any concern with intellectual history, the central focus must be the world of commonsense knowledge, that knowledge which constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist (14). This world of everyday life has a paramount reality, and is organized around the "here" of my body and the "now" of my present (21-22). Indeed, the analysis of this here and now has become an important part of sociology and history in the last twenty years, fuelled in large part by feminism and postmodernism, and especially by Michel

Foucault's archaeologies of knowledge and genealogies of the enchained body.[25]

Our understanding of this world of everyday knowledge requires us to move beyond the stated intentions of the social actors to the practical knowledge and unconscious processes that sustain everyday life. The social self is in a continual process of construction by the attribution of significance (i.e. meaning) by all those in contact with that self, from moment to moment. The evaluative aspect of this construction of the self ebbs and flows like the tides, depending on the words and actions of the actor. Our practical awareness of "how to do things" is what Berger and Luckmann call "recipes" for the mastery of routine problems (43). The uncovering of the "recipes" embedded in practical activities is a large part of what I mean by reconstructing the "meaning" of a social act. Needless to say, the actor may know how to use a recipe without being able to explicitly formulate it. This is one of the central tasks of social theory in so far as it seeks to produce a phenomenology of everyday life.

Without getting too deeply into the question of the social construction of the self, it is important to remember that our self-image and our image of others is the end product of a never-ceasing process of reflecting reflected images.[26] We see

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[25]See my "The Body as an 'Object' of Historical Knowledge" (1997) for an account and a critique of what I term "body theory", i.e. of sociological and historical discussions of the various paradigms of the human body in different times and places.

[26]Under Goffmann's dramaturgical model of how the self is presented on the stage of everyday life, the individual's goal is to control the conduct of others by controlling their definition of the situation (1959: 3-4). This way of looking at everyday life may be overloaded in terms of the degree of intentionality it accords social actors, as for Goffmann social actors are always trying to "con" their audience i.e. one cannot figure out their "true" intentions from their stated motives. His analysis lead him to the interesting conclusion that the self is not so much an organic thing with a specific location but a

ourselves as reflections of the way others talk about us and act towards us, which influences our future performances, which in turn influences the way these others will either maintain or revise their images of us. The social meaning of individual acts is usefully seen as tied to a series of performances given within the framework of an infinitely reflexive (and, as Lasch reminds us, sometimes narcissistic) construction of the self. This construction takes place largely by means of images communicated from the others present in the collection of phenomenological moments we call everyday life.

Weber saw hidden "motives" and repressions as one of the limits on the understanding of subjective meaning (1978: 9).[27] These were the subaqueous formations inaccessible to the surface-sailing social theorist. But, as Giddens notes, beyond discursive accounts of social action, there are many other forms of knowledge embedded in and constitutive of that action (1986: 536). He goes on to suggest that we must trace the origins of social meaning to the methodological apparatus embedded in the "practical consciousness" of the routines of day-to-day life (538). This "practical consciousness", this preconscious sense of how to do things, acts for Giddens as a link between the conscious and the unconscious. Both our practical consciousness and our unconscious drives enter into any full account of the meaning

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dramatic effect arising diffusely from the scene presented, and is thus a thing of collaborative manufacture (252-253).

[27]Motives, in everyday language, can be either conscious or unconscious, acknowledged or hidden. A conscious and acknowledged motive, such as "I went to work today to make money", is synonymous with an intention. But Weber means here an unconscious, hidden motive, the sort that we are reluctant to acknowledge, or simply repress.

of any given phenomenological moment. Although the stated intentions of the actor have a certain methodological primacy, we must further come to understand the practical knowledge that allows (or fails to allow) him/her to complete the act, along with the possibility that our awareness of the actor's unconscious impulses might help us to more fully comprehend the context of their intentions and therefore the *meaning* of the act. Thus a complete theory of mind for the social theorist would see the meaning of social acts as the product of (a) intentional consciousness, (b) practical consciousness, and (c) unconscious drives.

Of course, social theorists notoriously argue over the "meaning" of social acts. This lack of agreement has led to the postmodernist refusal to search for inherent meaning, to look for the "true" significance of behaviour. To generalize amongst at least the "sceptical" postmodernists (to use Pauline Rosenau's term), the social world is one great text for them, full of signs, all of which can be read in a variety of ways. However, the non-subjective meaning of an act is not like an empty ship adrift on the ocean, one which can be pulled by the determined tugboat/theorist any which way; it is instead anchored on the one side in the subjective intentions of the actor and on the other in the structural ideals that shaped the act. Although a social epistemology cannot provide a clear and precise formula to guide us to the "objective" meaning of a social act, if we keep ourselves firmly anchored to both intention and social structure we can avoid the postmodernist tendency to drift far out onto the waters of epistemological relativism.

Another dimension to explore as part of our tour through social meaning is the question of ideology, whether political, economic, or religious. It would seem

almost trite to claim that an important part of an analysis of the meaning of a social act lies in some understanding of the ideological presuppositions of the actor (or for the theorist, for that matter). But this is true all the same. Let us return to Tom and Mary at this point. Part of the social context of Tom's everyday life is the politically charged atmosphere of the campus he visits five days a week. Feminism, environmentalism, corporatism, and other political concerns influence the way classes are taught, the way students dress and relate to each other, and the way Tom speaks and acts towards those he sees as bearers of different ideological positions. For example, Tom is especially mindful that he does not say anything disrespectful of women when in the presence of his friend Jane both because he is quite attracted to her (the meaning of his acts being influenced by a strong biological drive) and because he knows that she is a radical feminist and will thus not tolerate the "looser" language that Tom uses in the presence of his male friends. In addition, Tom is (largely unconsciously) a *laissez-faire* liberal on moral and religious issues, and thus accords the right to others to believe in whatever they see fit as long as they do not try to impose their beliefs on him.

Mary, however, is in quite another boat. Although herself quite sympathetic to feminism, she works in the competitive environment of the middle management of a large corporation, with both men and women in positions of authority. Many of her fellow managers have no sympathy for her political views, and tell her so to her face, some of her male colleagues claiming that Mary's feminism is just a way of her compensating for her lack of success, so far, at climbing the corporate ladder. This infuriates Mary, but at the same time has taught her that she must shelve her

ideological position in most of her everyday relations with her co-workers. Instead she adopts, with some degree of cynicism, the ideology of competitive economic individualism favoured by those in positions of power in the corporation.

The point of these two brief cases is that the environments that Tom and Mary work within allow them a distinct list of choices on their ideological menus. And each has real restrictions imposed on them by the social structures they live and work within, the structural ideals of their friends, colleagues, and superiors shaping their own ideals and thus their behaviour. Of course, each brings with them their own preferred selections on these menus. As is the case in the social construction of the self, the construction of the individual's ideological position is tied to a process of reflecting one's own initial "gut feelings" in the mirror of the world around us, having this reflected back on us through the speech and actions of others, re-evaluating our initial ideological gut feelings, and so on, *ad infinitum*. When determining the social meaning of an act it is useful to look at the actor's stated ideological position, the ideological "environment" of the act, along with any unstated ideological presuppositions influencing the act (thus opening the door to the sort of sociology of knowledge to which Marx and Mannheim were sympathetic). Any explanation of the meaning of a social act is less than complete if it fails to address ideology as such a multi-textured phenomenon.

3. Structure

I return to Weber to introduce the third level of analysis in my methodological triad, structure. Weber saw the necessity of constructing "ideal types" of purely

rational courses of action to evaluate how these courses of action were influenced by irrational factors (1978: 6). He later says that collective concepts must be treated solely as the result of ways of organizing a collection of particular acts of individual persons (13). One of the standard criticisms of Weber was that his focus on subjective meaning prevented him from evoking any sense of social structure in his sociology. Parsons takes up this criticism in noting that Weber's suspicion of a functionalist approach to social science is based on his sense of the indispensability of an analysis of individual motivation (1947: 20).

However, this critique of Weber is not entirely fair, for he often resorted to structural explanations, such as his exploration of the effect of Protestant religious beliefs on the development of capitalism in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* To some degree, he remains our guide into the third level of analysis, social structure. We can once more look to him for a proto-solution to a theoretical problem. The ideal type, originally manufactured as a methodological tool to analyze the various aspects of social reality e.g. "charismatic leadership" as a concept to describe something that inevitably includes, in its actual empirical instances, other leadership styles, can be *redescribed* and thus rehabilitated to serve as a staring point for our analysis of structure. I take this rehabilitated "ideal type" to be a mental phenomenon that, as instantiated in everyday thinking, structures action in a way that transcends individual choice. It is a *structural ideal.* As R.G. Collingwood points out in his *The Idea of History* (1946: 200), that a certain people live on an island in itself has no effect on their history, while how they perceive that insularity, as a barrier or as a highway, does have an effect. In other words, the "hard facts" of a

situation are the hard facts of the way the actor sees the situation (317). When these perceptual "hard facts" are accepted as unquestioned assumptions across a given social group, class, culture, or subculture, we can speak of a *structural ideal* and thus identify, with varying degrees of certainty, an element of social structure.[28]

Pierre Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* and *doxa* to some degree capture what I mean by "structural ideal". However, both of his concepts have their limitations. The former is a set of ingrained dispositions within a given group or class. Bourdieu (1992: 85) feels that habitus is necessary for objective social structures to succeed in reproducing themselves in the form of durable dispositions in organisms living within the same material conditions of existence. Sociology must treat as identical all biological individuals who support the same habitus, with an objective view of social class having as its object of knowledge not aggregates of individuals but class habitus, "the system of dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structure." People sharing the same habitus are in fact related in terms of *homology*, of diversity with homogeneity, which unites the singular habitus of different members of the same class; although this implies some diversity of world-views, for Bourdieu the history of the individual is never anything else than a certain "specification" of the collective history of his group or class, with individual systems of dispositions being seen as *structural variants* of the group or class habitus (86).

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[28]As I said earlier, they are a generalized version of Scott and Lyman's "background expectations" for accounts. Although I will not engage the thorny metaphysical issue of free will vs. determinism here, I would like to claim that there is a strong sense in which social structure is *tacitly willed* by those implicated in it, by the unconscious acceptance of structural ideals as facts and not values e.g. it is a *fact* that there is a BMW parked in my neighbour's driveway, but it is a *value judgement* hardened into a quasi-fact that he can be said to "legitimately" own it.

Despite his insistence that it is homologous, at times Bourdieu's habitus acquires all-encompassing causal powers, emptying it of much of its explanatory content. He says that as a system of acquired "generative schemes" adjusted to particular conditions, "the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions, and no others" (1992: 95). If he means by this simply that some sort of norms or ideals inform social action, then one can agree (although without much enthusiasm for his pretended discovery). In this case, "habitus" could be seen as fluid, as constantly changing. But if he means that people working within a given habitus are controlled and directed by it in a more rigid way, and that this habitus is fairly stable (which I don't think Bourdieu would want to say, although he sometimes comes close to doing so), then we would have to abandon his ideas as some form of structural determinism that tries to sweep under the carpet the thought-side of action, to reduce intentionality to a mere function of systemic variables.

Doxa is Bourdieu's term for the naturalization of the arbitrariness of a given social order in the mind and body of the social agent. He says (1992: 164) that when there is a quasi-perfect fit between the objective social order and subjective principles of organization, the "the natural and social world appears as self-evident", an experience he calls *doxa*, to "distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs." In the doxic mode, "the world of tradition is experienced as a 'natural world' and taken for granted." Doxa become *orthodoxy* when challenged by non-believers, their own views being a *heterodoxy*. But as should be immediately evident, what I

mean by structural ideals would have to include all three of Bourdieu's ways of organizing responses to social solidarity (doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy), as all three can structure social thought/action. Also, Bourdieu's intention in coining these terms is to explain social *conflict* and *control*, whereas my intention in this chapter is to explain *all* social actions, not just the conflict/control aspect of these actions. So although Bourdieu's distinctions are quite useful within one province of social theory, they are of less value when engaging in a general critique of sociological reason.

This leads me to a consideration of the contents of this level of analysis. These include the unstated (or unknown) prior conditions of action, historical inheritances, social status, and social roles. Needless to say, these structural elements tend to flow into each other, if not often merging in the concrete analysis of a given social act. It is useful to bring in Giddens' concept of the *duality of structure* at this point to break out of the dualism of agency and structure.[29] Under this concept, social structure should

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[29]In the existentialized Marxism of *Search for a Method*, with its progressive-regressive method, Sartre sounds almost Giddensian in the roughly equal attention he pays to both individual biography and social structure. He says there that the structures of society, including the material conditions of our existence, define for each of us our objective starting point, but we constantly go beyond these in our practical activities (1963: 93). This leads him later on to suggest that every social act has a hierarchized multiplicity of significations, and is like a pyramid of signs, with the more concrete signs not being dissolvable into the more general ones (102). We recover the full depth and meaning of this pyramid of signs through the progressive-regressive method, which bounces the social theorist back and forth between the individual actor and the society or period in which the actor lived to understand their life. Social structure seems to exists only as instantiated in the pyramid of meanings to be found in the life of the individual actor.

But if we turn our attention to his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, we get a truer picture of his philosophical motives. He says there (1991: 51) that in understanding the individual human life we must deny its distinctiveness so that we can understand its dialectical position within human development as a whole, for "beneath the translucidity of free individual *praxis*" we can discover "the rocky sub-soil of necessity" (70-71). The fundamental condition of Sartre's critique is that there must be "a necessity in History at the very heart of intelligibility" (72), i.e. that individual behaviour is rigorously grounded

be seen as both the medium and the outcome of the human actions it recursively organizes (1986: 533).[30] Social actors are able to carry out their day-to-day activities only by instantiating certain structural properties, or, to use my own terminology, by invoking or applying (whether consciously, unconsciously, or on the level of practical consciousness) a network of structural ideals.[31] Structure influences the individual actor through the sort of collective concepts that Weber was so suspicious of. We must allow for the possibility that the historical preconditions (including a society's economic arrangements, its political system, and its cultural values) and the unintended consequences of our actions generate structural ideals on all three mental levels. When these ideals become sufficiently spread out and temporally durable, we can begin to use concepts like "class", "subculture", or "nation".

As Giddens (1979: 9) notes, institutions can be seen as the structured social practices followed by most people taking place in space and in the *longue durée* of

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in, if not determined, by social structures. In the end, Sartre was still caught up in the dualism of the freely-choosing individual agent versus social and economic structures as constraints on action. Even for his existentialized Marxism social structure acts like a series of barriers to action, of hurdles to be jumped over by revolutionary *praxis*. His Marxism is therefore still an unsullied structuralism.

[30]Bourdieu (1992: 83) puts forward a very similar idea, although less forthrightly than Giddens, when he insists that one cannot ignore the dialectical relationship between objective social structures and the cognitive and motivational structures they produce and which tend to reproduce them. Unfortunately, the general direction of Bourdieu's social theory, with its repeated invocation of "objective" structures, points toward structure as pure *constraint* and towards individual "cognitive and motivational structures" as strongly flavoured with epiphenomenality (although I confess that this reading might be a result of his sometimes ponderous prose and not his theoretical intentions).

[31]A section of these ideals are what Berger and Luckmann call the continuum of typifications of everyday life, the schema whereby others are encountered as "typifying" some quality, trait, etc. (in Berger and Luckmann's example, Henry the "typical" Englishman) (1966: 33).

time. We can thus see an institution like the university as a spatio-temporal meeting point of the social practices (e.g. teaching, research, going to the pub, etc.) of a loosely-defined but more-or-less regular body of actors (i.e. students, faculty, staff). The "structure" of these practices exists in the general notions that each group of actors brings to the situation, forming action, organized within a given space (e.g. the buildings of the university) and taking place over a span of time (e.g. a lecture hour).

On one level, structure has a virtual reality only (Giddens 1979: 9). We cannot put our finger on a structural element like "class", but only indicate the beliefs, practices, and material signs that point towards it. But even though structure exists as a virtuality in this sense, it all the same seems quite real to most actors. For example, in a society with striking differentiations of wealth, poverty is a real restraint on freely thinking and acting. It may be true that property is a "notion" sustained by symbolic interactions between the members of the society where it exists as a legal concept, but the "virtuality" of this poverty seems to melt away when the social agent begins to worry about paying next month's rent, buying food and clothing, etc. The reality of a concept like poverty exists in its ideational sedimentation in political and economic ideologies, in the legal system, and in everyday economic interactions. Perhaps the most important structural ideals are those which organize, distribute, and legitimize the physical and informational objects we call "property", a regional structure of control which, as Enlightenment Scots like Adam Smith, William Robertson and John Millar were the first to really point out, dominates many other regional structures of control (e.g. the law, political ideologies, forms of government and public administration). The acceptance of concepts like private ownership, the

division of labour, and social stratification as givens by the vast majority in a society limits the flow of resources to the poor and thus seems to deny on the level of practice what seems evident on the level of theory, the virtuality of social structure. At the point where social groups blindly or subserviently accept ideals that structure their lives and positions as obvious truths, we have discovered the operation of **hegemonic power,** the ideological substructure of what is commonly termed "economic" or "political" power. Thus one could define "power" as the capacity of an individual or group to compel another individual or group to accept certain structural ideals as valid.

A parallel to the way that structural ideals influence everyday action can be seen in Goffmann's discussion of how impressions of reality are fostered by our public performances. As human beings, we have variable impulses, moods, etc., but we are expected in our social performances to exhibit a more regular picture of ourselves to those around us, thus requiring a certain "bureaucratization of the spirit" (1959: 56). This leads the actor to feel a strong obligation to appear in a steady moral light, to be an effective "merchant of morality", one whose wares are known and trusted by those who consume his/her performances (251). Goffmann's self is a product of a collection of dramatically staged public performances. These performances help to create the nebulous structure we call "character".

The tendency to bureaucratize one's actions, to produce a pattern of activities that point to a coherent, core self, is accomplished partly by instantiating a coterie of structural ideals into everyday thinking and acting. We choose certain qualities, virtues, and tastes as distinctly "ours" at a given point in our life, and act towards

others in such a way as to "impress" the reality of this construction of our self on those around us. We see these patterns in phenomenological moments where actors use phrases like "she's such a nice woman", "he's a hard worker", "your taste in music is exquisite", etc. Lévi-Strauss tells us that just as music makes the individual conscious of his physiological rootedness, mythology makes one aware of one's roots in society (1969:28). With the caveat that Lévi-Strauss was wrong to see structures as operating independently of individual human motivation, if we extend his ideas a bit, we can see our structural ideals as the modern "myths" that give us a sense of rootedness in everyday life. If someone rejects key elements of these myths, we term them an "outsider", a rebel, or, in the extreme, "mentally ill". The social theorist does not have to be concerned so much with the moral truth or falsity of these myths/ideals, but with the epistemological question of their content, influence, and the way that they change over time. The analysis of social structure is equally a sociological and an historical pursuit.

Let's pay one last visit to Tom and Mary. As I have already sketched out, Tom's life is structured in space and time by the social practices of university life. He may bring with him to the university certain class or cultural ideals, and these may continue to in part influence his actions, but the institution of the university tends to generate its own structural ideals. These include class timetables, the attitude of respect that is generally expected by most professors from students, the sense that education has a positive value either in itself or as a means to the future end of employment, etc. Mary's corporate environment is perhaps more rigorously structured in terms of organizing its employees in space and time, while it too hands

out status and respect differentially to the various strata within it by means of a set of structural ideals its members generally accept (or at least act in accordance with). We can speak of her corporation as being part of a capitalist economic structure in so far as it exists in a network of regular (often competitive) interactions with other conglomerations of actors with similar structural ideals. In summary, Tom and Mary's *intentions* govern their social acts, which the social theorist understands as having certain *meanings*, which meanings sometimes come together to produce certain *structures*. These structures, taken as real by other actors, then in turn influence their future intentions. Social causality is like the wheel of fortune at a carnival: round and round it goes, and where it stops, nobody really knows.

To conclude, functionalists, strict structuralists, and deterministic Marxists should be reminded that a social explanation framed solely in terms of social structures is a reductive enterprise, and unnecessarily so. The consciousness of actors and the meaning of their acts always lurks in the shadows of social structural explanations, and we lose (perhaps for the sake of a single-minded theoretical simplicity) much of the richness of social explanation if we fail to go beyond the level of structure. In short, we should remain conscious that structure is not some sort of "occult quality" that we can pull out of our theoretical hats whenever we are puzzled by a given set of social events. Hume observed a similar tendency in metaphysicians:

> But as nature seems to have observ'd a kind of justice and compensation in every thing, she has not neglected philosophers more than the rest of the creation; but has reserv'd them a consolation amid all their disappointments and afflictions. This consolation principally consists in their invention of the words *faculty* and *occult quality*. For it being usual, after the frequent use of terms, which are really significant and intelligible, to omit the idea, which we wou'd express by them, and to preserve only the custom, by which we recall the idea at pleasure; so it naturally happens, that after the frequent use of

> terms, which are wholly insignificant and unintelligible, we fancy them to be on the same footing with the precedent, and to have a secret meaning, which we might discover by reflection... By this means these philosophers set themselves at ease, and arrive at last, by an illusion, at the same indifference, which the people attain by their stupidity, and true philosophers by their moderate scepticism. They need only say, that any phaenomenon, which puzzles them, arises from a faculty or an occult quality, and there is an end of all dispute and enquiry upon the matter. (1888: 224)

All the same, social theorists should retain structural explanation as an important weapon in their theoretical arsenal if they hope to fully explain "what happened" in a given phenomenological moment, provided they remind themselves once in a while that a deterministic structure that exists wholly independent of individual consciousnesses is indeed an "occult quality".

In summary, I see social theory as requiring the following elements:

(1) An account of the individual intentions of the relevant social actors.

(2) An account of the social meaning of these acts (as embodied in a narrative).

(3) An account of the social structures woven into the individual intentions and the social meaning governing these acts.

(4) An acceptance that these three levels of explanation as separate things exist only as analytical virtual realities, and that in a concrete phenomenological moment they are inextricably intertwined.

(5) That we need a regulative and heuristic concept like "structural ideals" to explain how social structure is inculcated in individual acts and in the meanings both the actors and the theorist ascribe to those acts.

In my next chapter I will discuss two schools of thought concerning deviance, labelling theory and new subcultural theory, and look at how my structural idealist model fits each. My goal here will be to show how by applying my metatheoretical model to deviance theory we can arrive at a fuller theory than is put forward by either of these perspectives in isolation from each other.

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Chapter 3: A Structural Idealist Interpretation of Theories of Deviance

1. Labelling/Transactionalist Views of Deviance

I now turn to two major schools of thought in the sociology of deviance to see how well my intention/meaning/structure model fits each. First of all I will examine views of deviance taken from symbolic interactionism. These views are usually termed either "labelling theory" or transactional analysis. I will concentrate on two works in this tradition: Howard Becker's *Outsiders,* and Stan Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics,* keeping in mind that it is suspect to categorize either work, but especially Cohen's, as being pure instances of "labelling theory". But at the core of each is a study of how the labelling of certain acts as "deviant" creates subcultural outsiders.

The transactionalist sees deviance as the outcome of a process of social interaction wherein a group of people is labelled "deviant" by those with the power to make rules. The analysis is further fleshed out by looking at what happens to those labelled deviant after the label has been successfully applied by the societal control culture (e.g. the courts, the police, the mass media, social welfare agencies, etc.). This new approach to deviance has been termed a "sceptical revolution" in that it abandoned the debate over values that dominated sociological thinking on deviance up until the 1960s (e.g. see Matza and Sykes (1961) on how delinquency can be seen as a product of "subterranean values" adopted by youth as a reworking of standard adult middle-class values) in favour of focussing on the *process* of becoming a deviant. In many cases, transactionalists "went native" and studied deviant subcultures from within, becoming participant observers, phenomenologically

bracketing their own (presumably middle-class) values in order to more fully understand the subcultural "rules of the game".

Becker's *Outsiders* stands as a landmark in this tradition. Becker's central thesis is that social groups create deviance by making rules whose breaking constitutes deviance, after which they are labelled deviant (1963: 9). Thus deviance is the outcome of a transaction between rule creators and rule breakers. But this labelling of the rule-breaker as an "outsider" does not come out of nowhere; it is the result of *moral enterprise.* The moral entrepreneur, out of some personal interest, uses whatever publicity-generating techniques he has at his disposal to mobilize social forces in favour of his new rule, or to "blow the whistle" on a group that is violating an existing rule (122,128). Their enterprise, if successful, results in the creation of a new fragment of the "moral constitution of society". (145).

Becker's transactional approach focuses on the intentions of each of the two central players in the sociological drama (i.e. the rule makers and the deviants) and how their interactions result in new definitions of acceptable behaviour. As he himself puts it, it has the great merit of refusing to settle for mysterious and invisible forces as explanatory mechanisms (Becker 193). Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* uses some of the insights from transactional analysis to look at the phenomenon of the rise and fall of a particular pair of folk devils, the Mods and Rockers of mid-sixties England. Cohen sees the creation of folk devils as the end product of a successful moral panic engineered by moral entrepreneurs within the societal control culture. The mass media is the main channel of dissemination for a moral panic. The media, with its greater dramatic resources, reports heavily on deviance, telling the public the

shape that folk devils can assume (Cohen 1987: 17). He draws from Lemert the premise that social control leads to deviance, and not vice versa, echoing Becker's notion that rule creation is a necessary precondition for the creation of outsiders (15). Cohen uses a sequential model taken from studies of reactions to natural disasters to describe a moral panic. He simplifies the seven-stage model he borrows from these studies to four stages, around which he structures his book: warning, impact, inventory, and reaction (22). His study of the Mods and Rockers phenomenon moves from the initial warning and impact of the disturbances in Clacton, Margate, and Brighton to the "inventory" which the press, national political leaders, local government, and ordinary citizens make of the deviance, to what is really at the core of Cohen's study, the social reaction to these seaside scuffles with police, petty vandalism, etc. However, in the case of a moral panic, unlike a disaster, the model is circular and amplifying, with built-in feedback systems that serve to increase future deviance as society's control culture reacts to the initial cases (24). This leads Cohen in his last chapter to propose a model of deviancy amplification that looks like this:

(1) The Initial Social Problem (the structural/cultural position of working-class youth) ----->
(2) Initial Solution (deviant acts, deviant styles) ----->
(3) Societal Reaction (involving misperception & distortion) ---->
(4) Operation of Control Culture/Creation & Exploitation of Stereotypes (sensitization, dramatization, escalation) ----->
(5) Increased Deviance, Polarization of Deviant Groups ----->
(6) Confirmation of Control Culture's Stereotypes (p. 199)

Part of the amplification effect is the "pyramidal conception of blame and responsibility", which, tied to the belief that the deviance is just the tip of a more broadly based social malaise Cohen takes as important prerequisites of a successful moral enterprise (in a conscious attempt to expand on Becker's own criteria) (113).

The moral panic only emerges if the local control culture can convince the greater part of society that the local problem is also *their* problem, and that it will not go away unless wider social forces are mobilized against it. But without getting too deeply into the twists and turns of Cohen's argument, we can summarize his position by looking at the subtitle to his book: deviance in general, and the Mods and Rockers specifically, were *created* by the reaction of the societal control culture to a disparate collection of acts by hooligans on holiday that in themselves did not constitute anything like the assault on values and property by organized gangs that the press portrayed it as.

Becker (1963) deals with two groups of outsiders: the marihuana user and the dance musician. The former case is the more interesting of the two, and better illustrates how Becker's transactionalism works. He suggests that many kinds of deviance are socially learned, the proto-deviant having to be introduced to "new pleasures" by participating in a subculture organized around these pleasures (30). The case of the marihuana user shows how new social interpretations of an ambiguous physical experience (i.e. smoking a joint) creates "deviant motivation" from deviant behaviour, and not vice versa (42). According to Becker, marijuana use does not continue unless the smoker (a) learns the proper smoking techniques, (b) learns to recognize the effects and connect them with the drug, and (c) learns to enjoy the sensations (58). Naturally, once all of this occurs, the smoker "joins" the deviant subculture of marijuana users, learning in interactions with this subculture such things as how to find a safe supplier of the drug, how to hide its effects in public, and a set of rationalizations with which to defend their drug use.

Turning back to Cohen's work, although it focuses on the scene at English sea-side resort communities on mid-sixties holiday weekends, it is in large part a generic primer on moral panics and the creation of folk devils. In general, the successful creation of folk devils involves portraying them as atypical actors against an over-typical background, the labellers drawing on a ready-made stock of images to brand these "atypical" actors as deviant (Cohen 61, 73). This takes place by means of a process of symbolization: a word, e.g. "Mod", become symbolic of a certain status, objects (such as dress) come to symbolize the word, and finally, these objects themselves become symbolic of a negative status (40). The whole phenomenon started on a cold and wet Easter weekend at Clacton in 1964, with groups of youths scuffling and throwing stones (the impact), followed by an unorganized local response, and then by the media's inventory, consisting largely of a gross exaggeration of the seriousness of the events (29, 30). Out of this initial inventory came the invention of the Mods and Rockers as distinctive and hostile groups, despite their common working-class origins and the fact that they were never "gangs" in any meaningful sense (165).

Cohen speculates that youth deviance has its origins in the fact that the working class adolescent, faced with leisure goals he or she could not reach, manufactured his own entertainment, making things happen out of nothing. They were generally aware of the absurdity of both their problem and their solution (182). The danger society at large saw in groups like the Mods was that they lived in leisure time, and created themselves as Mods in that time (188). They defined themselves outside of the workplace and thus outside of their usually low-status slot in the

economic hierarchy.

This leads me to the broader question of the position of transactional theory within the framework I have outlined in the first three sections of this chapter. I will come back to this question at the end of the next section, but as a preliminary answer I suggest that transactional theory uses the intentions of the actors it studies to penetrate into the social meaning of their acts. In explaining deviance as the outcome of a labelling process (Becker), and then showing how the process of labelling different groups of adolescents as "deviant" works (Cohen), the focus is on the intentional acts of two groups (the labellers and the labelled), and how these groups interact to produce new social objects (outsiders, folk devils, etc.). There are some important caveats to make at this point, however. Becker notes that those whose position gives them the weapons and power to make and enforce rules are the most successful at doing so, thus tipping his hat to the role of power in the creation of outsiders (17). In addition, in his addendum "Labelling Theory Reconsidered", he tells us that it is a misinterpretation of labelling theory to see it as suggesting that labelling causes deviance: stick-up men *don't* stick up people because of having been labelled stick-up men (181). Nevertheless, the structural element is largely absent from *Outsiders*, and there is certainly enough evidence in the book to suggest that deviance as a social object is in some sense "created" by the intentional action of moral entrepreneurs.

The case for at least a "passive" structural element being present in Cohen's work is much stronger. In the introduction to the 1987 edition of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (the original work came out in 1972), he complains that his book was

misinterpreted as implying no need for a structural explanation of deviance, saying that it was more of a study of moral panics than of folk devils (iii). He suggests that the whole beach scene was structured by the lack of leisure choices offered to youth by society, and further that "endogenous" factors like the youth culture and the structural position of working-class adolescents are difficult to keep separate from the societal reaction to deviance (183,190). Lastly, Cohen shows how the manipulation of the appropriate symbols by the control culture is made easier when the group under attack is highly visible and structurally weak (which was more the case with the Rockers than the Mods) (198). All of this adds up to a greater sensitivity on Cohen's part than Becker's to the structural ideals guiding the actions of each of the players in the drama of deviance. However, structural explanations are kept firmly in the background in both of these transactional studies, in favour of the "intentional" route into social meaning. This cannot be said of the other group of social theorists I will examine, to whom I now turn.

2. New Subcultural Theory

The second approach to deviance I will consider I will term "new subcultural theory", as a catch-all to cover the neo-Marxist sociology that came out of the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies from the early 1970s and on. I will focus on two works here: the essays contained in the germinal work *Resistance through Rituals,* originally published by the Centre itself, and to a lesser degree Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style,* one of the more powerful statements of the "resistance through rituals" theme.

For new subcultural theory (NST) "spectacular" youth subcultures in Britain such as the Teddy Boys, the Mods, the Skinheads and the Punks were attempts by working-class youth to resist the hegemony of bourgeois ideology, as incorporated in their schools, homes, workplaces, and mainstream popular culture, through the magical formula of *style* (which is taken to include dress, music, slang, and behaviour). Capitalist societies are still riddled with class contradictions, but, as Gramsci suggests, these contradictions are papered over by bourgeois hegemony, which makes the rule of the dominant classes seem natural and normal by reframing all competing definitions of the world within its range of acceptable definitions (Clarke, Hall etc. 1976: 38-9). Thus for NST the struggle between classes on the level of social and material life always assumes a further struggle over the distribution of cultural power (11). Since culture and social structure are intimately linked in NST, the Centre felt it necessary to "de-construct" youth culture as a purely generational phenomenon, to get at its deeper social, economic, and cultural roots, and thereby "re-construct" this youth culture in structural terms (16). They aimed to do this by looking at post-war youth sub-cultures in Britain in structural and historical terms, especially in the way that they either resisted or succumbed to the cultural hegemony of the dominant classes (*RTR* Introduction: 5). As the title of their sociological manifesto suggested, the Centre found time and time again that these subcultures resisted hegemony through rituals, through the self-defeating but nevertheless magical formula of style.[32]

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[32]The dominant theorist lurking in the background of NST is, of course, Gramsci (with his extension of the class struggle from politics to culture through the notion of "hegemony"), although credit must also be given to Althusser on the question of

This whole project was by and large a reaction to interactionist and transactionalist approaches to deviance, which the Centre's theorists found "naive" in their focus on public labelling as the chief origin of deviant behaviour (Introduction: 5). As Brian Roberts notes, only rarely did the transactionalists look at the relation between the poor and the powerful in *structural* rather than interactional terms (1976: 248). Overall, NST's search for structural explanations of deviance and scepticism with regards to middle-class values made them critical of both traditional (largely American) subcultural theory *and* interactionist approaches for their attempts to frame their analyses in terms of an assumption of the need for some sort of bourgeois social consensus. The theoretical foundation for NST's analysis of subcultures and style came from Phil Cohen's early-1970's work. Cohen concluded that "the latent function of subculture is... to express, albeit "magically", the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture." (quoted in Murdock & McCron 1976: 204). Youth's expression of class contradictions through subcultural activities was a result of the fact that the life-options for working-class adolescents at work were limited, so they "articulated" their class locations through consumption and leisure (205). But it was a class location being expressed all the same. Given the largely mythical quality of the themes of "affluence", political "consensus", and the "embourgeoisment" of the working class that dominated social analysis of the 50's and 60's in Britain, the Centre drew attention to the fact that class stubbornly refused to disappear as a major dimension and dynamic of the social structure (Clarke, Hall etc. 1976: 25).

"magical" resolutions of class contradictions.

These class locations were "negotiated", according to NST, through the construction of distinctive leisure styles (Murdock & McCron 1976: 203). The shared experiences of adolescents in a given location in the social structure were the breeding ground for these styles. As Corrigan and Frith note, post-war youth should not be seen as pop-corrupted teens, as entirely passive consumers, but as "exuberant, proud, belligerent" makers of their own cultures (1976: 237). Three ways that these cultures were made stand out in the ethnographic section of *Resistance through Rituals.* Firstly, Tony Jefferson thinks that the Teddy Boys of the fifties, who were sort of English greasers in neo-Edwardian jackets, can be "decoded" as attempting symbolically to defend a constantly declining space and declining status of old working-class neighbourhoods and values (1976: 81). Dick Hedbige sees the Mods of the mid-sixties as trying to compensate for their relatively low daytime economic positions by exercising complete control over their leisure pursuits (1976: 91). Lastly, John Clarke feels that the Skinheads of the early 70's tried to magically recreate, through the football mob and an aggressively proletarian style, a traditional working-class community as a substitute for that community's real decline (1976a: 99).

However, the "magical" solutions to class contradictions created by these subcultures do not address the real material causes of their class subordination. Their solutions are not mounted on their real terrain, and thus fail to pose a counter-hegemonic challenge to the parent culture (Clarke 1976b: 189). Their importance lies in their winning of space for working-class youth through the distinctive leisure styles that embody their way of life.

This way of life, as I have already hinted, is personified in the creation of

subcultural styles. NST suggests that subcultural groups choose objects for their individual style that are *homologous* with their central beliefs and activities. There must be some fit between the elements of the style and the way of life it personifies. A group must be able to *recognize itself* in the repressed meanings of the symbolic objects that go into making the style (Clarke 1976b: 179). As Dick Hebdige claims in his *Subculture,* the punks (who post-date the earlier *Resistance through Rituals* essays) constructed a homologous ensemble of symbolic objects out of "the trashy cut-up clothes and spiky hair, the pogo and amphetamines, the spitting, the vomiting, the format of the fanzines, the insurrectionary poses and the 'soulless', frantically driven music" (1979: 114). The self-consciousness and self-image of the punk subculture was expressed in the elements of dress, language, music, and behaviour which they chose to make up their own unique style.

A central element in NST's analysis of style is the fact that subcultures are not passive consumers, but that when they appropriate a commodity, they redefine its use and value, and thereby relocate its meaning within a different context (Hebdige 1976: 93). They are, in short, *bricoleurs.*[33] "Bricolage" involves an individual or group taking objects with already "sedimented" meanings and reordering or reconstructing them so as to communicate fresh meanings (Clarke 1976b: 177). Whether it is the punk's safety pins, the mod's stylish jacket, or the skin's braces and boots, subculture is read by NST as undermining the traditional meanings of social objects through their stylistic ensembles. The point of this *undermining* exercise is to communicate

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[33]A term borrowed largely from Roland Barthes, especially from his work *Mythologies.*

group identity and *significant difference*, both from other subcultural groupings and from mainstream culture (Hebdige 1979: 102; Clarke 1976b: 180). These differences serve as a convenient hook for the media (and the control culture as a whole) to latch on to in their efforts to stigmatise subcultures as evidence of a more general social malaise, sometimes leading to the sort of moral panics Cohen talked about.

Dick Hebdige describes the meaning of subcultural style as even more explicitly confrontational that do most of the other Centre theorists:

> Moreover commodities can be symbolically 'repossessed' in everyday life, and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings, by the very groups who originally produced them... the challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style... Our task becomes, like Barthes', to discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style, to trace them out as 'maps of meaning' which obscurely re-present the very contradictions they are designed to resolve or conceal. (1979: 16-18)

Thus Hebdige is clearly interested in the social meanings contained within subcultural styles, although, unlike the interactionists, he will read these meanings through structurally-tinted sunglasses. Under Hedbige's schema, subcultural style acts as a coded response to community changes (80). The subculture he discusses the most in his book are the punks, largely working-class kids whose stylistic ensemble (e.g. safety pins, ripped t-shirts) involved icons living a double life, reflecting in heightened form their perceived condition of *exile* from the parent culture and from other recent subcultures (65-66). Sadly (as one can imagine from Hebdige's general tone) these symbolic acts of resistance to hegemony are destined to self-destruct, as the original innovations of the style become frozen commodities. Hebdige concludes that youth "cultural styles may begin by issuing symbolic challenges, but they must inevitably end by establishing new sets of conventions" (1979: 96). The engine of

consumer capitalism consumes these styles and spits them back out as mass-produced objects no longer tied to the counter-hegemonic meanings they originally signified.[34]

For NST, commodities have no distinct meaning in and of themselves: they are "social hieroglyphs", as Marx put it. This raises the broader question of how NST connects meaning and structure in its analysis of class and subcultural styles. The Center's theorists admit that commodities are cultural signs that often seem to have fixed and natural meanings, but quickly add that this is an illusion, and that they "mean" only because they have been arranged within cultural codes that assign meanings to them (Clarke, Hall etc. 1976: 55). They add to Marx's social hieroglyph just a bit of Derrida's floating signifier when it comes to interpreting stylistic ensembles. A couple of cases in point help to show how NST connects structure and meaning in explaining deviance. The way the Teds dressed is seen by Tony Jefferson as a symbolic way of negotiating with their social reality, of giving "cultural *meaning* to their social plight" (1976: 86). Their snappy river-boat gambler image acted as a compensation for the loss of both physical and ideological space by and the implicit "humiliation" of the metropolitan English working-class in the 50's. Jumping ahead twenty years, Hebdige sees lurking beneath the "clownish makeup" of the punks "the unaccepted and disfigured face of capitalism; that beyond the horror circus antics a divided and unequal society was being eloquently condemned" (1979: 115). He saw the punks as mirroring the inequality, powerlessness, and especially the alienation of bourgeois society in their decisive break not only with the parent culture but with

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[34]Thus youth subcultures talk about "alternative" musicians or artists "selling out" i.e. giving up their status as icons of the subculture in question in exchange for mass popularity or respectability.

their own location in experience (121). In a word, NST sees the meaning of subcultural style as expressing in code class contradictions, exhibiting from the 50's to the 70's an increasing alienation by working-class youth from bourgeois hegemony in Britain. The meaning of subcultural styles lies in the fragmented *structures* that gave them birth.

One of the best summaries of NST, which is at the same time a powerful critique, came in Stan Cohen's 1987 introduction to the new edition of his *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. Although to some degree sympathetic to the work of the Centre, he attacks NST principally on four grounds: (a) it fails to connect the symbolic elements of subcultural style with the conscious intentions of their bearers; (b) NST's decoding technique is too free-ranging and unverifiable; (c) it is ideologically remote from concrete interactions; and (d) it romanticizes the youthful deviant. Taking these one at a time, Cohen feels that NST's focus on the structural underpinnings of subcultures brings the social theorist too far away from the subjective consciousness of the actor, suggesting that their focus on historical and structural explanations relieves them of having to show that the symbolic meanings of subcultural styles are actually in the awareness of their bearers (1987: xiv). This I read as the claim that NST too often severs the connection between subjective intention and social meaning, which is certainly a valid criticism.

Secondly, Cohen questions the whole "decoding" technique:

> Above all else, the new theories about British post war youth cultures are massive exercises of decoding, reading, deciphering, and interrogating. These phenomena *must be* saying something to us - if only we could know exactly *what*. So the whole assembly of cultural artefacts, down to the punks' last safety pin, have been scrutinized, taken apart, contextualized and re-contextualized. The conceptual tools of Marxism, structuralism and

> semiotics, a Left- Bank pantheon of Genet, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes and Althusser have all been wheeled out to aid in this hunt for the hidden code. The result has been an ingenious and, more often than not, plausible reading of subcultural style as a process of generating, appropriating and re-ordering to communicate new and subversive meaning. (ix)

As one can see, Cohen is partly sympathetic to these decoding exercises, but with serious reservations. For example, he questions (with good reason) NST's decoding of subcultural styles purely in terms of *resistance* and never in terms of *accommodation* to the parent culture (xii). This second problem feeds back into the first, for the effectiveness of decoding is in large part tied to the theorist's remaining true to the intentional content of the symbols used by subculture members.

The third and fourth elements in Cohen's critique are NST's ideological remoteness from and romanticism towards youthful deviants. Cohen thinks that this remoteness leads to premature ideological closure, for the intellectual pyrotechnics of NST are too cerebral and remote from the "emotional tone" of the actual deviant acts (xxiv, xix). He seems to suggest that a bit of participant observation (Cohen himself was at some of the English seaside resorts on holiday weekends in the mid-sixties, interviewing his "folk devils" on the scene) would cure the Centre's theorists of their structuralist decoding excesses. Lastly, Cohen takes aim squarely at Hebdige's celebration of the Punk Refusal and other subcultural "resistance" as involving a romanticisation of delinquents as the "vanguard" of the revolution to come (xxvi). NST's neo-Marxist reading of working-class subcultures as centers of *resistance*, if not as *proto-revolutionary*, certainly opens the door to this sort of romanticism.

So how can we situate labelling theory and NST? I suggest that we can map labelling theory and NST onto my intention/meaning/structure theoretical network

as follows:

Labelling Theory==========> <----------

INTENTION	MEANING	STRUCTURE

----------> <==========*New Subcultural Theory*

Labelling theory sees social meaning as, by and large, the *product* of intentional interactions between potential (i.e. they may not have yet been so labelled) deviants. NST reads (or decodes) the social meaning of subcultural style and culture (which it sees quite rightly as "maps of meaning") from the symbolic objects created by actors within a given historical/structural location. It reads *biography* through *structurally and culturally* tinted glasses. My claim is a simple one: that both theories make a valuable contribution to the understanding of deviance, but that both are self-limiting and therefore "provincial" theories. Labelling theory makes little attempt to understand the causes of deviance in terms of the structural ideals that distribute power and resources within consumer capitalism. NST romanticises the working class and its deviant subcultures, using structuralist and post-structuralist parlour tricks to remove stylistic ensembles from the intentions of their bearers. We need an *integrated theory* that borrows elements from both the transactionalists and the structuralists to fully explain deviance. This integrated theory would pay close attention to the actors' intentions, the cultural (including the ideological) seedbed of their acts, along with the social structures (notably class) that act as both the background and the consequences of these acts.

3. Understanding Deviance from the Point of View of a Structural Idealist and the Question of Causality

Looking at deviance from the point of view of structural idealism would involve approaching concrete cases of deviance on three levels:

(i) The intentions of the deviants: what did they *think* they were doing? How well do these intentions jibe with deviant behaviour?

(ii) The meaning of the deviant acts, including how their deviance was shaped by social reaction, how their acts lead to social consequences beyond their original intentions, how subcultural stylistic ensembles take on a meaning expressing the basic beliefs and solidarity of a given social grouping, and (although one must be cautious about this) the degree to which we can see deviance as a form of *social and political* resistance to dominant ideologies and cultures.

(iii) The structural context of the deviant acts, i.e. where deviance (including its stylistic component) came from. What sort of structural ideals operate to shape the case of deviancy under investigation.

If we are able to penetrate into deviance on all three levels, in terms of the *intentions* of the individual deviants, the social *meanings* produced by deviance, and the extent to which we can offer a *structural* etiology of the deviant acts, we can offer a full explanation of the phenomenon. However, most sociology offers a glance at only a partial slice of the full spectrum of social theory. We should abandon this provincialism in social explanation, even if it involves a further abandonment of sharp and distinct divisions between theoretical camps. Social theory must allow its panoptic gaze to linger over the entire length, breadth, and height of human social behaviour.

The idea that the meaning of an act can escape the actor's intentions pushes us to consider an important related issue in social theory, the question of levels of causality. The bulk of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is taken up in an extended defence of the idea that spiritual factors, notably the worldly asceticism of the Protestant sects, favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life (174). At the end of the *Protestant Ethic* Weber adds the caveat that it is also necessary to see how Protestant asceticism was influenced by the totality of social conditions, especially economic ones, but that he had no desire to substitute a one-sided materialistic causal explanations of culture for an equally one-sided spiritualistic one (183).

This raises the whole question of how ideas influence social and economic conditions, and vice versa. I do not think that (outside of looking at it purely as a matter of what personally interests the theorist) this problem has any final resolution on the level of theory alone, but if we see the intention/meaning/structure analytical network as offering three distinct but linked avenues into any given phenomenological moment, then we may be able to suggest armistice terms to the warring parties in this dispute. On the level of *intention*, our primary focus must be on the ideas that influence action. On the level of *structure*, greater attention must be paid to the economic and other material arrangements within the agent's society. The importance of interpreting an act's *meaning* in this regard lies in the theorist's judgment of how to weight, respectively, the ideational and material factors influencing the way the phenomenological moment under investigation was played out by the actors involved. In this sense, the spiritual superstructure/material

substructure debate is a theoretical Northern Ireland, where each of the parties to the conflict disdain the company of the other and, collectively, refuse compromise. We can usefully see the debate between economic determinism and subjectivism as grounded in a pre-theoretical decision to favour either, respectively, structure or intention as the way into social analysis. But if we can keep our levels of analysis clear to start with, we may be able, to a large degree, to defuse this conflict. All of this can be applied to the more limited field of deviance studies by trying to enter into the phenomena studied via each of these three levels, and then showing how they interact. This is what I mean by a *structural idealist* theory of deviance.

The causality and agency/structure debates within sociology serve to illustrate that the taking up of a position usually involves the staking out of a theoretical domain in a search for social/intellectual capital. The sharper, more clearly defined, and more novel the position, the greater the potential rewards in terms of this capital. If I am right about the need to approach social explanation from all three of the levels discussed in the previous and present chapters, it behoves the social theorist to swallow his or her pride and accept the fact that a complete case of social explanation will not garner them these longed-after rewards, for such an explanation is likely to be neither from a simple unicausal starting point nor to be particularly novel. Completeness and intellectual honesty, not fame, will be the prize for such an effort.

More concretely, deviance theory should focus on control and power. This control is both structural and of discourse, of group labels. Those who control the media, the police, academia, and public opinion in general control the dominant culture's structural ideals and thus the meaning of subcultural "deviance" (whether it

is a legitimate rebellion against the mass conformity of modern industrial and bureaucratic societies, or the work of hooligans and druggies who have nothing better to do with their time). The social theorist should live in an atmosphere of a constant shifting of focus between the stated intentions of members of the subculture or deviant group under study and the structural roots of the group or subculture's behaviour. The balance point of this methodological see-saw, rocking back and forth between agency and structure, is the *meaning* of the deviance. This is, of course, just as much a historical as a theoretical investigation. In this sense labelling theorists sit on one end of this teeter-totter, the new subcultural theorists on the other, each seeking to swing the interpretation of deviance towards their own end. But instead we should seek out that elusive middle position, from which we can access both the intentional and the structural elements of social theory by paying close attention to the social meaning of deviant acts.

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Chapter 4: Reconstructing the Past, A Structural Idealist Approach

The central epistemological question in the philosophy of history is how we can know the past. In this chapter I will try to answer this question by rehabilitating R. G. Collingwood's philosophy of history by means of situating it within a structural idealist framework. I will do this by taking Collingwood's re-enactment thesis as simultaneously both an *a priori* condition for historical knowledge and as a serious methodological statement, showing its weaknesses as such, and then go on to reformulate it as a "reconstruction" thesis that I believe more fully expresses what the historian does in writing history. By adding a "structural" component to the re-enactment thesis, by attacking the "intuitionist" interpretation of the thesis, and lastly by widening the standard definition of the "thought" that the historian re-enacts in constructing historical narratives, we can generate a theory of history that can serve us on two fronts: on the philosophical side as an *a priori* foundation for historical knowledge, and on the historical side as a working methodology for the interpretation of evidence and the construction of narratives.

I believe that the reconstruction thesis also applies to sociology and social theory, but there it is not so much a description of what the sociologist does as what he or she *should* do if they wish to fully describe the phenomena they are dealing with. Purely statistical analyses of social phenomena by and large avoid any real attempt to re-enact the thoughts of those being studied, although the symbolic interactionists come close to invoking a Collingwoodian method in their work. However, I leave questions of sociological method for another day, for the time being choosing to focus my efforts on the philosophy of history (although these are by no

means neatly separable). I now turn the intellectual clock back to Collingwood's starting point, to his "idealist" premises for knowing the past and to his idea of re-enactment.

1. Collingwood's Re-enactment Thesis

In *The Idea of History* and his *Autobiography* Collingwood states quite clearly the three premises of his philosophy of history. These are:

(a) All history is the history of thought.

(b) This thought must be re-enacted in the mind of the historian.

(c) This re-enactment is not a passive process, but a critical one. The thought being re-enacted is that which is incapsulated in present thought. (IH 215, A 110-114)

Collingwood sees history as a science in the sense that it seeks answers to questions about human actions in the past, a science whose method is the interpretation of evidence, and whose goal is human self-knowledge (*IH* 10-11). His clear suggestion that the method of history is the interpretation of evidence, added to his various descriptions of the re-enactment thesis, will lead me to a "hybrid" methodological interpretation of the thesis. This interpretation sees the re-enactment thesis as, simultaneously, both a description of the goal of historical inquiry and as one way of going about actually interpreting the evidence chosen as relevant to that goal.

The actual re-enactment thesis received a number of formulations in Collingwood's writings, but one can date it back, at least in a rough and ready version, to an article on Roman Britain in a popular magazine of 1925:

> Get a Roman road, or, for that matter, any road, under your feet, and you enter into the spirit of the men who made it; you see the country through their eyes; you get into your bones a feeling - obscure, perhaps, but powerful and unmistakable - of what they meant to do with the country and how they meant to do it. (Collingwood in van der Dussen 1981: 321)

In an essay on Oswald Spengler published in 1927, Collingwood chides the German historian for not being able to enter into the spirit of classical culture, which is only possible by putting oneself in their shoes and rethinking for yourself their thoughts (*OS* 71). Lastly, in *The Idea of History*, he says in speaking of Michael Oakeshott that the historian must look to a living past, "...a past which, because it was thought and not mere natural event, can be re-enacted in the present and in that re-enactment known as past" (158). Historians must re-enact past thought in its widest sense in their own mind; they only become an historian of, say, the Theodosian Code or of ancient philosophy in so far as they can rethink and understand the problems that Theodosius or the ancient philosopher faced themselves (282-283).[35]

Moving to the nuts and bolts of the thesis, we find Collingwood, in his unpublished notes of 1926 and 1928, emphasizing the "ideality of history". He says in the former (*LPH* in van der Dussen: 138) that "the present alone is actual; the past and future are ideal..."; while in the latter (*OPH* in van der Dussen: 142) he suggests that our knowledge of the past is not that of an actual object, but only "the reconstruction of an ideal object in the interest of knowing the present". There are no past facts "except so far as we reconstruct them in historical thought" (142); this re-enactment of the past in the present "*is the past itself* so far as that is knowable to

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[35]Following Collingwood's own style, I will use "re-enact", "rethink", "reconstruct", and "recreate" as virtual synonyms, differing in flavour more than concrete meaning.

the historian" (in Nielsen: 13). Thus an important element of Collingwood's first approximations to his mature philosophy of history is this sense that present historical thinking can deal with ideal objects only. These objects become "real" when re-enacted in the present mind of the historian.[36]

Shifting back to *The Idea of History,* one finds Collingwood claiming that the thoughts historians re-enact are in a sense "outside" time (217) and "outside" the temporal flow of consciousness (287). If they were not, but were instead irretrievably "past", they could not be thought in the present, but approached only as relics. This peculiar character of thought allows the historian to re-enact past thoughts just as they originally were, provided we restrict ourselves to the re-enactment of the thought involved in rational, purposive actions. Unlike memory, which presents the past as a "mere spectacle", in historical thinking the past thought being re-enacted as present thought can become part of historical knowledge (293).

Intimately tied into the re-enactment thesis is Collingwood's famous but troublesome "inside/outside" distinction. The outside of an historical event is the bodies and their movements, while the inside of the event is thought. The historian is enjoined to investigate not the mere *events* (i.e. the outsides), but *actions*, the unity of the inside and the outside (213). The events of nature are mere events, presenting us with a spectacle (214). Those of history, having a thought-side, can be rethought and

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[36]This ideality of historical facts is anticipated by Beard (1969: 171), who questions the commonsense view that history is an actuality outside the historian's mind, and Becker (1959: 124-125), who sees historical facts as symbols in the historian's mind which allow him to recreate the "actual" events imaginatively. Of course, if we hold literally to this notion of the ideality of history, then it exists entirely in the present, and we cannot in any meaningful way be said to be re-enacting the past.

thus understood by the historian.

This distinction has led to several early interpretations of Collingwood as an "intuitive methodologist", notably by Gardiner (1959) and Walsh (1967). The intuitionist interpretation sees Collingwood as putting forward the need for empathy and intuitive insight as the historian's primary methodological tools. Gardiner sees the re-enactment thesis and the act/event distinction as asking the historian to look via something akin to telepathy into the mind of the historical agent; he sees Collingwood as positing a peculiar entity (thought) housed in a peculiar container, which the historian gets at by some form of intuition (213). Walsh is more kindly disposed, but criticizes Collingwood for thinking that we understand past thought by means of a single intuitive leap instead of interpreting and reinterpreting a growing body of evidence in the light of general truths (58).

But if we return to *The Idea of History*, and look at his sections on "The Historical Imagination" and "Historical Evidence", we find a full-blown description of historical method that is self-confessedly Baconian in spirit, thus refuting the intuitionists. In the latter section Collingwood likens history to criminal detection (268), which proceeds by asking intelligent questions about the evidence before the investigator. Nothing is evidence except in relation to some specific question (281). The historian should follow Bacon's lead in putting Nature to the question both by taking the initiative with a question and by devising tortures to get her to answer (269). Shifting analogies slightly, he asks the historian to put the historical authorities in the witness box and cross-question them (237), for there is no real difference between written and unwritten evidence as far as Collingwood's Baconian logic of

question and answer goes.

The difficult part comes when he suggests that after this questioning of the evidence historians construct their narratives by means of their "*a priori* imagination". He says that it gives a historical narrative continuity by bridging gaps, and is structural as opposed to ornamental (241). Narrative creates a structure of historical understanding, as opposed to merely adding colour to the "facts in themselves" (supposing that there are such things). This bridging of gaps Collingwood attempts to picture as a web of imaginative construction stretched out between "fixed points" provided by historical authorities, although he quickly reverses this description in noting that the fixed points are not all that fixed, also being the product of the historian's imagination (242-243). This whole idea of the *a priori* imagination and the imaginative web seems a bit nebulous until we explicitly connect the Baconian reliance on evidence with what Collingwood sees as the goal of historical investigation, a goal that colours the methodology itself, the re-enactment of past thought.

To reiterate, one thing is quite clear from Collingwood's philosophy of history (although this may seem a trivial observation to the practising historian): that historical explanation depends on evidence.[37] We can see this throughout his work: in the early essay "The Limits of Historical Knowledge", where he says that in the game of history the player must support his position with evidence (*LHK* 97); in the 1930 essay "The Philosophy of History", where he says that the interpretation of evidence

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[37]As opposed to any sense of history as aiming at a mystical, intuitive insight into past events.

and the principles of historical method exist together or not at all (*PH* 136-137); in the *An Essay on Metaphysics,* where what he calls the "historian's rubric" is that "the evidence at our disposal obliges us to conclude that" X or Y happened (55); and finally in *The Idea of History,* especially in the section entitled "Historical Evidence", which outlines how the historian uses the evidence at his or her disposal to reconstruct an historical event along the same lines as a detective reconstructs a crime. Thus Collingwood's primary methodological injunction is to *look to the evidence.* It is true that the questions historians ask determine what counts as evidence for them, yet once they ask their questions, they are led by these questions to a body of evidence appropriate to answering them. The re-enactment of past thought is only possible at all given the appropriate evidence; without any evidence at all, there is no past thought to re-enact. It may be the case that the "idea of history" is part of the furniture of the historian's mind (*IH* 248), but as any good interior decorator knows, the furniture must suit the room in which it is placed, and this room is defined for historians by their evidence.[38]

We are now led to a second group of interpreters, those who see the thesis in terms of its being a sort of "transcendental deduction" of historical knowledge, an *a priori* principle of historical understanding. These interpreters see no hint of method in the re-enactment doctrine. In Donagan's "The Verification of Historical Theses" (1957: 199, 203), he tries to show how Collingwood's interpreters have mistaken a description of an element in the goal of historical inquiry for a description of

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[38]Of course, one wonders just how this *a priori* imagination works, and whether we can speak of its being an "objective" technique for reconstructing the past. This is the "relativism problem", the fifth of the critiques I list in my section 2.

historical method, a way of verifying historical theses. He prefers to see the thesis as describing the conditions under which historical knowledge is possible. Dray (1980: 22) sees rethinking as a thesis not about the procedure but the *goal* of historical inquiry. Lastly, in his magnum opus on Collingwood's philosophy of history, *History as a Science* (1981: 312), van der Dussen claims that the thesis should be seen "in the context of a transcendental analysis of the universal and necessary characteristics of the science of history". He feels that this "transcendental principle" interpretation of the re-enactment thesis is strongly supported by the unpublished materials he has analyzed in detail in the book, a conclusion that Nielsen (1981) disputes.

Yet this new school of interpretation wishes to have its Baconian cake on the question of methodology and, transcendentally speaking, eat it too. Both in *The Idea of History* and in his assorted historical works Collingwood tries to show the reader that the whole point of paying close attention to the evidence is to explain what was going on in the past, and that the past we are trying to explain is past thought, the only realm of experience open to the historian. The search for and interpretation of evidence is not a passive act of absorption but an active rethinking of the thoughts embodied in that evidence.[39] Thus re-enactment is both a *goal* of historical inquiry and a vital (although not the only) component of its *method*. With this joining of a Baconian search for evidence to his principle of all history being the history of

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[39] Of course, we must use "thought" in a rather catholic sense to make Collingwood comprehensible on this point. Thus coins, pottery shards, and birth registers involve "thoughts" about economic and political organization, craftsmanship, and religious and family life, respectively. A coin in and of itself, for example, means nothing until we see it as a social and economic object, which in turn embodies specific ideas about the political state of its origin, about the gods and heroes or heroines of that state, or, in general, about its collective self-image (e.g. Lady *Liberté* on the French franc).

thought, we come to a third school of interpretation, which we can loosely call that of the nonintuitive or Baconian methodologists.

Goldstein sees the re-enactment thesis as an attempt to reconstitute the historical past, the *what* of history, having nothing to do with explanation, the *why* of past events (1972: 244). Looking at his history of Roman Britain, Goldstein suggests that only through re-enactment is the evidence at hand converted into human action (261). Margit Nielsen, who along with van der Dussen is a relatively new player in the Collingwood hermeneutical sweepstakes, sees the thesis as a nonintuitive, constructivist methodology (1981: 31). She links the theme of sections 2 and 3 of the epilegomena of *The Idea of History*, "reconstruction by the interpretation of evidence", to that of section 4, " the re-enactment of past experience", to provide a unified theory of Collingwood's methodology of history (24).

This third school I believe hits closest to the mark. Needless to say, the historian's prime job is to interpret whatever evidence is at hand. However, as Collingwood points out clearly in his *Autobiography* (128), historical evidence has to be seen as connected to human thoughts or purposes, to human "action" in some sense of that term, to be historical evidence in the first place. Thus the historian's "method" is simultaneously a Baconian search for evidence and an interpretation of evidence. This is, at the same time, an attempt to understand the past thoughts of historical agents, to "rethink" them in the light of the evidence, including both written and unwritten evidence, and also the evidence of other historical narratives. Thus evidence and rethinking are parasitical on each other, since human action (seen as the manifestation of thought) is what, strictly speaking, all historical evidence is evidence

for.

2. Problems with the Thesis

Yet scholars have found there to be a number of problems associated with the re-enactment thesis. Assuming that the intuitionist/sympathy model of historical explanation is as unfairly attributed to Collingwood as I have claimed it to be in the previous section, we are left with five serious critiques (with (4) and (5) representing my own extensions of other scholars' critiques):

(1) His excessive rationalism and the inability of the re-enactment thesis to deal with past emotions and impulsive action. His thesis seems to focus on rational, self-conscious, purposive actions only. This may also leave him unable to explain the effect of natural events on human action.

(2) His wrong-headed rejection of psychoanalysis (and to a lesser degree psychology as a whole) as irrelevant to the historian's project, and his related rejection of an embodied self as part of the subject-matter of history.

(3) His inability to deal with mass phenomena, including social and economic history, because of the presumed methodological individualist bias of his philosophy of history.

(4) His failure to deal with unintended consequences and the structuredness of everyday life.

(5) Whether an historical narrative constructed according to the *a priori* imagination can claim to be "true", independent of the historian's social and cultural

position (the relativism problem).[40]

All five of these critiques of the thesis have some merit, yet all five of them have been answered at least in part by Collingwood himself. I will attempt to sift the critical wheat from the chaff of misunderstanding by reviewing each critique in turn.

As far as (1) goes, there is ample evidence in *The Idea of History* and elsewhere that Collingwood did believe that only rational, purposive action can be re-enacted. He says there that the only subject-matter of history is reflective thought. Reflective acts he suggests "may be roughly described as the acts which we do on purpose", the only acts that can be the subject-matter of history (*IH* 308-309). Later, he tells us that just as historical thought is free from the domination of natural science, the rational activity that is uniquely historical is free from the domination of nature (318). There is no history of purely natural events, but only of self-conscious thought (302, 306). The initial picture one gets from *The Idea of History* is that of a radical divorce between a rational human mind and an irrational natural background for that mind's activities. History deals with human actions, while the natural sciences explain events in nature, usually under classificatory schemes.

We can find evidence of Collingwood's rationalism elsewhere in his works. In *An Essay on Metaphysics,* he states that of the three types of causality that he outlines, only historical causality deals with human actions. Here is his definition of this sense of the word "cause":

...that which is 'caused' is the free and deliberate act of a conscious and

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[40]Critiques 1-4 deal with the scope of Collingwood's thesis, while 5 deals with the problem of whether historical truth can be arrived at through it. Due to its distinct nature, critique 5 will have a separate section devoted to it at the end of this chapter.

> responsible agent, and 'causing' him to do it means affording him a motive for doing it. (EM 285)

This leads William Dray (1966: 44) to identify causes with reasons for Collingwood, placing him firmly within the anti-naturalist hermeneutical tradition. In his *Autobiography,* in a discussion of archaeological method, he says that for the archaeologist all objects (broken pottery, coins, scrolls, etc.) must be interpreted in terms of thoughts or purposes, with an event like the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius being a historical event only in so far as people reacted to it (127-128). This has led some unsympathetic interpreters to claim that Collingwood is unable to show how natural events have influenced human history, despite evidence in his histories of ancient Britain (e.g. a long description of the geography of the British Isles in one work) to the contrary.

Leaving aside his rationalism for a moment, Collingwood can be easily cleared of the latter charge. If a people live on an island, it is not the island itself that has an effect on their history, but...

> ...the way that they regard the seas as a barrier or a highway to traffic. Had it been otherwise, their insular position, being a constant fact, would have produced a constant effect on their historical life... In itself, it is merely a raw material for historical activity, and the character of historical life depends on how this raw material is used. (*IH* 200)

His point is simple enough: the physical circumstances that a people find themselves in do not determine in a rigid way their actions, but offer them a continuum of choice which will have different results at different places and times. Nature is part of history, but only as mediated by human thoughts and purposes, just like the archaeologist's pottery shards. These shards are *in themselves* mute. They can be made to speak, according to Collingwood, by discerning the thoughts and purposes that

went into the construction of their unfragmented originals.[41]

Returning to the central theme, Louis Mink thinks that critique (1) refers to a "fictional" Collingwood, a bull-headed rationalist amongst other things, and further that we can hunt down several important "recessive principles" in his work, one of which is that re-enactment does not exclude emotions, will, etc. (1972: 155-157). Mink claims that if we look to Collingwood's other works, especially *The New Leviathan* and *The Principles of Art*, we can find a four-stage model of the mind, the levels being pure feeling, appetite, desire, and will. Only acts on the fourth level of consciousness can be re-enacted, although these acts of will "carry the freight" of the other three levels within them (1969: 167). These other levels are like "hidden faces in the clouds" that survive into the fourth level of consciousness, and thus enter into history via the historian's re-enactment of past thought on this level (1972: 157).

Although the work of an industrious and inventive scholar, Mink's attempt to save Collingwood from an excessive rationalism by reconstructing his late theory of mind seems to fly in the face of most of his positive pronouncements in his early essays and lectures and in *The Idea of History* on the non-re-enactability of instinctive and irrational actions. Yet it is true that we can find flashes of anti-rationalist insight scattered throughout Collingwood's works. In the unpublished "Outlines of a Philosophy of History", he says that all history is the history of thought, where

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[41]One possible rebuttal of Collingwood would involve the criticism that some "natural events", e.g. the Black Plague, force historical actors to take them into account and therefore have a certain historical status in and of themselves. Still, the devoted Collingwoodian could reply that a biological understanding of the plague is relevant *precisely because* it affects human life and human social organization, which we can only understanding *qua* human thought.

thought is "used in its widest sense and includes all the conscious activities of the human spirit" (in Nielsen: 14), an injunction he repeats in a watered-down version in *The Idea of History*, where he says simply that the historian must discover thought in its widest sense (282). On the question of purposiveness, he attacks the Greeks and Romans for their rational humanism, saying that the idea that an agent is wholly responsible for everything he does is naive and "ignores certain important regions in moral experience" (41). On the next page he partially mitigates his own excesses in noting:

> Most human action is tentative, experimental, directed not by a knowledge of what it will lead to but rather by a desire to know what will come of it... The ethical thought of the Greco-Roman world attributed far too much to the deliberate plan or policy of the agent, far too little to the force of a blind activity embarking on a course of action without foreseeing its end and being led to that end only through the necessary development of that course itself. (42)

However, these insights swim against the tide of Collingwood's general emphasis on rational, planned actions. All in all he tries to close the circle as tightly as possible around these rational, purposive actions as the only ones that are re-enactable, no doubt hoping for theoretical and methodological rigour by so doing. However, he would be well advised to follow the precept of his countryman G. M. Trevelyan that the historian's job is to recover the thoughts of past actors in their full emotional and intellectual value (1930: 143, 151). This the re-enactment thesis in its original form is ill-equipped to do.

On the role of psychology and embodiment, Collingwood is even clearer. He says of the former that it can deal with only the irrational elements of the psyche, the blind forces (i.e. sensations, feelings, appetites) that are a part of human life but not

of history (231). The historian is not so much interested in such animal appetites as eating, sleeping, and sex as in the "social customs which they create by their thought as a framework within which these appetites find satisfaction in a way sanctioned by convention and morality." (216) This distinction between the provinces of the mind dealt with by philosophy and history on the one hand, and psychology on the other, is echoed in Collingwood's distinction between immediate experience and the mediacy of thought. Immediate experience (i.e. sensations, feelings, and the immediate context of thought in general) cannot be re-enacted: we cannot know how the flowers smelled in the garden of Epicurus, or how the mountain winds felt in Nietzsche's hair. But we can recreate their thought for we have evidence of it: we can re-enact the mediate, or conceptual, element in their original experience by reading the relevant books and understanding them (*IH* 296-297).

Thus psychology cannot deal with the rational or conceptual element of human experience. Collingwood's theory was open to reconciliation with psychoanalytic approaches, in so far as the latter attempt to understand the irrational processes of the unconscious mind in terms of our conscious, rational egos. And Collingwood certainly hints in *The Idea of History* and elsewhere that unconscious thought could be rationally understood and thus re-enacted. Yet he was inconsistent on this point. It is perhaps better to see behaviouristic psychology as his principal target of attack. In any case, he did show a strong bias against psychological explanations of the past. Not all human experience is rational or conceptual, and the historian must deal with "certain important regions in moral experience" where psychology might be a useful tool. In addition, Collingwood's rejection of most

psychology and of animal appetites as irrelevant to the historian's project leads him, at least by implication, to an even stronger rejection of any historical awareness of embodiment, a direct awareness of one's own physical bodily processes, and how these are the same or different from those of others (outside of the realm of those "social customs" he mentions). Collingwood cannot be entirely acquitted of the second charge of an anti-psychological bias either.

As far as (3) and (4) go, the criticisms based on Collingwood's supposed "methodological individualism", there is certainly evidence that the re-enactment thesis refers to the historian's attempt to recreate the thoughts of *individuals* alone. At the center of the re-enactment thesis is the free and rational agent attempting to fulfil a purpose or plan. Common currency among early critics of his philosophy of history was the idea that he ignores the influence of institutions upon actions, for example Maurice Mandelbaum in his 1947 review of *The Idea of History*. He says there that Collingwood should see institutions as independent of the actions that make them up, and as canalizing and moulding concrete human actions (186-187).

In response to this, Collingwood speaks about (*IH* 219) a "corporate mind" of a community or age, and several interpreters have asked us to look to his histories of ancient Britain to see how he speaks of the influence of geography and climate, of broad social and economic forces, etc. to refute this individualism. Yet Collingwood could be writing this way in his actual histories in direct contradiction to the re-enactment thesis itself, and his claim that we can speak of a "corporate mind" moves us very far indeed from the rigorous Baconianism he proposes in section 3 of the epilegomena of *The Idea of History*. E. H. Carr's reminder to Collingwood (1964:

52) that historical facts are facts about the relation of individuals to each other *in society* still carries some sting in its tail, despite the efforts of interpreters like Dray (e.g. 1989: 198) to remove the poison from this critique.

Turning briefly to the problem of unintended consequences, as Anthony Giddens (1986: 544) notes, social products often escape the intentional input of their creators. This has been a matter of common knowledge to social thinkers since the days of Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and the Scottish Enlightenment. Again there are hints in *The Idea of History* that Collingwood recognizes this problem (see 41-42), but these are dark and obscure at best. A solution to this problem is suggested by Walsh, who chastises Collingwood for not recognizing that what an agent has *in his mind* is not the same thing as what he has *before his mind* (1967: 54). I believe that the elements missing from the historical agent's mind in Collingwood's account of historical explanation are (a) human passions, which are sometimes only semi-conscious and semi-purposive, and (b) structural ideals (see chapter 2 for my initial attempt to define these). Be that as it may, the problems of mass phenomena and unintended consequences are real and can only in part be dealt with by the thesis.

Lastly, we come to the relativist dilemma: when constructing an historical narrative, according to Collingwood's principles, can we claim that it is in some sense "true"? Lorraine Code (1989) raises an interesting point in connection with this criticism. She sees Collingwood as an "epistemological individualist" who posits a timeless Cartesian knower at the core of his historical method (552). Collingwood's "absolute presupposition" about human agency is that human beings are

self-constituting, self-determining rational agents, and further that the historian can produce a re-enactment of an agent's thought "wholly untainted by his own historical and cultural location". (547-548). In conclusion, she says that the self-knowledge that Collingwood's philosophy of history aims at is not that of an embodied, culturally and historically located, differentiated self (559-560).

The relativist critique is perhaps the most telling one. On the one hand, we have the rational, purposive agent at the center of the process of interpreting evidence and re-enacting the past, and history and archaeology conceived of as sciences that can recreate past actions as they originally occurred, as anti-relativist or "objectivist" elements in Collingwood's thought. On the other, we have the *a priori* imagination as a narrative technique, the imaginative web, and the theory of absolute presuppositions in *An Essay on Metaphysics* as strongly constructivist or historicist elements of his thought. I return to this problem in my last section, although I would suggest at this point that relativism is a problem that haunts the whole of twentieth-century philosophy, history, and social science. Like crime, the problem of relativism is in principle insoluble, although it can be mitigated. This is no doubt what Collingwood was trying to do by way of his emphasis on evidence, his idea of the *a priori* imagination, and his re-enactment thesis. His success in so doing depends on the degree to which we can make more flexible the philosophical and methodological tools he has bequeathed us in his philosophy of history, a task to which I now turn.

One of the major problems with the re-enactment thesis is the question what Collingwood meant by "thought". Collingwood cannot totally escape the criticism

based on a careful reading of *The Idea of History* that his notion of thought is excessively rationalistic, despite Louis Mink's best efforts to broaden Collingwood's concept of thought by pointing to the analyses of layers of the mind he lays out in other late works. I now turn away from exegesis to offer a solution to critiques (1) and (2), dealing with the third and fourth critiques in my next section.

"All thought exists for the sake of action." (*SM* 1) Thus Collingwood starts his first important philosophical work. Later, he claims that the mind is nothing apart from what it does (*IH* 83). When we treat social consciousness at least, we must see thought and action as two sides of the same coin. "Thought/action" I take to be a way of describing human consciousness in a social setting, borrowing the cue to unify the concepts from Foucault's power/knowledge. Social consciousness would not be social if it were not directed toward social objects. These objects become social, as opposed to private, in so far as they are acted upon in some way in the public realm (whether the object is a piece of property, a political office, or an ideological system of belief). A linguistically unexpressed and unrecorded thought on which no action is based is not part of any social consciousness and therefore is not a possible element of historical knowledge, probably not even of biographical knowledge either. It would probably not even be of any *interest* to the historian, although this is a more debatable. In short, there are no private historical languages.

To clarify the notion of "thought" with respect to the possibility of re-enacting the past and thus producing historical knowledge, I shall now return to the four-level model of social consciousness I laid out in my first chapter (keeping in mind that these "levels" are separated only heuristically, and are present to varying degrees in

all real-world actions):[42]

(a) **Embodiment, or Bodily Action:** This includes perception, feelings, bodily instincts and drives, as well as physiological processes in general. Especially important here are the "differences" (such as those based on gender and race). It covers the spectrum <<unconscious - preconscious - consciousness>>. Speaking metaphorically, the roots of the tree of thought/action, to borrow a metaphysical metaphor from Descartes.

(b) **Passionate Action:** Impulsive, emotional, unreflective actions; desire and all that flows from it. The trunk of the tree. It covers the same mental spectrum (from the unconscious to the conscious) as embodiment. It differs from embodiment in that it intends external objects, objects of desire like sexual partners, a good meal, or striking a target of anger. Most of the time, of course, passions are allied to purposes, as "plans" are concocted by the actor to direct them toward the object of their passion.

(c) **Purposive Action:** Actions done on purpose; actions that are at the same time both reflective and passionate: e.g. *planning* to pursue an object of desire. Purposive actions are *willed*, thus will takes over from desire as the central motive force behind action. The branches of the tree of thought/action. This is the level of thought/action which is perhaps the most directly affected by background structural ideals. It exists largely in the <<conscious - self-conscious>> spectrum.

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[42]I do not want to valorize reason as the "highest" level of thought/action, but start with embodiment both because it is the first level of awareness in the development of the human organism, and also because it is the permanent ground of the other three levels (thus even Hume's "abstruse reasoner" reasons in some mood or other, must occasionally succumb to physical needs like drink and food, has sexual drives that flow into and out of his or her consciousness, etc.).

(d) **Reason, or Intellectual Action:** Thought largely free of affect, of a "theoretical" nature; "thinking" in the traditional rationalist sense. The leaves of the tree. By definition it is largely self-conscious: the facing of a problem, whether intellectual or practical, by thinking about it in a more-or-less efficient way. As Hume shows, "reason" is the slave of the passions in the sense that it is never the origin of either what I call passionate or purposive action, although it is often used as a tool which serve human purposes.

Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, as I understand it, excludes the reconstruction of embodiment but includes our rethinking past intellectual and purposive action. The difficult case comes when we turn our attention to *passionate actions:* can we re-enact a blind impulse? This is what psychoanalysis seeks to do, to apply a rational understanding to what seems (at least on the surface) to be irrational actions. Thus, although there is some merit to Collingwood's dismissal of psychology as an anti-historical attempt to reduce the mind to a timeless psyche, a historically orientated psychology like psychoanalysis should be given some recognition as a valuable aid in reconstructing what I call passionate action, actions based on impulse and instinct. If we accept Freud's story about the unconscious mind and about how the ego, id, and superego do battle in the human psyche, then surely there are occasions when the historian is obliged to turn to psychology to reconstruct the etiology of human passions and purposes.

This is the one level of human thought/action that Collingwood largely neglects, yet historians of the late twentieth century have written about it at some length. A case in point is Michel Foucault's various political economies of the body

like *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality,* and Thomas Laquer's *Making Sex:* these are works that attempt to reconstruct, in different ways, what I call "embodiment" and "passionate action" (although I recognize that there is no small degree of purposive action in the fields of punishment and sexuality). Now we can apply Collingwood's own re-enactment thesis to a broadened conception of thought and thus provide the contemporary historian with an *a priori* set of principles and a methodology for the interpretation of evidence when dealing with past events, even though in actual historical work (especially in the history of the body) these *a priori* principles will have to be treated as quite loose heuristic rules.

Thus we can redefine the thought that the historian re-enacts as including passionate, purposive, and intellectual action. It can even include bodily action in a limited fashion, in terms of a presentation of a chronicle (in Croce's sense) of some historical agent's memoirs, diaries, films, recordings, or other record of his or her bodily states embodied in a wider narrative. My critique of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis for failing to account for embodiment leaves aside a more fundamental question, namely, whether we can reconstruct the outsides of actions - what Collingwood calls bare "events" - within an idealist framework. We need to do more than re-enact past thought to reconstruct the purely physical side of past events. Yet this leaves us with the equally important question of whether purely physical movements, uniformed by human goals and purposes, are historically interesting.

Bodily events, therefore, cannot be re-enacted in their original vitality, but can be presented to the reader as evidence for the interpretation of the agent's other levels of thought/action. Of course, this sort of direct evidence of an agent's bodily states

may be highly subjective and in many cases will not be of great relevance in the reconstruction of the past. Yet even embodiment has "structures" or regimes associated with it, mediated (as Collingwood himself hints) by social customs and mores. Indeed, the revealing nature of these structures or regimes was very much at the heart of Foucault's intellectual life project.

3. Structuring Human Actions

This section will argue for the necessity of bringing a structural element into Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, but within an idealist framework, in terms of *structural ideals*. They are the underlying assumptions of everyday life, whether in the social, cultural, political, or economic spheres, and are best investigated by means of a socially and historically oriented phenomenology. By joining structural ideals to the re-enactment thesis we can defeat the critiques of the thesis based on its failure to deal with mass phenomena, unintended consequences, and social structure.

One preliminary suggestion is to use Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions as a bridge between the methodological individualism of his philosophy of history and a theory of social structure. In his *An Essay on Metaphysics* Collingwood sees "scientific" propositions (taking science in the broadest possible sense) as based on presuppositions of two types: *absolute* presuppositions, which are neither true nor false, and *relative* presuppositions, which make sense only in relation to the absolute presuppositions on which they depend, and which can indeed be either verified or refuted. "God exists" is an example of an absolute presupposition, one for which no evidence counts as a refutation. The metaphysician's job is akin to

the historian's: to decipher the constellations of presuppositions held by science (taken in its broadest sense) in the past, for metaphysics should now be seen as an historical science.

Mink (1969: 185) sees the *a priori* imagination as an earlier, cruder version of the theory of absolute presuppositions. He feels that the analogies between the art, politics, religion, and social institutions of an age are not causally explicable but are intelligible as exhibiting the complex structure of the dominant constellation of absolute presuppositions of the times (156). A given set of absolute presuppositions, a given *Weltanschauung,* produces a specific constellation of political and social beliefs, artistic styles, and forms of worship. Yet this may be a case of intellectual Stockholm syndrome, of Mink's intense study of Collingwood leading to his reading into Collingwood's later metaphysics the outlines of a full-fledged social theory. Toulmin points out the tension in this theory between a rational and causal explanation of why constellations of presuppositions change. If indeed we could posit a causal explanation of presupposition change, in terms of strains caused by general social and cultural tensions, then conceptual strain might be seen as an epiphenomenon of broader socio-historical crises (1972: 212). Yet Collingwood hesitates between a rational and a causal explanation for presupposition formation and change, and by no means can his late metaphysics be reduced to a Marxist view of ideas as the by-products of underlying material relations. In the end, the theory of absolute presuppositions is not an element in social theory. It is meant as a deconstruction of the attempts of metaphysicians to construct "real" worlds in their theoretical imaginations, to build a "science of Being", a project that the later Collingwood

believed was doomed to failure.

A more promising approach to the status and function of social structure, one largely compatible with Collingwood's philosophy of history, can be found in the work of Peter Winch and Anthony Giddens. Winch sees social relations as expressions of ideas about reality, with these relations becoming meaningful only in so far as human actions exemplify rules (1958: 22, 62). This echoes a point that Collingwood himself makes: an action depends on knowing and believing that we are in a certain situation, and in a given situation we often act according to rules applying to that situation (*A* 102). In *The Idea of History*, he notes how, for the agent about to act, the space before him will be crowded with people pursuing activities of their own, and that, even though the situation before him consists entirely of thoughts, it cannot be changed by a voluntary change of mind: "For a man about to act, the situation is his master, his oracle, his god... And if he neglects the situation, the situation will not neglect him. It is not one of those gods that leave an insult unpunished" (316).[43]

If we connect this notion of the "situation" with social rules that are not the product of individual purposes (although they are in individual consciousnesses), we reach the notion of social structure I propose. Giddens hints at the location of social rules in his distinction between the *unconscious, discursive consciousness*, and *practical consciousness*. Discursive consciousness operates in the realm of surface discourse,

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[43]One could see in Collingwood's idea of the "situation" a proto-structuralism, a vague sense that social structure is a powerful external force that "punishes" those who choose to act in ignorance of it. This might provide a small theoretical opening to re-interpret Collingwood along structural lines.

where people talk and write to each other, while practical consciousness is made up of that tacit knowledge used in action that is not formulable discursively, generally conforming to Wittgenstein's idea of "knowing a rule" (Giddens 1979: 31). To reiterate what I said in chapter 2, structural ideals operate largely within the sphere of our practical consciousness, although most of them can be explicitly formulated in everyday discourse given some reconstructive effort.

If all history is the history of thought - and we discover that thought by means of a reconstruction of the purposes, plans, etc. of historical agents - then how do we account for mass phenomena like great economic changes or large-scale social movements? Following Walsh's fertile suggestion (1967: 54), we must remember that what is immediately *before* the mind is not all that is in the mind: included in the background of our actions are certain ideals (moral, political, aesthetic, pragmatic, or socially regulatory) that govern how we structure our thought/action in a given situation. They can be simple things like waiting for a green light before crossing the street at an intersection, or more complex ones such as using the proper notation of the computer language one is using to write a computer program. They can also involve such highly complex sets of social rules as those surrounding seeking a romantic partner or professional interaction in a public or private institution. They are the "do's" and "don'ts" of *types* of social situations. These ideals are not the direct result (at least in most cases) of individual purposes and intentions, yet all the same they shape human behaviour on a mass scale by directing and channelling those purposes.

A structural ideal is some idea that suggests the normal or proper (whether

moral, political, economical, or ideological) ordering of a historical agent's social field. In so far as it orders the behaviour of the agent, it may also produce (if sufficiently widespread) "social structures" among social actors, which further orders the distribution of power, status, and wealth in the society it affects. Like Giddens' duality of structure, a structural ideal both *conditions* and is *conditioned by* behaviour, that is, it is both a *product* of social interaction and a factor that conditions that interaction (see 1986: 533). Also, following Giddens, we can see social structure as having a virtual existence only (Giddens 1979: 9). Social rules exist only in so far as people have either rationally accepted them as guiding factors in intellectual or purposive action, or have semi-consciously "absorbed" them as elements of purposive or passionate action, or as determining factors in their individual embodiment. Structural ideals are social rules that channel and direct human thought/action. They are the *products* of human interaction, while (usually not entirely in a conscious fashion) also helping to *shape* those interactions.

A classical example of a structural ideal is the idea of private property, the cornerstone of the capitalist economic system. It acts both as a day-to-day prescription on the usability of physical goods in our society and as a moral ideal of how people interact economically. It is equally embodied in the small child's yelling "this is my ball, you can't play with it" and in the pile of stock certificates in the millionaire's private vault. Even in its violation, in the thief's actions, we can recognize its workings, as in declaring his act to be illegitimate and a possible target for penitential punishment. It may not be immediately *before* the mind of the individual agent, but it unconsciously *structures* the agent's perceptions of the physical objects in the social

world and of the "holders" of those objects.

Foucault had much to say about the social history of the body. In his "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", he looks at the body as an inscribed surface of events, calling for a genealogy that will expose the human body as totally imprinted by history (1972: 148). It is indeed possible to extend the notion of structural ideals to the norms governing passionate thought/action, e.g. to the sexual practices of a given people at a given time.[44] These practises and their associated mores can be reconstructed given sufficient evidence, and they can be understood as either repressing or challenging individual actors. Thus when Foucault asks us to look at how the body has been inscribed by history, he is making a reasonable request, although by no means should one wish all of history to become preoccupied with past regimes of the body.

The way that we discover these ideals is rather different from the way that we discover the past thoughts of individual agents. We discover them by using the classical methods of the social sciences and of phenomenology (viewed as a close inspection of the relevant social field), all within the context of an awareness that social structure has no "real" existence beyond the thought/action of individual agents. In the language of the late Sartre, social structure is "created" by individual *praxis*. To conclude, structural ideals are those pragmatic, prescriptive, or normative rules that govern human thought/action in society at large.

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[44]Needless to say, there is a purposive side to sexual practises: the distinction between passions and purposes in this realm is not black and white but largely a matter of varying shades of grey.

4. The Centrality of Meaning in Historical Explanation

When we wed Collingwood's re-enactment of past thoughts (*qua* purposive and reflective mental activity, taken in its widest sense) to the need to reconstruct past structural ideals we arrive at a "dialectical synthesis", using Jörn Rüsen's terminology, i.e. the *meaning* of the historical event. Rüsen argues against "the perspective from Mars", suggesting that there must be a common world of meaning between the historian and those whose actions he is studying (Ankersmit 1988: 87). He concludes that we must marry a hermeneutical identification with past thoughts and actions with an analysis of the real world surrounding those thoughts and actions, thus arriving at a dialectical synthesis of the two (91). The attempt to understand the "meaning" of that sliver of the past dealt with by the historian is the central purpose of historical explanation in its narrative form. It is achieved by a dialectical synthesis of the reconstruction of past thought/action and of the structural ideals instantiated in this sliver.

In his *Autobiography* and elsewhere, Collingwood points out that the purpose of the study of history is the search for self-knowledge. Knowledge is only useful and desirable if it is meaningful. Under the tutelage of positivism and commonsense, we are tempted to see historical facts as fish on a fishmonger's slab from which the historian selects a basketful to his taste (Carr 1964: 9). However, the historian must be guided by some concept of meaningful action (i.e. meaningful to him, as well as to the agents themselves, although the historian's *meaning* in some sense takes precedence) if he or she wishes to reconstruct the past. The injunction for the historian to attempt to discover meaning in historical events is like a gourmet recipe

on how to select and cook fish: it does not direct him to a specific fish, but to a species appropriate to the dish. The search for historical meaning can yield many different results, according to the events the historian chooses to study, his cultural and social location, the age he lives in, and so on.

Max Weber's *Verstehen* sociology hints at the importance of the search for meaning in understanding human actions. The whole point of sociology, he says, is to cognize "the subjective meaning-complex of action" (1978: 13). This can be done in three ways: (a) by the historical approach; (b) in the case of mass phenomena, by way of an average or approximation of the intended meaning; and (c) by looking for meaning in scientifically formulated ideal or pure types (9). A modified re-enactment thesis covers the first approach, while by collapsing the second and third we get a social theory of structural ideals. In the end, Weber admits, anticipating Giddens' more extensive formulation of the idea, that only rarely is an action's subjective meaning brought clearly into consciousness, and thus that sociology must delve beneath the surface layers of social consciousness (21-22). We have to look to the "practical consciousness" of historical agents to get at the mass ideal or pure types that guide their thought/action.

Weber's search for the subjective meaning of social action parallels Freud's search for the meaning of psychic action, of jokes, dreams, neuroses, and slips of the tongue. In reconstructing the past, we have need of both a humanist sociology, as opposed to number-crunching surveys, to investigate structural ideals, and psychoanalysis, to investigate individual passionate action. Winch ties the understanding of behaviour to the following of rules in a social setting (1958: 116).

Like Freud's positing of the unconscious mind in relation to dreams, neuroses, etc., we need to posit sets of social rules embedded in thought/action to even understand human social behaviour. Without the assumption of social rules structuring social consciousness, narratives of past events would collapse into a heap of innumerable and separate biographies.

Raw events, those dealt with in a purely chronicle form, become meaningful as *historical events* only in so far as they are narrated, put into a narrative context. This becomes methodologically possible only when we take into consideration both the original meaning the act(s) had for their agents, and the structures that condition those acts. Thus history deals with two sorts of causality: the *direct, intentional causality* that Collingwood (in *An Essay on Metaphysics*) thought was the only real sort of causality, and the *unintended, structural causality* (Giddens' duality of structure) of historical agents that both defines the flux of experience as a given "situation" and provides these agents with a list of options within that situation. Thus paralleling Giddens' duality of structure is a duality of cause: we can interpret human behaviour both in terms of intentional and structural causes. Collingwood admitted two other types of causality - the scientific and the technological - in his *An Essay on Metaphysics,* but he would probably say that these types of causality apply only to *events,* and not to *actions.*

If we turn our attention briefly to a 1924 essay by Collingwood called "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History", we can see how his early identification of history with the perception of *external facts* led to a struggle with historical scepticism and a quasi-Whitean position on emplotment. He suggests there that

historians are spectators of a life they cannot participate in, mere perceivers of a foreign world of facts (47, 49). He concludes that history is a drama, and that the historian must look for a plot in it (36, 40). One might imagine a sort of "realist" interpretation of the path to historical knowledge as underlying Hayden White's idea of the body of facts being "neutral" to how a historical narrative is actually constructed, thus leading the historian to emulate the fiction writer by encoding his or her facts within specific plot structures using largely aesthetic criteria (1987: 46-47). As the early Collingwood makes clear, the realist view of the interpretation of evidence treats that evidence as a foreign bundle of perceptions (to echo Hume on the self) that can be arranged, manipulated, stapled and glued together in whatever manner suits the historian's tastes (what he latter calls "pigeon-holing"). However, unlike White (whose "aesthetic realism" pushes him toward postmodernism), Collingwood overcame his own early realism in realizing that history is the history of thought, and that the historian can best appropriate that thought by re-enacting it in his or her own mind. For the later Collingwood, although we must still "construct" a narrative according to our *a priori* imaginations, the evidence at our disposal is by no means a neutral bundle of perceptions that can be emplotted in any number of ways.[45] Collingwood believed that by following sound principles of historical method, and by paying close attention to the evidence, the historian is led toward some general "sense" of what happened in the past events he is studying, albeit a sense that

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[45]Lest we make White sound too much like a perspectivist, he does make it clear that events restrict the historian's freedom of emplotment, although how they do so is not always clear. Can one emplot President Kennedy's assassination as a comedy instead of a tragedy? This would depend largely on one's national sympathies, and thus would be more "possible" for, say, a Canadian historian than an American one.

changes with each generation and (to a lesser extent) from historian to historian. This sense is the meaning of the human actions being narrated.

By focussing historical explanation on meaning and not purely on subjective intentions we can deal not only with mass phenomena but also with unintended consequences. In the latter case, our rethinking the thoughts of all the relevant agents would still not provide an explanation of the event in question e.g. the Stock Market Crash of 1929. Presumably, pretty well no one "willed" the Crash to occur, but the collection of individual efforts to manipulate the stock market or to pull out of it when the going got bad resulted in an economic disaster. We can say (without any recourse to a "group mind" or a "spirit of the age") that the *meaning* (unintended, in this case) of the mass of individual economic decisions surrounding the events of 1929 was the collapse of the Stock Market, an institution held in place by certain rules of trading, price fluctuations, fair play, gain and loss that together form the structural ideals that governed people's thinking and acting in that institution.

Needless to say, as good Baconians we must look to the evidence to reconstruct that meaning, to reconstruct the rules leading to the dramatic breakdown of the financial markets on that black day in 1929. We could emplot this as a tragedy for capitalism or for Western civilization, or as a satire on how low human greed brings us, but whichever emplotment we use, the skeletal structure of historical fact must be there to hold our narrative together. Of course, the specific bones are of our own choosing, but the way they fit together is largely a product of the evidence at our disposal. The emplotment of the historical facts may differ from historian to historian, but the point of narrative seen as a "cognitive instrument" (Mink 1987: 185)

is to reconstruct the *actual* meaning of those past events. I will return to this question of the objectivity of historical reconstructions after laying out what I call my "reconstruction thesis", the rehabilitated version of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis.

5. The Reconstruction Thesis

In writing history, historians can more accurately be said to be reconstructing, as opposed to re-enacting, the past. They "put back together" as much as they can the elements of the past event(s) they are interested in, given the evidence they have before them. This is where the detective analogy comes into play: the detective does not use the clues available to him to recreate the crime as it "really happened", but enough of the crime to assign guilt beyond any reasonable doubt. Similarly, historians operate within a realm of varying degrees of reasonable doubt in piecing together a narrative of the past based on the collection of evidence they have before them. Historians reconstruct events not *as they really were* but *as they probably were*, given the evidence, their various presuppositions, the present-day level of historical science, and the sort of plot best able to bring out the meaning they see in them.

To conclude this rehabilitation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis along "reconstructionist" lines, I will define a "historical event", offer my "reconstruction thesis", then rewrite Collingwood's three theses of history. First, I offer a definition of a historical event:

> *An **event** is some human action or constellation of actions in the past that the historian has decided, based on the questions he seeks to answer and on the constellation of evidence, method, and the community standards of historians, to be*

essential to his narrative. All historical events are the acts of human agents, or natural (including animal) events that somehow affect these acts.

Second, here is my "reconstruction thesis", which summarizes what I have said so far on how the historian explains the past:

The Reconstruction Thesis: *A historical explanation of a past event or set of events must involve a reconstruction of the thought/action (i.e. on the intellectual, purposive, and passionate levels) of the historical agents involved set in the context of the structural ideals that shaped this thought/action.*

Last, I will somewhat iconoclastically rewrite Collingwood's three theses on history in structural idealist terms:

(1) All history is the history of thought/action.

(2) This thought/action, along with the structural ideals that shaped it, must be reconstructed in the mind of the historian.

(3) This reconstruction is a critical process on the historian's part. It accepts the fact that past thought/action and structural ideals are incapsulated in present thought/action and structural ideals, and further accepts the need to turn to psychoanalysis, social phenomenology, and the traditional social sciences (sociology, politics, economics, anthropology, and geography) to aid in this reconstructive effort.

6. Construction, Reconstruction, and Objectivity

Here I will distinguish between constructing and reconstructing the past by means of looking at objectivity not as a realizable goal but as a regulative ideal. Without the regulative ideal of truth, the search for meaning by way of reconstructing

past thoughts and structural ideals loses direction and gets caught up in literary technique and/or ideology. Thus history can be said to be a "reconstructive" discipline in so far as it is aims at the construction of true narratives as an ideal goal.[46]

There is an "objectivity problem" in Collingwood's philosophy of history. An imaginary critic could legitimately ask: "Isn't it possible that the past thoughts that we have reconstructed aren't the real ones? Aren't historians influenced by the social and cultural presuppositions of our own age? Isn't history really a matter of the imaginative construction of narratives, albeit grounded to some degree in evidence?" On one reading of Collingwood, the answers to all of these questions could be yes. This line of interpretation could lead one to see a tie between Collingwood's philosophy of history and postmodernism. F. R. Ankersmit, staggering about due to the alcoholic excess of books published every year on many academic subjects, feels that we no longer have any real texts or past, just interpretations of them (1989: 137). Pauline Rosenau sees postmodern history as questioning: (1) whether there is a real, knowable past; (2) that historians should be objective; (3) that reason explains the past; (4) that the role of history is to transmit the human cultural and intellectual heritage from one generation to the next (1992: 63).[47] Collingwood also questions (1),

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[46]I take my lead here from a hint made by Nielsen in a footnote on the distinction between construction and reconstruction, although she leans towards a purer constructionism in interpreting Collingwood than I do (1981: 26).

[47]Needless to say, this comes close to being a gross oversimplification of postmodernist approaches to history: it might be more accurate to say that postmodernists doubt whether they still have *access* to the real past. Be that as it may, Richard Rorty, in a way the kingpin of American philosophical postmodernism, is saying much the same thing when he suggests that the world is out there, but truth (as

while critics could easily wonder whether given what he says in *The Idea of History* and elsewhere, he would also be forced to question at least (2) and (4).

So we are left with the distinct possibility that Collingwood can be read as being at least partly submerged in the quicksand of a proto-postmodernist relativism. To help pull him out, one should start by looking at truth in history not as a realizable goal but as a regulative ideal. Collingwood says that the historian's picture of the past is meant to be true, and to be so, its picture of events must be (1) localized in space and time, (2) be consistent with itself, and (3) be consistent with the evidence (*IH* 246). Yet all of this, even with the *a priori* imagination mixed in, does not result in a hard and fast guarantee of narrative truth. Leaving aside personal honesty and diligence, we need something to help this regulative ideal function properly.

One way that this regulative ideal is upheld is by the criticism of other historians, on the level of either fact or interpretation. Within a vital community of interpreters, history is kept on the rails to objectivity by vigorous internal debate. There is no higher arbiter of who wins at the game of historical truth than the skill of the players who actually play at the game of history (i.e. both those who read and those who write histories), given that this game has at any point in time a common, if somewhat loose, set of rules, and that the actual pieces on the chessboard come from a common pool of evidence.

As far as "progress" in the writing of history goes, we cannot expect the arrival of any sort of millennium of a perfect knowledge of the past. But we can, following

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independent of the mind) is not (1989: 5).

Collingwood's discussion of progress in general, expect progress in history in so far as historians are able to solve new problems without losing sight of old solutions (*IH* 329).[48] It may be the case that considered from a literary point of view Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* is a masterpiece, but no twentieth-century history professor would suggest that students check their copy of Gibbon over a sound (if more plodding) contemporary historian of ancient Rome as a historical source. We should not fall into some sort of aesthetic perspectivism in assuming that our choice of a late twentieth-century academic historian over a master historical stylist like Gibbon or Hume is motivated purely and simply by current literary fashions or by some ingrained sense of the superiority of our own present world-view.

I now turn to the "debate" between Mink and Hayden White on the question of truth in history as part of my endgame strategy. White sees historical narratives as verbal fictions, "the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (1987: 42). For White, the formulizations of poetic insight that help historians explain the past are ultimately grounded in aesthetic and moral, not epistemological, criteria (1973: xii). Mink takes issue with this: he admits that there is a tension between the implicit presupposition that historical narratives are somehow connected with an "untold story" of the past and the conscious belief that the formal structure of narrative is constructed rather than discovered (1987: 199-200).

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[48]Again, Kuhn echoes this idea in saying that in science there is no theory-independent reconstruction of the "out there", no ontological march to truth, but that we can speak of progress in terms of new theories solving problems better than the old ones (1970: 206).

He sees historical narrative as a cognitive instrument which aims at truth by means of bodying forth "an ensemble of interrelationships of many different kinds as a single whole", as opposed to fictional narrative, which aims at emotional or aesthetic satisfaction (198). Mink thus hints at a distinction that Collingwood makes in *Speculum Mentis,* between history and art as unique forms of knowledge with unique goals.

There is another partial way out of the relativist dilemma, based on Collingwood's own ideas. In his *Speculum Mentis,* he outlines five forms of experience (art, religion, science, history and philosophy), each of which are both forms of knowledge and ways of life (Mink 1969: 29). As one might suspect, these forms are linked together by a neo-Hegelian dialectic. The mind constructs external worlds as reflections of itself to come to some sort of self-knowledge (*SM* 315). These forms of experience are all "competitors for the prize of truth" (42). However, the point of art is to create imaginative products without making any claim that these products are real (the claim that religion makes of its imaginative products), while the point of history is to tell a true story about the past.[49] Admittedly, the form of knowledge called "history" is grounded partly in the imagination, like art, but just as firmly in truth-telling. History is a reflection of the historian's mind in the mirror of the past, mediated by evidence and sound interpretive methods. History is grounded in an

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[49]One could critique Collingwood to the effect that art often *represents* real things, but he could reply that the *point* of representative art is not representation in and of itself (outside, perhaps, of photography), but some sort of *imaginative* or *expressive* representation. Thus if we look at the work of a photo-realist painter like Canadian Ken Danby, say his "At the Crease" and his "Lacing Up", we could say that what he was trying to do in each case was not to show us what a hockey goalie or a pair of skates *look like,* but to express something of the feel and drama of the sport of hockey.

archaeological culture, a culture which seeks to unearth a true past, although it does have a literary element. Postmodernist thinkers live by and large within a literary and aesthetic culture, where verbal grace, beauty, and cleverness rule over method and truth. The free-wheeling deconstruction of the postmodern literary critic cuts itself off from evidence in a way abhorrent to most conscientious historians. We make a serious category error in assuming that Derridean deconstruction can cross over from literary criticism to history. The *telos* of the former is private and subjective meaning, that of the latter public and objective meaning.

The reconstruction of past thought is not an arbitrary procedure, a type of free variation, but is one guided by evidence and method. Even if a given body of evidence forces no one reconstruction upon the historian, it rules out an infinite number of false reconstructions. As Sosa puts it, from the fact that no one alternative is forced upon us objectively, it is a fallacy to infer that none are objectively foreclosed (1987: 713). In other words, just because a given set of historical facts is open to a number of narrative emplotments, this does not mean that (to use Paul Feyerabend's phrase) "anything goes". Even if the historian of a given generation guided to a given body of evidence by a given set of questions can produce a number of more-or-less equally convincing narratives, he or she should always retain enough faith in objectivity, a sense of being able to come into contact with "reality" (*SM* 315-316), to avoid the scorn of the community of scholars that will, no doubt, pass judgment on his or her completed work. Part of this avoidance of scorn is an openness to the critique of this community, and an acceptance of the need to revise one's work in the light of the more cogent criticisms from this quarter. Thus historical

"truth" is *provisional* and *communitarian,* grounded (pragmatically speaking, at least) in the regulative ideal of objectivity.

As Hume notes:

> Poets themselves, tho' liars by profession, always endeavour to give an air of truth to their fictions... [but] The conversation of those, who have acquir'd a habit of lying, tho' in affairs of no moment, never gives any satisfaction; and that because those ideas they present to us, not being attended with belief, make no impression on the mind. (*Treatise* 121)

Hume may perhaps be too hard on the poets, but in the implied suggestion that people should generally endeavour to tell the truth (at least as they know it), he is certainly not too hard on the historian. Only such an attempt can make a satisfactory impression on the minds of the community of interpreters of the past.

This reinterpretation of Collingwood's philosophy of history, which adds a "structural" component and a more textured understanding of the nature of human action to his original re-enactment thesis, rehabilitates Collingwood's idealism as a useful historical methodology. The hermeneutic of structural idealism, tied to the notion that the past can be meaningfully reconstructed, offers a path between the Scylla of a natural law understanding of history (one that is now advocated by very few people) and the Charbydis of postmodern relativism and constructivism. I now turn to a historical narrative of my own, to my telling the tale of the intellectual epic of the rise and fall of the search for depth meaning in late modernity.

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Chapter 5: The Search for Depth Meaning as the Essence of Late Modernity

This chapter will be an exercise in the sociology of knowledge on a grand scale. My basic thesis will be that for some of the key theorists of late modernity, specifically those on the cutting edge of the European intellectual scene over the last century, the central task is the search for depth meaning within actions and structures, whether mental, ideological, or social. This task has shaped the way that late moderns interpret human existence, the mind, and the social world. The surface, stated, conscious, etc. meaning of an utterance, act, or structure is no longer seen as its "actual" meaning, and any attempt to understand the thing being examined must penetrate beneath this surface appearance. In Kantian language, it is a characteristic of late modernity to have lost interest in "mere" phenomena in exchange for a drive towards their associated noumena. Thus a leading theme within late modernity is the rise of structuralism, the interpretation of human behaviour as the product of structures (whether economic, social, or psychic). Naturally, this coming to the fore of structural interpretations involves a decline of intentional explanations of behaviour.[50]

I will tie this unmasking trend within contemporary thought to the general move towards political, economic, and social rationality under modern industrial capitalism as a *structural meta-ideal*, and then try to show how the "postmodern break" from the unmasking project is also a break from this rationalization trend, and that

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[50]We see in the twentieth century a partial return to the idealist end of the structuralist-idealist methodological continuum in the work of Max Weber, R.G. Collingwood, the later Wittgenstein, and Peter Winch, as should be evident from my earlier chapters. We can see this collection of thinkers as part and parcel of a miniature revolt against the methodological structuralism so dominant in twentieth-century intellectual life.

this break has concrete social and economic roots. My subsidiary thesis will be that this whole movement ends inevitably in postmodernism, in the complete erosion of surface meaning, and because of this in a radical questioning of even depth meaning.

The *structural meta-ideal* of modernity is thus rationalization, which is played out in the political, economic, social, cultural and intellectual spheres in a variety of ways. These include democracy and individual rights; capitalism, with its instrumental rationality; the secularization and disenchantment of the Western world; aesthetic modernism in art and architecture; realism in literature; and last but not least positivism (i.e. the sense that empirical science can explain everything) and the search for depth meaning in the intellectual world. This structural meta-ideal both shapes and is shaped by these local ideals. On both levels these ideals form the social and economic realities of the contemporary Western world.

When we descend from the ethereal realm of theory to the daily lives of our contemporaries, we find such elements as instrumental economic realism, *laissez-faire* attitudes to morality and religious belief based on the democratic attention to individual rights, and an almost worshipful respect for natural science as guiding and propelling the modern masses. The intellectual world in late modernity has done its part in undermining traditional irrational beliefs and even some of the earlier certainties of modernism, e.g. Marx's critique of liberal political economy. Over the next two chapters I will look mainly at European intellectual life over the last century or so as instantiating on the level of the intentions of the "private" scholar the broader social, economic, and cultural changes in structure brought about by this rationalization.

Terry Eagleton puts the distinction between the moderns' search for meaning and the postmodern's abandonment of this search nicely:

> What is amiss with old-fashioned modernism, from this perspective, is just the fact that it obstinately refuses to abandon the struggle for meaning. It is still agonizingly caught up in metaphysical depth and wretchedness, still able to experience psychic fragmentation and social alienation as spiritually wounding, and so embarrassingly enmortgaged to the very bourgeois humanism it seeks to subvert. Postmodernism, confidently post-metaphysical, has outlived all fantasy of interiority, that pathological itch to scratch surfaces for concealed depths; it embraces instead the mystical positivism of the early Wittgenstein, for which the world - would you believe it - just is the way it is and not some other way. (198: 69-70)

He too hints at a strong postmodern break, a break that I will attempt to explain in the course of dealing with a half dozen or so major figures in contemporary European thought. I will investigate these theorists in turn, trying to "decode" the language each cloaks this search for depth meaning in. We can see the search for depth meaning in its critical mode in Nietzsche's genealogy of morals, in Freud's theory of the unconscious, and in Mannheim's *Situationsgebundenheit*. We can see it in its self-consuming mode in Foucault's power/knowledge equation and hermeneutics of the self, in Derrida's deconstructive technique and attack on logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence, in Lyotard's incredulity towards Grand Tales (aka meta-narratives), and in Baudrillard's heralding of the Age of the Simulacrum. I take it as axiomatic that while these thinkers pursue their own private ideals, they do so within broader structures (universities, medical establishments, technological changes, social and economic realities) that help shape these private ideals. I will deal with Nietzsche, Freud, and Mannheim, my representative "late moderns", in this chapter, going on to discuss Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Baudrillard, my "postmoderns", in the next. But before getting down to the business of what are admittedly

thumbnail sketches of each of these thinkers, I would like to take the reader on a cook's tour of late modernity, from the point of view of the structural idealist.

1. A Cook's Tour of Late Modernity

The central thrust of modernity, which for the sake of this chapter I will take to be co-extensive with the development of capitalist economies and democratic polities in the West from the seventeenth century until our own times, is *systemic rationalization.* This is a structural meta-ideal, into which feed a number of subsidiary structural ideals. We can see this thrust at work in the destruction of superstition, in the decline of religion as an active political and social force, in the growth of market economies and an international trading community, in bureaucracies and modern administration, and in the technological revolutions of the modern world. It can thus be found working simultaneously on the political, economic, and social, and intellectual levels. As Baudrillard notes, modernity is a mode of civilization that is opposed to tradition and which, irradiating from the Occident, imposes itself on the world as a homogeneous unity (1987: 63). In the nineteenth century, we see the triumph of the scientific/technological worldview allied to the victory of bourgeois optimism and capitalist economic power. We might term this period "High Modernity", to distinguish it from the Late Modernity of the last century or so. It was characteristic of high modernity that, as Charles Taylor notes, only an inner exile would allow us to operate according to anything other than instrumental reason (1991: 97).

As Albert Borgmann points out, the medieval edifice came crumbling down

with the triple blows delivered by Columbus, Copernicus and Luther. Columbus shattered the locally bounded, cosmically centered and divinely constituted medieval world; Copernicus decentered the earth from its privileged cosmic position; Luther's focus on the Word fatally weakened the communual power of the Catholic Church (1992: 21-22). This led to a world where the distinctive discourse was prediction and control, and to a social order created by technology and economy characterized by aggressive realism (as seen in Bacon), methodological universalism (Descartes), and ambiguous individualism (Locke) (Borgmann 1992: 1, 5). We can see Borgmann's list of the central characteristics of modernity - realism, universalism, and individualism - as structural ideals subservient and supporting the meta-ideal of rationality. More diffusely, the central *philosophical* assumptions of modernity include a conscious subject, the possibility of an objective, rational morality, the possibility of a science of society, and therefore the existence of social and historical facts, the possibility of knowing these facts, that a text *means* what its author intended it to mean, and that knowledge is at least separable if not inherently separate from power. The search for meaning in depth bursts all of these assumptions.

One of the chief ways that this rationalization drive manifests itself in intellectual circles is in the unmasking projects of thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the point of which is to "expose" the false consciousness of the day on a variety of subjects, finding its real "meaning" lurking somewhere beneath the depths of surface thinking. Although I will avoid discussing the first of these three great unmaskers, we can see easily enough how Marx's exposé of the class-boundedness of the ideological presuppositions of the European bourgeoisie stripped away the

surface language of middle-class thinking to show to the world the naked class interests laying underneath their optimism, their theory of progress, their touting of *laissez-faire*, their utilitarian systems of morals. The unmasking project of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud proceeded in the name of a higher reason. They carried the rationalization project started by the European bourgeoisie to its logical extreme.

The late modern world (roughly speaking, the twentieth century) is one where myth, religion, and tradition are on the retreat on all fronts. The rationalization drive begins the long process of the death of God. The decline in religious faith finds its reflection in the decline of faith in art to represent "reality" or some "truth", or, in extreme cases, anything at all (e.g. Dada, abstract expressionism). This is part of a larger crisis of faith that thought, whether political, philosophical, psychological, sociological, etc., can represent "reality". We must now ask, "what is the 'meaning' of this or that bit of knowledge, wisdom, or truth?", as thought becomes internally reflexive and self-questioning. This can also be seen in the decline in the faith that science, at least old-fashioned postivist science, can represent the world. The Anglo-American intellectual world lost this faith in the representability of reality in art, science, and thought later than continental thinkers did, and was slower and more reluctant to accept the postmodern break.

In the twentieth century, we witness a metaphysical void left by the triumph of science over religion, which is partly filled at first by historical ways of understanding politics, morals, religion, art and even science, and later in the century by radical/utopian politics and a quest for personal authenticity. Historicism, moral relativism, nationalism, and battling ideologies have rushed in to fill this void. In

addition, the first half or so of our century witnessed a dangerous if not disastrous flirtation with utopian anti-rationalism in politics (European imperialism, fascism, Nazism, Stalinism). As a result of these social and philosophical revolutions, the Anglo-American intellectual world has found itself "threatened and undermined by successive waves of hermeneuticists, structuralists, post-empiricists, deconstructionists, and other invading hordes." (Skinner 1985: 6).

The unmasking project that dominated European thought from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century is now seen as *passé*. This may be because it is largely unnecessary in a social and economic sense. The rationalization drive of modernity, like a harbour dredge, has scraped from the bottom of the harbour of the West weed-covered artifacts of the premodern soul and reclassified them as the unconscious mind, repression, illusions, will to power, *ressentiment*, etc., tossing them into a junkyard that only historians and antiquaries visit. We now live in an era of re-masking, of covering the commodities (whether material, intellectual, or political) our civilization produces with fresh layers of affective gloss enamel so that they might have a shiny appeal to potential consumers. Only such products will appeal to the narcissistic, cynical, disenchanted citizen/consumer of late modernity.

In both our cities and the corporate world that owns and runs our economy we can see the meta-ideal of rationality. It is embedded in the daily physical life of our urban environments and in the daily managerial life of the business enterprise. Modernism turned on its firstborn metropolitan children, the cities that failed to measure up to the standards of a rational and enlightened order, and replaced them with those modeled on a rigorous Cartesian purity, realizations of a three-.

dimensional coordinate system in wood, brick, and concrete (Borgmann 1992: 58). Similarly, the Cartesian ideal of rational organization was applied to the corporate economy, the corporation being a monument to time universal, a legal person possessing eternal life (36). A sound sociology of knowledge thus visits both the peaks of wide socio-cultural phenomena and the valleys of the everyday: it is only in so far as it can do both that it can lay any claim whatsoever to realism, even if this realism can visit only one perspective at a time. The structural meta-ideal of rationalization is thus not a free-floating manifestation of some Absolute Spirit, but is rather a powerful force manifesting itself in our daily lives in a thousand ways, some obvious, some hidden.

My structural idealism takes it as a basic premise that intellectual developments proceed to some degree according to their own inner logic, but are all the same inextricably tied into broader economic and social structures without which we cannot fully understand them. It is thus (as the reader may already have guessed) both *structuralist* and *idealist*, for my central claim in this thesis is that social and historical explanation must be both if it is to fully *explain* their objects. As this will be an exercise in the sociology of knowledge, I will have recourse to both this internal logic of development *and* to the structural foundations of this development. The tale I will try to tell in this chapter is how the project of rationalization characteristic of late modernity was expressed in non-positivistic Continental thought as a search for the depth meaning of human thought/action, going on in the next chapter to tell the associated tale of how European intellectuals, from the late 1960s on, by and large gave up on this search for depth meaning as part of the *postmodern break*. I will now

shift gears back into intellectual history (or, more accurately, archaeology) proper, looking first at the epistemological foundations of Nietzsche's attack on truth and morality, and then at his unmasking of the history of moral codes, trying to show how these endeavours feed into the central late modern intellectual project of the search for depth meaning.[51]

2. Nietzsche: From Morality to the Genealogy of Morals

A. Truth, Masks, and Bad Causality

Nietzsche had quite a bit to say about truth, including his famous suggestion that it had a female pedigree, but it is perhaps easiest to sum up his position by means of this passage written early in his career:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically... truths are illusions... metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. ("On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense"; future references to Nietzsche will use the standard system of abbreviations and section numbers)

It is not that long a road from Nietzsche's view of truth as metaphor to Rorty's ironist culture. But before we timewarp too far forward, it is important to note that Nietzsche provided late modernity with a number of intriguing hints that objective

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[51]I am fully aware that much of the language that I use to paint these broad strokes is loose and imprecise, and will no doubt fail to convince the hardened empiricists in the audience. However, I am myself convinced that a century of analytic philosophy and logic worship have revealed no great social or historical truths, at least, no truths that an adept story-teller couldn't have revealed in a much more entertaining fashion. In this sense, I am wary of claiming any more truth value for this and the following chapter that their being a convincing narrative of the contemporary Western intellectual odyssey, or, in simpler language, of their being a tale well told. Nevertheless, there is some value in such tales.

truth might not be all that it is cracked up to be, that the truth claims of science and philosophy had deep, largely unseen roots in biology and irrational psychic *structures.* In this special sense he was a *structuralist,* like Marx and Freud. Not surprisingly, this lead him to the conclusion that all philosophies were just foreground philosophies, and that "every philosophy *conceals* a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask" (BGE 289). This pithy aphorism provides the late modern search for depth meaning with its epistemological *raison d'etre.* Nietzsche begins the late modern project of stripping away the veils hiding the truth of morals, religion, and by implication civilization, revealing the timid little wizard behind the curtain. He opens the way for a society-wide deep rationalization, and, ironically, for the "de-rationalization" of the Nazi era, where anything that served the needs of the regime served for truth, where the positivist ideal of scientific knowledge in Germany was betrayed by the fascist truths of blood, soil, and race.

So truth is metaphorical and philosophies are masks. Then what about the claims of morality and religion? He unmasks these in a number of ways, but what might be called his "epistemological" or Humean critique rests on his suggestion that they rest on a flawed sense of causality. In *Twilight of the Idols* he informs the reader that the whole realm of morality and religion belongs to that of imaginary causes (VI, 6). In *The Antichrist* he tells us that the whole point of sin, guilt, grace, etc. is to destroy man's natural causal sense, to attribute deeds to spectres of superstition and thereby allow the priest to rule over the mass of humanity (49). The *subterranean* meaning of this destruction of our natural causal sense is to tame our wild wills and make us subservient to priestly rule.

B. Intentionality, Repression, and the Will to Power

The road to Freud's discovery of psychic meaning in the unconscious mind was in a sense mapped out in advance by Nietzsche. He claims that everything that is of value in an action is unintentional, while everything that is intentional and conscious belongs merely to the surface and skin of the action (BGE 32). He, like the other seekers for depth meaning, shifts social and historical meaning from surface intentionality to deep structures. We get a greater sense of his desire to plumb the depths of human action in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where he offers a prelude to Freud's theory of repression in noting that a "bad conscience", a serious illness, results from enclosing men within the walls of society and peace, where they lose their unconscious, infallible drives, being reduced to consciousness, "their weakest and most fallible organ" (II, 16). Under such conditions the old unconscious natural drives are repressed, and we chafe against the prison-bars of civilization. Yet "civilized" moral and religious codes are just nothing more than interpretations of the world. More specifically, the feeling of sinfulness is not a fact but an *interpretation* of the fact of physiological depression (III, 16). Again, the double entendre theme of late modernity is emphasized. Nietzsche at various places tells us how this state of depression can be avoided by a healthy diet, good air, good reading and music, etc., being perhaps a bit tongue in cheek. But all the same, we must take him at his word when he suggests that the meaning of moral turpitude can be found in states of weakness in the body or the will (or both). Good and evil, as we will see, each have their own deep structural roots in concrete, non-moral foundations; they are *caused* things, almost epiphenomena.

Nietzsche's basic metaphysical monism is the *will to power*. All living things are driven by it. Life itself is will to power, he tells us, with self-preservation being only the most common result of that will (BGE 13). Good in Nietzsche's subterranean sense, in its "deeper" sense, is whatever heightens one's will to power; bad is whatever thwarts it (Anti 2). To continue my aquatic metaphor, will to power is a powerful underground channel from which spring both moralities and courses of action. Understanding it is the key that unlocks the history of moral codes and makes a *genealogy of morals* possible.

C. A Moral Genealogy

(i) The Genealogical Method

Nietzsche moved Western thinking from a discussion of ethical theories to a search for the genealogy of ethical systems and codes. He moved from morality to a genealogy of morals, the key stroke in his more general search for depth meaning. Again he starts from something akin to a Humean position with this aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "There are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena" (108). Moral judgments are projected onto the external world by the individual or group making the judgment. These judgments have a psychological/physiological basis: moralities are a "sign language of the affects" (BGE 187). Moralities are like coastal buoys serving to mark the existence of structures deep below the water's surface.

Nietzsche's genealogical method is laid out in greatest detail, not surprisingly, in his *Genealogy of Morals*. His stated *modus operandi* there is to look for the conditions

under which humanity devised its concepts of good and evil, and to determine what value these values themselves possess, i.e. whether they express a sense of degeneration or regeneration in their holders (Preface 3). His method is thus to question the value of values, to go beyond their surface rationality or irrationality to interrogate them at a deeper level. This leads him to put forward his grand schema of the historical dialectic of master and slave moralities, to his concept of *ressentiment* and to his critique of Christianity.

(ii) Ressentiment and Christianity

He starts with a basic observation about the nature of moralising:

> Moral judgments constitute the favorite revenge of the spiritually limited against those less limited - also a sort of compensation for having been ill-favoured by nature - finally an opportunity for acquiring spirit and *becoming* refined - malice spiritualized. (BGE 219)

The depth meaning of moral judging is some lack, whether spiritual or physiological or psychological, from which springs resentment and a need for revenge against those that have no such lack. This is what Nietzsche means by *ressentiment*. The great slave revolt in morals begins when "*ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values" (GM I, 10). The slaves, the resentful, try to poison the consciences of the more fortunate, thereby achieving the "sublimest triumph of revenge" (GM II, 14). However, even this *ressentiment* can become dangerous if not bled off or channelled into less dangerous areas. This is the job of the *ascetic priest:* he "detonates" the accumulating *ressentiment* of the herd, the slaves, in "orgies of feeling", or turns it inward by telling the herd that *they themselves* are the cause of their own suffering, thereby giving birth to guilt, sin, and bad conscience (GM II, 15).

The "historical" origin of the slave revolt in the West Nietzsche takes to be the ancient Jews, that priestly nation *par excellence.* In that great struggle between the Jewish and Roman moral codes of antiquity we can read the entire history of the opposition between master and slave moralities (GM I, 16). In *The Antichrist* Nietzsche delivers one long, withering attack on the chief manifestation of slave morality over the last two thousand years, Christianity. Christ was a sublime seduction for the blonde beasts of Europe, his moral code such a sticky sweet substance that these marauding pagan bears could little resist that first taste, bringing them to their spiritual ruin. The cross was the "mark of recognition for the most subterranean conspiracy that ever existed - against health, beauty, whatever has turned out well; courage, spirit, *graciousness* of the soul, *against life itself*" (Anti 62). Nietszche overturns the love/brotherhood/forgiveness mythology surrounding Christianity, finding deep in the waters of Christian love the slimy sea serpents of unsatisfied revenge and of hatred of all that is healthy, mighty, and life-enhancing.

(iii) Masters and Slaves/Good and Evil

The psychological presupposition of slave morality is that everything that "elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is henceforth called *evil;* and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honors" (BGE 201). Parallel to this psychological presupposition is an etymological one that Nietzsche makes with regard to the origins of the terms "good", "evil", and "bad". Under the reign of master morality, "good" meant noble, aristocratic, and privileged, while "bad" meant

common, low, plebian. Now that slave morality has won out, "good" is associated with Christian and democratic virtues, while the "good" of master morality has been transvalued by the herd into "evil" (GM I, 4). Under the Roman Empire, the Jews (including the Christian sect) aimed at spiritual revenge by revaluing the values of their enemies and overlords the Romans, producing the Judeo-Christian slave revolt in morals that ruled Europe pretty well unopposed until the Renaissance (GM I, 7). According to Nietzsche, we can read into the etymological shift in the meaning of good and evil in the ancient world an underlying grand historical shift in moralities, a shift that only the moral genealogist can fully appreciate. This structural shift is echoed on the theological level in the move from paganism to Christianity: it is *not* a free choice by a people to embrace a kindler, gentler moral code, but a surface expression of an underlying political-physiological weakness.

The real opposition here is between "bad" and "evil". 'This 'bad' of noble origin and that 'evil' out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred... how different these words 'bad' and 'evil' are, although they are both apparently the opposite of the same concept 'good'". The good man under master morality is noble and powerful, but dyed in the colours of *ressentiment*, he becomes petty and revengeful (GM I, 11). All of this might be a rather fanciful construction, but Nietzsche's point here is that the genealogist must use such "traces" as etymological shifts to get at broader historical changes in values.

After Nietzsche, the Western world could never again look at morality with the naiveté reserved for the intellectually primitive. Good and evil had now revealed their hidden depths, their spiritual and physiological meanings, their nasty little

etymological secrets. Nietzsche's unmasking rationality pushed these nasty little secrets into the foreground, and exposed the whole moral apparatus of modernity (including Christianity, democracy, feminism, and socialism) to the deep cuts of the genealogist's scalpel. Nietzsche is a representative of the late modern European intellectual *bourgeoisie,* but gone bad: he pushes the search for depth meaning to its limits, abandoning it in the end in favour of a salute to naked power. Like the greasers in black leather jackets on motorcyles that haunted the fringes of 1950s American whitebread suburban culture, Nietzsche was the wild one of late modern intellectual culture, revving his genealogical engines a bit too loudly for the taste of the late nineteenth-century educated bourgeois. The philosophical neighbourhood would never again be quite the same.

I now turn to Freud's unmasking project, which, like Nietzsche, interrogates the human soul, but in the psychological sense.

3. Freud: From Mind to Psyche

A. The "Discovery" of the Unconscious and the Structure of the Psyche

Following Nietszche's instructive hints, Freud brought together the work of such immediate predecessors in psychology as Charcot and Janet in his theory of the unconscious mind. The idea that the rational, conscious component of thought is either the only or the most important element in human motivation is unmasked; deep beneath the flow of consciousness runs a raging torrent, murky but not entirely inpenetrable, *the unconscious mind.* The deeper psychic structure of human intentionality is now seen as the warring triad of ego, id, and (in the later Freud)

superego.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud announces that the unconscious is the true reality, and that this reality is as little communicated to us by the data of consciousness as the reality of the external world is by the reports of our sense-organs (Freud 1938a: 542). The fundamental premise of psychoanalysis is this division of the psychical into the conscious and the unconscious (1962: 3). Freud fine-tunes this division with his famous tripartite structure of the psyche: the ego represents our perceptual system, the external world, and common sense, and is conscious or preconscious; the *id* represents the instincts and passions, and is the unconscious reservoir of our sexual and aggressive energies; while the *super-ego* is the censor, our "conscience", which is probably formed out of the "haboured residues of the existences of countless egos" deposited in the id and revived by the ego as the psychic organ of repression (1962: 15, 28). The thing that keeps the whole mechanism working is *libido*, the psychic energy that Freud at first saw as explicitly sexual. This flows out into the world and fixes onto erotic objects, and then returns to the ego, like the arms of an amoeba (1969: 7). Just as nineteenth century European explorers penetrated into the hearts of darkness of Africa, Freud explored the river of the psyche leading from its estuary in such traces of the id and the psychic censor in conscious life as dreams, hysteria, neuroses, and paraphraxes to its source in unconscious processes.

His method was to fill in the "breaks" in conscious psychical events with reasonable inferences as to what was going on in the unconscious mind (1969: 16). Freud looked for the structures of the psyche behind those thousand little daily

events of conscious experience. Freud acted as a detective of the unconscious, reconstructing its operations out of the verbal and behavioural clues it leaves behind in the external world. Thus the point of pyschoanalysis was to oblige the unconscious mind to reveal its secret history (Hutton: 124). In so far as this process had a therapeutic motivation, its point was to strengthen the ego, the rational, conscious, perceptual component of the pscyhe (see Freud 1962: 46). It was to unmask the workings of the id and the superego to the ego and therefore allow our reason to establish a permanent foothold in the territory of the instincts and the repressed passions. Thus he investigated the deep structures of human conscious intentionality with the hope that he could buttress that intentionality against the partially hidden internal psychic forces seeking to undermine it.

B. Repression: The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of

The study of dreams, claims Freud, provides the *via regia* into the unconscious element in our psyche (1938a: 540). Extending the metaphor a bit, he tells us that when the psychic censor (which he later calls the super-ego) rules over the wishes of the id, we can speak of "repression". When repression occurs, the mind is like a mountain region where the main highways have been flooded, and (psychic) traffic is forced to use steep and inconvenient pathways formally used by hunters alone (484). One of these pathways is dreaming. Dreams provide a way out for repressed psychic material, but at the same time provide a way back into the unconscious mind for the psychoanalyst.

Freud divides a dream between its *manifest* content and its *latent* content, the

former its surface symbolism, the latter its partially hidden unconscious meaning. The latent content of a dream undergoes a process of distortion consisting of condensation, displacement, symbolization, and dramatization before the psychic censor allows the repressed wishes emanating from the unconscious to be expressed in the dream (see Ellenberger 1970: 491). Freud is quite clear that the motive power of a dream is a wish-fulfillment of a censored unconscious desire (1938a: 485). We can imagine the id as a seething cauldron of warring and unsatisfied urges that constantly batter themselves against the containing wall of the superego. The whole process is connected to waking life in so far as our day-thoughts act as the entrepreneurs of our repressed psychic energies, providing the capital that allows these energies to invest in the creation of a dream (506).

Given that dreams attempt to rid the psyche of disturbances, they can be seen as the "guardians of sleep" (1969: 28). But what do they guard against? "Dreaming is a fragment of the superceded pyschic life of the child", specifically, a fragment consisting of repressed infantile sexual wish-impulses that the superseded psychic censor will not allow to enter the conscious mind (1938a: 510, 538). So the interpretation of dreams allows us access to the long-buried treasure chest of secrets concerning our childhood sexuality. But it also tells us something else:

> ...we are encouraged to expect, from the analysis of dreams, a knowledge of the archaic inheritance of man, a knowledge of psychical things in him that are innate. It would seem that dreams and neuroses have preserved for us more of the psychical antiquities than we suspected; so that psychoanalysis may claim a high rank among the sciences which endeavour to reconstruct the oldest and darkest phases of the beginning of mankind. (497)

In his search for these psychic antiquities, Freud was acting as an archeologist of the human soul, digging deep, like von Schliemann at Troy and Mycenae, beneath the

accumulated surface rubble of culture, moral ideals, and religion to uncover the gilded treasures of hidden lusts. He was able to do this because he believed that the life of the unconscious mind is indestructible, that there is nothing there that is past or forgotten (518). To continue an old metaphor *ad nauseam*, the unconscious, whether individual or collective, is like a powerful river flowing under all our conscious psychic life, providing it with a hidden, deeper meaning.

With Freud we see how the meta-ideal of rationality sought to conquer the *terra incognita* of dreams, sexuality, aggression, etc. The modern industrial system needed to bring these under the aegis of its productive, instrumental rationality, but could only do so by wielding the dangerously double-edged sword of the search for depth meaning. Later, under consumer capitalism, although instrumental rationality was still an important factor in the productive process, commodious rationality required a clever manipulation of the unbottled genies of dreams, hidden childhood memories, and sexuality by a people who were just coming to terms with Freud's rational construction of them. A case in point of the meeting of these two worlds is Salvador Dali doing car commercials in the 1960s, the surrealist magus doling out suburban dreams to the television camera by a twirl of his trademark moustache. Although melting clocks and burning giraffes are not big consumer items, they do stand as aesthetic symbols of an opening of the unconscious mind into a broader cultural awareness.

C. *Eros and Death*

After his initial development of depth psychology, Freud advanced his theory

of instincts. They were Eros and Death, the sources of sexual and aggressive/self-destructive energy. Eros moves us to preserve life and to join together in greater organic unities, while the death instinct moves things back to their primeval, inorganic state (1961: 66 & 1969: 5-6). They flow like twin rivers through human thought and action, through both the psyche and history. The meaning of civilization is the struggle between Eros and Death, a struggle for the life of the human species, and "it is this battle of the giants that our nursery-maids try to appease with their lullaby about heaven" (1961: 69). Thus the structure of human history echoes that of the psyche for Freud: it is a Manichean struggle of darkness and light.

By becoming civilized we to a large measure repudiate our sexual drives (1969: 43). This repudiation, as part of the struggle of love and death, leads to an increase of the super-ego sponsored sense of guilt to perhaps intolerable heights (1961: 80). Parallel to this battle of giants is a further one between personal happiness and the urge to unite with other human beings, the battle of individual and cultural development (88). These struggles will continue as long as human civilizations exist, and force the civilizing powers and agencies to exercise a considerable degree of repressive damping of individual erotic and aggressive drives.

D. Suffering, Religion, and Civilization

One of the central themes of his *Civilization and its Discontents* is suffering, both its sources and how to control it. There are three such sources: our body, the external world, and our relations with others (1961: 24). Humanity's efforts to combat

suffering can be grouped into three general categories: powerful *deflections* to make light of our miseries, substitutive *satisfactions* which diminish them, and intoxicating *substances* which make us insensitive to them (22). Freud discusses several concrete cases under each of these categories, but perhaps his most interesting remarks concern intoxicants, cultural sublimations, and religion. He believes that intoxicating substances have an established place in "the economics of the libido", but they have wound up wasting a great amount of energy that might otherwise have gone into improving the human lot (25). He is more sympathetic to displacements of our libidinal energies into sublimative satisfactions like art and science which, although mildly successful at dealing with the frustrations of the social repression of the sexual and aggressive instincts, cannot compensate for the sufferings caused by our own bodies (26-27). But what was (before the twentieth century) perhaps the most effective but also the most dangerous palliative is religion.

In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud refers to religion as a delusional remolding of reality that depresses the value of life and distorts our picture of the real world (1961: 28, 32). However, his most extended and stinging criticisms can be found in what is perhaps his sequel to Nietzsche's *The Antichrist, The Future of an Illusion.* He begins by suggesting that the gods performed three tasks for our ancestors: they exorcised the terrors of nature, reconciled men to the cruelty of fate, and they compensated them for the sufferings and privations of a life in common (1964: 24). Behind every divine figure, especially for monotheists, was a father writ large (27). He derives religion explicitly from the Oedipus complex, making it a "universal obsessional neurosis" of humanity (71). He feels that it is high time that we

replace this neurosis, the effects of repression, by the effects of the rational operation of the intellect (72). Here Freud is quite consciously supporting the meta-ideal of rationality of late modernity as manifested in its drive to restrict or abolish religious belief.

Freud believed that the cornerstone of civilized life was repression. In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis,* he suggests that the most valued assets of our civilization are aquired at the cost of sacrificing most of our sexuality (1969: 58). One of the most "uncivilized" courses of action is falling in love, in that in a love relation one feels the need of only the Other, and not society as a whole (1961: 55). Similarly, he tells us that human beings have a great degree of mutual hostility as a result of our natural aggressive instincts, and that civilization must set up an agency within each of us, the super-ego, to watch over these aggressive instincts "like a garrison in a conquered city" (59, 71). Eros and Death stand like giants outside the gates of civilization, ready to hurl down the Olympian gods from their palace of reason and humanity onto the rocks below.

So this brings us to Freud's general estimate of the value of civilization. We cannot overlook the degree to which civilization is based on the renunciation of instinct (1961: 44). It holds Eros and aggression in check, to the point where it is hard for us to be happy under its sway. The primitive man was much better off in this regard (62). And it is no use looking to technological innovation to overcome the effects of instinctual repression, for our newly-won power over nature and time are "without value for the economics of our happiness" (34-35). Freud's dark vision of how the excessive demands of our cultural super-egos deprive the individual under

civilization of happiness leads him to conclude that, under the influence of "cultural urges", some epochs of civilization, or perhaps all of humanity, have become neurotic (91). Underneath the optimism about progress in modern civilization Freud detected a neurotic undercurrent fed by the hidden tributaries of massive influxes of repressed instinct. This progress is fed by deep neurotic structures, hidden away in the psycho-social bedrock, structures that generate untold megawatts of repressive energy.

Freud was the great explorer of the bourgeois world of repressed and duplicitous sexuality, the great unearther of human instinctual drives. His own search for depth meaning revealed the grubby and ignoble origins of what most had previously thought noble endeavours, such as religion, war, art, and literature. Underneath the accomplishments of civilization lay repressed fragments of childhood wishes, warring instincts, old hysterias and neuroses, and ancient fears of nature and of cruel fathers. His unmasking project laid these bare and thus contributed to the rationalization drive of modernity.

4. From Sociology to the Sociology of Knowledge

A. Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge

The movement in the twentieth century from a sociology of "social facts" to the sociology of knowledge was the product by and large of German historicism and phenomenology, and received an early, clear formulation in Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia.* We move from a science of society, a surface investigation, to a study of how knowledge is produced in a given society, to an investigation of the depth meaning of positivist or historical sociological methods. Mannheim says that the

sociology of knowledge looks at the mental structure of the subject *in its totality,* which requires us looking at how it appears in different social and historical groups (1936: 266). This is because he feels that we must consider how an investigator's social position *infiltrates* his or her thinking, especially if this thinking is ideological (see 271). This leads him to conclude that by investigating various species of knowledge, the sociologist of knowledge "seeks to obtain systematic comprehension of the relationship between social existence and thought" (309).

Indeed, in so far as this chapter is itself an exercise in the sociology of knowledge it participates in the late modernist project of searching for depth meaning, in this case reflexively, by asking what lies underneath the sociology of knowledge itself. However, I believe that we can find an answer to this question only by locating the sociology of knowledge within the larger context of late modernity, as part of the unmasking tradition, and thus as part of the history of the rise and fall of this search for depth meaning. Mannheim's basic concern with his own participation in the unmasking tradition was that his work would wind up in relativism, so he invents the term "relationism" to describe his brand of sociology, a brand which does not wish to deny criteria of rightness and wrongness, but only that they can be formulated outside of some specific perspective (283). All knowledge is *Situations-gebunden.* The concept of truth does change through time, but its exact physiognomy at any given time is structured by its surrounding social world (see 291). Mannheim defends his relationism against the suggestion that it might be code for relativism by noting that it would become so only if linked to the older idea of static, eternal, unperspectivistic truths independent of the subjective experience of the

observer (300). Truth is fluid and perspectival, a lesson learned from Nietzsche. This is a lesson that would not be lost on the postmodernists, as we shall soon see.

B. Berger & Luckmann and the Social Construction of Everyday Knowledge

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann extended the sociology of knowledge even further in suggesting that the origins of this "discipline" were too much steeped in the history of ideas, that it should focus instead on the social construction of "reality", or at least on the bodies of knowledge that constitute everyday reality in the modern world (1967: 1-4). Now not just bodies of intellectual knowledge are subjected to sociology's unmasking gaze, but everyday life also. Berger and Luckmann suggest that what "everybody knows" has its own sort of logic (43). Commonsense knowledge, not abstract ideas, is the focus of their sociology of knowledge in that this knowledge constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist (14). This sort of knowledge is made up of signs and symbols, which language uses to build up semantic "zones of meaning" (41). The job of the sociologist of knowledge is to decode these signs and symbols, to make clear what they mean in the situation where they are used.

The search for depth meaning in late modernity was thus the mission of self-critical rationalizers in the European bureaucratic, economic, and technological elites, a sort of second Enlightenment rejecting the uncritical rationality and optimism of the first one. The sociology of knowledge, whether in hands of Mannheim or Berger and Luckmann, continues the unmasking project of late modernity, in this case unmasking knowledge seen as a realm of truth independent of the social circumstances that gave

it birth. The search for depth meaning in the realm of the production of knowledge is perhaps the final frontier of the meta-ideal of rationalization within the confines of late modernity. It is only a short leap from the social construction of reality to the postmodern deconstruction of reality, a matter to which I will turn in a moment. However, before I do, I would like to emphasize the "virtuality" of the way I see the modern structures of rationality. In each of its manifestations, we must keep in mind that there have been (and will be again) alternate ideals. Some cases in point: the rigid Cartesian grids of the late modern city have replaced the winding lanes and haphazard, landmark-hugging arrangements of earlier periods, arrangements that still have an evocative charm for many of us. We see a partial attempt to evoke some of this charm in postmodern architecture. Secondly, the instrumental rationality and emphasis on productivity in contemporary economic life, with its *telos* of an undifferentiated global economy, have recently been attacked by postmodern "localists" and by theorists like John Ralston Saul, who quite rightly notes that positive political changes and movements towards social justice have never been the result of an unseen economic hand pushing society forward. Lastly, ethical rationalists within the theoretical community (e.g. utilitarians, libertarians, and contractarians) have lately faced a barrage of criticism from communitarians and dialogicians like Charles Taylor for the futility and hollowness of their attempts to distill the essence of the Good from the liquour of human reason alone. This theme of the ultimate plasticity of human social arrangements must await my final chapter for a fuller treatment. Suffice it to say here that the escape from an undiluted structuralism as a form of historical and social explanantion is at the same time an

escape from determinism, whether in its geo-climatic (Montesquieu), economic (Marx), or psychological (B.F. Skinner) form.

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Chapter 6. The End of the Search for Depth Meaning as the Essence of Postmodernity

1. The Basic Themes

A. The Big Picture

Somewhere in the first decade or two after the Second World War our culture underwent a dramatic shift, a shift prompted by the rise to prominence of the economy of mass consumption in the West. Parallel (and intimately connected) to this development came, about a decade later, starting from the European *avant-garde,* and filtering slowing but surely out into the English-speaking world, poststructuralist and postmodernist thought. This provided a powerful paradigm competing with older, more established ways of thinking (e.g. positivism, liberalism, historicism, etc.). This paradigm called a halt to the creeping advance of the structural meta-ideal of rationality in exchange for a limited (to the consumer economy and popular and intellectual culture, at least) return to the irrational. This is a sort of functional acceptance of the meta-ideal of public irrationality as a counter to the general modern trend to social rationality.[52]

Mass awareness of depth meaning, tied to the social and technological changes that have come with the economy of mass consumption from, roughly, the end of the Second World War until today, has created a feedback effect so that at worst we act and think naively and consciously while at the same time being vaguely aware of the

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[52]Of course, the clearest evidence of this return to the irrational in late twentieth-century culture is the rise of fundamentalisms (both Christian and Moslem) and of religious cults like the Moonies, David Koresh's Waco horde, etc. However, we shouldn't get too carried away with the importance of such millenialisms, for they seem to be a recurring, maybe even cyclic, occurrence in Western history.

unconscious, ideological, or social signification of our act or thought. Truth is bifurcated between the literal and the hidden. This results in relativism and historicism as important intellectual problems, but also in a general "disenchantment" of the social world, the theme of my last section.

As Baudrillard suggests, we live in an era of mass culture and mass media, where revolutions of style, fashion, writing and custom create an aesthetic of change for change's sake (1987: 68-69). Late modernist culture had its self-confidence eroded by unsettling technological revolutions, allied to revolutions in the consumer economy, the decline of stabilizing religious traditions, the crumbling of the nuclear family and "patriarchy", and the dislocations caused by subcultural and counter-cultural self-alienations over the last four decades. Connected to this loss of self-confidence in modern Western culture, the bourgeoisie has lost its stake in the rationalization project. The new managers and myth-makers of late modern capitalism must spread a layer of affect, of manufactured need, over consumer products to fuel the dialectic of desire. The modern manufacturer, as Christopher Lasch notes, must educate the masses in the culture of consumption, creating an unappeasable appetite for goods, services, and personal fulfillment (1979: 136-7). The consumer economy requires a large element of mystification in the consuming masses.[53] In a quite postmodern fashion, the spiritual artifacts of earlier periods, including myth, religious symbols, and unconscious drives are played on in this re-masking effort. Pop stars sport crufixes and frolic sensuously for the camera, a can

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[53]Unfortunately, as Borgmann (1992: 63) points out, we are perhaps now witnessing a sort of *Götterdamerung* of commodities, a goods saturation that he believes augurs the twilight of modernism.

of soda pop in their hands.

Reality is now media-mediated, the image taking precedence over the concrete product, political theater over debate, the simulacrum over the physical thing. Reality has become hyper-reality. This coincides with the rise of a new social reality, as intellectual life becomes isolated and protected in the university. A new, privileged sub-class emerges from this development, the state-sponsored intellectual with academic tenure and a salary that puts them squarely within the upper middle class, into what John Ralston Saul calls the "corporatist" system. It bars entry to outsiders with gatekeepers versed in arcane and technical languages, languages that must be learned to be permitted entry into the various professional "corporations" that make up university departments.

Coinciding with the exhaustion of the modernist rationalization project in philosophy and the arts comes this "remasking" impulse, emerging fully armed, like Zeus from the head of Cronos, from the search for depth meaning in the great unmaskers of late modernity like Nietzsche and Freud. The project of the Enlightenment is not completed, but instead lies on the side of the sociological freeway of modernity behind a garish billboard, burned out and smashed like an old Chevy, flowers growing from its rusty hubcaps.

One of the more hardy floral species growing from these hubcaps is postmodernism. It has distinct expressions in the world of art and architecture (where it shows a mild, parodic classicism) and in that of philosophy, literary criticism, and social thought. This second expression of postmodernism has been born and nurtured within universities almost exclusively, and we should not be surprised if bears the

marks of its social origins. Postmodernist thought is the product of a late capitalist consumer culture where the spirit of intellectual critique is largely exhausted. It grows best in the fertile fields of what Rorty calls "ironist culture", where thick descriptions of private idiosyncracy are assigned the job of penetrating the veil of reality, which was formerly the business of theology, philosophy, and science (1989: 94). The last real root and branch critique of Western culture came out of Critical Theory and of the New Left of the sixties, which by the eighties had become out of fashion. Now critique turns to parody and irony, not social structures. Linda Hutcheon (1989: 3-4) is quite explicit about the role of the postmodern cultural critic: she is a "dedoxifier", accepting in principle that artistic production cannot be separated from its political context (i.e. that political power penetrates to every nook and cranny of personal and cultural life).

The postmodernist critic is an intellectual criticizing texts and how others have read them i.e. criticizing his own sub-class, the academic. In the postmodern break, thinkers begin to doubt even the depths as a source of meaning. As Frederic Jameson has it, the poststructuralist critique of hermeneutics, of the depth model, is usefully seen as a significant symptom of a postmodernist culture (1991: 12).[54] Foucault is among the last of the major European figures to perform a search for depth meaning, finding that knowledge and the self are the products of power. After him, we have only the play of meaning within the text, Derrida's deconstruction.

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[54]Indeed, Jameson (1991: 12) lists four other fundamental depth models that have been repudiated in postmodern culture: (1) the dialectical one of essence and appearance; (2) the Freudian one of manifest and latent content (i.e. the theory of repression); (3) the existential one of authenticity and inauthenticity (e.g. in the theory of alienation); and (4) the great semiotic opposition between signifier and signified.

In this chapter I will map the physiognomy of this *postmodern break*, bracketing for the most part the whole question whether we live in a "postmodern era" (although I believe that from a social and economic point of view it is more proper to speak of our own times as "late capitalist" or "late modernist", and that much of what passes for "postmodern" social thought is just a highly rhetorical species of late modern *avant-gardisme*). New ideals are now competing for power in the world of culture, ideals which I will attempt to outline below.

B. The Textualization of the World

To paraphrase the Bard, for postmodern philosophers and literary critics, all the world's a text, and we are only poor (but all the same potentially quite creative) readers. In Barthes' words, the author is dead, and the reader has been freed from the shackles of authorial intentionality as a guide to textual meaning. The reality of this strange new world can only be found in Kristeva's intertextuality, in so far as we can speak of "reality" in a postmodern context at all. This is the reality where texts bump up against each other in the night, illuminated only by the verbal cunning of the postmodern reader.

A new modesty (theoretical, *not* personal) has taken hold of the postmodern intellectual. As Richard Rorty tells us, we should now see moral and intellectual progress as the history of more and more interesting metaphors. Language does not represent the "real world", and when we think that it does we are merely worshipping the corpse of dead metaphors (Rorty 1989: 9, 21). Truth now wears a metaphorical cloak, the colour and shape of which is left to individual taste. The

logical extreme of this way of thinking is to see the body itself as a social construction, a simulacrum, a text upon which the social world inscribes its hierarchies and logocentrisms (see Turner 1992: 47 in this regard).

C. A Farewell to Meta-Narratives: Anything Goes

Yet there is a certain madness in postmodern method. Truth is seen as the effect of power, as inherently ideological, and thus as a form of terrorism in so far as it silences those who disagree. For postmodern thought, truth is fragmentary, changing, aesthetic, and found in traces here and bits and pieces there (Rosenau 1992: 77-79). The new epistemological rule for the leading fringe of postmodern thinkers is "anything goes". The old humanist, rationalist, objectivist culture imagined that theory in some way reflected the world around it. Lyotard announces the need to say goodbye to what he calls *meta-écrits*, meta-narratives, which seem to include all the stories that humanity has ever told itself about the cosmos, history, the world, and the self other than fragmented, local, discontinuous ones. Postmodern discourse rejects the two great meta-narratives of modernity, the German idealist notion of the dialectic of Spirit and the unity of knowledge, and the French revolutionary one of the liberation of humanity, in exchange for little tales, local narratives (Lyotard 1979: 98). Science is instead seen as an appeal to the consensus of experts, whose self-appointed rules establish whether a given move within the language game of science is permitted (52). Even those doing so-called "hard science" are seen by the postmodernist as playing games with "texts". Postmodernist thought is thus motivated by what Ernest Sosa calls "freedom of spirit", with its subjectivism and

anti-realism, to which he opposes realist, objectivist "serious" philosophy (Sosa 1987). Unentangled in meta-narratives, the postmodernist is free to play with meaning (fast-forwarding to Derrida for but an instant).

This unplugging of epistemology from some conception of the "real world" leads to Rorty's ironism. Rorty sees the ironist as (a) having continuing doubts about her "final vocabulary" (which is something like "truth" for Rorty), (b) believing that arguments in her final vocabulary cannot dissolve these doubts, and (c) not believing that her final vocabulary is any closer to reality than anyone else's (1989: 73). Ironism is just the philosophically modest version of "anything goes". It is the ideological presupposition of a polite academic debate, where nothing is really at stake. Both ironism and the "anything goes" position give precedence to the fleeting image over the continuity of history.[55]

D. The Image Culture and the Critique of History

Under our consumer culture, our sense of history has diminished. For the postmodern theorist, we have access to the past through its traces only (i.e.

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[55]Terry Eagleton (1985: 62-63) situates this development nicely when he calls the new age one of a dark parody of anti-representationalism, wherein art no longer reflects truth because "there is in truth nothing there to be reflected, no reality which is not itself already image, spectacle, simulacrum, gratuitous fiction." Speaking of Lyotard with an invigoratingly Marxist spleen, Eagleton notes that "It is not difficult, then, to see a relation between the philosophy of J.L. Austin and IBM, or between the various neo-Nietzscheanisms of a post-structuralist epoch and Standard Oil. It is not surprising that classical models of truth and cognition are increasingly out of favour in a society where what matters is whether you deliver the commercial or rhetorical goods. Whether among discourse theorists or the Institute of Directors, the goal is no longer truth but performativity, not reason but power."

documents, witness testimony, etc.), constructing our historical narratives out of these representations (Hutcheon 1989: 58).[56] In the textualized world of postmodern culture, all texts (whether contemporary or ancient, new or old) are co-temporal. As Pauline Rosenau notes of what she calls the "skeptical" postmodernists, we live in a series of perpetual presents, where the future is an anticipated present and the past a remembered present (1992: 64).[57] We witness increasingly the privileging of the new, living in the eternal now of the most recent act of consumption. When we add this view to the "end of meta-narratives" position, we get the end of history, for "history" is premised on the idea that the events of the past can be shown to have some sort of rational course (Vattimo 1991: 133-4). The end of truth, reason, and univocal meaning coincides with the end of history, at least as it is traditionally understood. This leads the "postmodern historian" to focus on traces and scraps, in the spirit of the Foucauldian genealogist (see Ankersmit 1989).

This is tied to a parallel social development, the development of the "image culture" in which pretty well all of us in the late modern Western world live. After

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[56]Although Hutcheon does go on to note that this implies no ontological reduction of the past: historical representation gives past events their *meaning*, but not their *existence* (1989: 81-82). However, the more rhetorical of postmodern theorists do not always observe this important distinction.

[57]Charles Jencks (1987: 349) notes of postmodern architecture, which is generally accepted as the clearest expression of "postmodernism" as a wide cultural phenomenon, that it is schizophrenic about the past, wanting to retain elements of it yet escape its dead formulae. Kim Levin (1988: 4) sees postmodern art as scavenging, ransacking, and recycling the past, while Jameson (1991: 9) sees postmodern art as "flat", depthless, and superficial, taking as his archetype Andy Warhol's souped-up (excuse the pun) photo-montages. Overall, we can say that postmodern art and architecture *use* history without especially participating in it (or, in some cases, understanding it), hence allowing the possibility of its using images from the past without these images giving it any depth.

the world is textualized, the postmodern culture seeks history by means of pop images and simulacra of the past, which in and of itself remains forever out of reach (Jameson 1991: 25). This culture is the result of the marriage of the consumer economy to late twentieth century technologies of information exchange and broadcast. In Baudrillard's words, we now live in a culture of "daily events" (1987: 71). Putting this into a broader perspective, Christopher Lasch calls all of late modern American culture the "culture of narcissism", where the forgetting of the past (and thus of history) is the mark of a narcissistic impoverishment of the psyche; this is tied to the way that the mechanical reproduction of culture produces a swirl of visual and audial images surrounding us on a daily basis, electronically mediating our sense of reality (1979: 25, 96). This leads some postmodernists to suggest that the paradigm model of the self in the "postmodern age" is that of a "filmic self", one which attends to past and future images through the fleeting moments of the present (Wurzer 1988: 248). The present image culture, where the concrete self is replaced by a strip of celluloid, stands opposed to the "historical" culture existing a century and more ago, and is largely responsible for the postmodern break in Western thought. The aesthetic structural ideal of the image culture has come to challenge the verbal, literate culture of the first half of this century, despite the latter's dogged resistance in the universities and "higher" culture.

So, as Baudrillard notes, we now resurrect our histories as mummified remains and put them on display in museums, just as the Egyptian Pharoah Ramses was exhumed and museumified. This, as he puts it in his typical hyperbole, is symbolic of a hatred of a whole civilization for its foundations (1984: 261). But he is right to the

degree that the hyperreal infusion brought about by the image culture has degraded our abilities to directly access our collective pasts in a meaningful way. If postmodern consumer culture does not quite mummify history, it at least embalms it, treating the past as almost forgotten traces, as fragments of memory, to be from time to time injected with artificial life to entertain or persuade the consuming masses.

E. I'm OK, You're OK: Parody Replaces Critique

The rational foundation for social critique crumbles under the epistemological regime of "anything goes". Reason and logic are put on the same footing as myth and magic, with preference replacing rational argument as the central determinant of belief (Rosenau 1992: 128). Yet all those disempowered intellectuals need something to do, so, as Frederick Jameson suggests, postmodern techniques give them fresh and seemingly socially useful tasks, if not some sense of exhilaration (1991: xiv). The critical methods of choice for most postmodernists are parody and irony. Yet this results in a false criticality, resulting in an assault on the social order with colourful but ineffective ships and planes constructed out of balsa wood and paper maché. As Kupsit puts it:

> I suggest that the term "postmodernism" is deliberately kept flexible and enchanting - so rich with connotations that it dissolves on direct contact with reality - as a pretentious, pseudo-autonomous display of theory's critical power in its bourgeois situation of social impotence. (1990: 54)

The socio-economic interests of avant-garde theorists within academia explain to a large degree how postmodernists can abandon truth and reason as ideals while at the same time claim to be exercising the function of social and political critic. Linda Hutcheon (1989: 8, 11) comes clean on this question when she sees the weight of long

traditions of visual and narrative representations combined with her loss of faith in the power of existing representations leading her to parody as the only way out of the contemporary crisis of representation, to a paradoxical postmodernism of complicity and critique. Naturally, the postmodern critic must go through a few moments of angst in the process of critique, but at the end of the day she is complicitous with the object of her criticism in a joyfully parodic acceptance of the way things are.

F. The Social and Economic Milieu of the Postmodern Break

When postmodernists textualize the world, abandon representations, bid farewell to meta-narratives, and "privilege" the fleeting present over the historical past, they do so by and large from the social position of a comfortable upper middle class academic post and from the historical position of the late capitalist consumer economy.[58] Their class position is that of the late modern *bourgeois* on both fronts, the economic and the cultural. As I have already suggested, this economy is an image culture in the sense that the evanescent audiovisual byte is the chief means of

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[58]Jameson suggests that the Other of late modern consumer culture is no longer Nature, as it was throughout most of human history, but technology, Sartre's counterfinality of the practico-inert (1991: 35). The enemy in this sense is our own collective pasts as contained in the dead human labour stored up in machinery. The contemporary urbanite now treats the natural world by and large as a playground, another ground for the consumption of new and interesting experiences, and not as a source of terror or wonder. Romanticism, the aesthetic of natural wonder, is laughed at by the contemporary world-weary, cynical intellectual. But perhaps Appignesi and Garratt are right when, at the close of their *Postmodernism for Beginners* (1995), a quite brilliant sketch of postmodernism using text, graphics and comics, they conclude that maybe the homeopathic remedy to postmodernism we need is the "incurable illness of romanticism", a return to wonder at a world long since overgrown with human constructions (in both the material and ideal senses).

information exchange. We find there a contemporary subject that is no longer a "strenuous agent", a *homo faber*, but a "dispersed, decentered network of libidinal attachments, emptied of ethical substance and psychical interiority, the ephemeral function of this or that act of consumption, media experience, sexual relationship, trend or fashion" (Eagleton 1985: 71). The meta-ideal of rationality finds its place in the economic instrumentalism of late modern capitalism, which in turn generates a dispersed, decentered, grasping subject as the archetype of the contemporary individual.[59]

This image culture is still formally tied to a "capitalist" economy, but it has, in league with a spreading of the consumption of consumer goods to the masses, worked such great changes in Western societies that we can speak of a quasi-structural shift and a quite real "break" in the corresponding intellectual evolution. So we can identify the social and economic milieu of postmodernism as that of middle class intellectuals absorbed in the image culture of late capitalism. Yet these intellectuals are propagators of the structural meta-ideal of rationalization too: they are immersed in the dualistic causal web that propels modernity, right down to their day-to-day interactions and decisions.

However, to return to my broader theme, the older rugged individualism, and

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[59]I specify "archetype" because common sense tells us that there are wide variations in the ways that individuals personify the ideals of consumer capitalism. Within our world there are many fringes, both modern and premodern, counter-cultural and sub-cultural, that radiate subtle energies, energies that serve to draw away substantial numbers of people from the purely instrumental economic rationality of consumer capitalism. It is the job of the social critic to nurture the more substantial of these energies, to keep their fires burning and thereby illuminate ideals counter to those held by mainstream culture.

its economic counterpart, bourgeois entrepreneurial individualism (which still receives worshipful praise in self-help manuals and television shows, but whose socio-economic function is rapidly becoming a thing of the past), are in retreat as dominant social paradigms, being replaced by what Albert Borgmann calls "commodious individualism", whose primary *telos* is the unencumbered consumption of consumer goods (1992: 43). I will come back to this theme of the disenchantment of the social self at the end of this chapter. Instead, I will now leave this "big picture" (or, to parody Lyotard, *meta-tableau*) behind to turn to the first of the theorists heralding the postmodern break, Michel Foucault, trying to show how his understanding of archaeology and genealogy helped to begin the process whereby the search for depth meaning, propelled by the structural meta-ideal of rationality, came to a halt.

2. Foucault: From Truth to Power/Knowledge

A. Power/Knowledge/Human Sciences

Foucault begins to undermine the rational basis of the whole unmasking project of late modernity by pushing the search for depth meaning to its upper limits. For the mature Foucault, power, knowledge, and the human sciences represent one big complex underlying all human organization, culture, and intellectual achievements. In *Discipline and Punish*, he says that power and knowledge constitute each other (1979: 27). Underneath every will to knowledge lies a will to power. But we should not see power in a purely negative sense, for it produces reality, domains of objects, and rituals of truth (194). In an interview on method, Foucault attacks

great unmaskers like Marx and Freud for thinking that they could escape the regimes of power/knowledge into some transcendent realm of truth (1987: 97). He then goes on to say that the purpose of his work is to see how men govern themselves and others by the "production" of truth (108). To put it most simply, truth is produced by power relations.[60]

Foucault sees the human sciences as implicated in modern schemes to pacify the masses by creating docile bodies and normalized minds. Modern societies control and discipline their populations by sanctioning the knowledge-claims of the human sciences, e.g. pyschiatry, economics, medicine, etc. (Philp 1987: 67). The result is a disciplined, docile individual ready to work, play and interact within the limits set by the current regime of power/knowledge.

B. Madness, A Structuralist Overture

Madness and Civilization acts like an overture to his investigation of the power/knowledge regimes of modernity, an overture that still shows strong links to the methods of Foucault's structuralist teachers. In this work Foucault unmasks three such regimes of madness, the premodern one where madness showed the opening of a path to the supernatural, the classical regime that saw madness as the unreason of an unchained animality, and the modern one that sees madness as a disease. He tells

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[60]Lyotard echoes this in suggesting that a sort of terror rules the late modern ideal of efficiency, insofar as anyone who does not play the language-game of whatever institution or culture they are a part of is told "Adaptez vos aspirations à nos fins, sinon..." (1979: 103). The nonconforming, unruly inhabitant of a corporation of knowledge (using Saul's terminology), whether academic, technocratic, or economic, is in effect asked the same question that Clint Eastwood *qua* Dirty Harry asked of the cornered petty criminal: "do you feel lucky, punk?" Most don't.

us in the preface that in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, man's dispute with madness took the form of a dramatic debate in which he confronted the secret powers of the world; now, madness has been reduced to silence by psychiatry. Foucault's work represents an attempt to write an archaeology of that silence (1973: xi-xii). At the end of the Middle Ages, leprosy disappeared, and the spaces in the lazar houses that formerly housed lepers were taken up by the insane. In addition, ships of fools floated along the coasts and rivers of Europe, manned by the mad condemned to a watery exile. They sailed through a lanscape of delights with a false happiness that bore witness to the diabolical triumph of the Antichrist (22). The Renaissance view of madness, as seen in Shakespeare and Cervantes, saw it as a sort of semi-divine and semi-infernal Fall into unreason, hence all the talk about the wisdom of fools. But the classical age was soon to "reduce to silence the madness whose voices the Renaissance had just liberated" (38).

This age (the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) saw the madman as someone who had let loose their normally hidden animal natures. The madman was not yet a sick man. His madness was situated against a background of Unreason, revealing a "liberty raging in monstrous forms of animality" (74, 83). Madness was both an excessive passion and a delirium that required a brutal discipline (75). And it was futile to look back at this period and try to distinguish physical therapeutics from psychological medications because psychology had yet to come into existence, thus treatment was a matter both of transforming physical nature and discoursing with the unreason of the mad (197).

But this all changes with the birth of the asylum in the hands of the reformers

Pinel and Tuke, when madness was seen as a disease that had to be cured. Madness now became a moral deformity, something to be judged and condemned. This cure was to be effected by a "medical personage", a doctor who was at the same time Father and Judge, a magic perpetrator of a cure, a Thaumaturge (273). Foucault interprets the new regime of psychiatric practice as a late eighteenth-century moral tactic that was preserved in the rites of the asylum, being later overlaid with the myths of positivism (276). These myths transformed the doctor/wise man into a scientist who engineers a cure for the insane. Freud later demystifies the asylum's structures, but through psychoanalysis concentrated the powers set up in the confinement of the asylum in the person of the psychoanalyst (277-8). Foucault concludes that psychoanalysis can unravel some forms of madness, but remains a stranger to the sovereign enterprise of unreason (278). Freud himself stands unmasked by Foucault's overture on the history of madness. The deep psychic structures that he hoped to reveal are reinvested with their primal mystery by Foucault's archeology of silence.

C. Genealogy/Punishment/Counterpoint

This second theoretical triad involves Foucault's shift to Nietzsche's notion of genealogy as his central unmasking strategy, and his application of this strategy to the history of punishment in *Discipline and Punish.* Here the search for depth meaning in his genealogy of regimes of punishment shifts back and forth between structuralist and poststructuralist modes with a contrapuntal flair. Foucault laid out his notion of genealogy in his 1971 discussion of Nietzsche, where he begins by calling it grey and

meticulous, operating on a field of entangled and confused parchments "that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (1977: 138). It seeks to shorten the historical vision to those things that are nearest: the nervous system, the body, energies, etc; and if it chances upon lofty epochs, it is suspicious of finding there a "barbarous and shameful confusion" (155). Foucauldian genealogy is proposed as a postmodern successor to old fashioned history. It will be practiced by the "specific intellectual" who struggles locally to detach truth from the hegemonic structures under which it operates (Foucault 1987: 97). It involves a painstaking rediscovery of struggles and of local, specific knowledge (Philp 1985: 76). It is an abandonment of the old belief in the unity of history.

Foucault starts off *Discipline and Punish* by telling us that this study will be a history of the micro-physics of punitive power as an element in the genealogy of the human soul, and that this punitive power is situated in a certain "political economy" of the body (29, 25). This focus on the body is sustained throughout the work. As Merquior puts it, from the early seventies on Foucault's epistemological categories were politicized (1985: 85). His new interest becomes how power/knowledge takes hold of the human body through punishment and regimes of sexual normality. Under the old monarchical regime of punishment, a crime represented an attack on the person of the prince, and was repaid with the terror of torture and execution. This did not reestablish justice, but reactivated the power of the prince (49). With the growth of democracy, torture became less popular, and there was a shift in the point of application of power away from spectacular rituals performed on the victim's body to the mind (101). The reformers of the Enlightenment turned their heads away from

the barbarities of the ancien régime, but in doing so opened the way leading to the discliplinary society and its panoptic methods of control.

The new methods of discipline in schools, barracks, workshops and prisons produced docile bodies through a whole "micro-penality" of time, behaviour, speech, body, and sexuality (Foucault 1979: 138, 178). Indeed, imprisonment became the chief method of punishing criminals. The perfect mechanism of carceral discipline was Bentham's Panopticon, which induced in the inmate a state of permanent and conscious visibility, leading to the automatic functioning of power (201). Foucault takes "panopticism" to be a general mark of the regime of docile bodies in which we now live, the depth meaning, as it were, of the disciplinary society.[61] He related this to the accumulation of capital in the West, which allowed the economic takeoff of the Industrial Revolution: the parallel political takeoff involved a new technique in the administration of men, discipline being the most cost-effective way of "reducing" the body to order and docility (220). Work, whether in prison or in the factory, produced individuals "mechanized according to the general norms of an industrial society" (242). Here is another element in Foucault's structuralist counterpoint.

The last major issue dealt with in *Discipline and Punish* is the "ensemble" police-prison-deliquency, which Foucault sees as a never-interrupted circuit (282). The current that flows through all three elements of this ensemble is the idea that the criminal exists in some sense before his crime, as a psychological potentiality (252). This gives rise to the idea of the "dangerous individual", or delinquent. In fact,

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[61]As we shall see, Baudrillard prophesies the end of panoptic space within contemporary culture, as, for example, television and life merge, and the medium, the message, and human existence are inextricably intertwined.

prisons succeed quite well in producing a certain type of delinquency, one that is less dangerous politically and economically: the offender as a pathological subject (277). But prisons are only one part of a much broader structure, the "carceral network". Within it, we see a universal reign of the normative, where judging has become a major social function (304). The underlying meaning of the disciplinary society and its carceral network is the creation and enforcement of norms, norms that allow that society to function smoothly in an economic and political sense.

D. Sexuality, the Poststructualist Finale

Lastly, I turn to the "finale" of Foucault's career, his multi-volume history of sexuality. In the first volume we hear Foucault telling us that modern power/knowledge complexes use sexuality to control populations (see Pollis 1987). The second volume, *The Use of Pleasure* (which I will focus on), travels back in time to study the sexuality of the ancient Greeks. It begins with a muddled theoretical introduction where Foucault makes several tenative suggestions about the course he will follow within: he wants to write a history of the experience of sexuality, to put forward a hermeneutics of desire and of the self, both grounded in "games of the self" and an aesthetics of existence, while his analysis of desiring man will be located at the intersection of an *archaeology of problematizations* and a *genealogy of practices* (Foucault 1990: 3-13). This mixture of archaeology, genealogy, hermeneutics, and aesthetics represents a significant acceptance by the older Foucault of poststructuralist categories of thought.

His search for the meaning of ancient Greek sexuality as an aesthetics of

existence led him to focus on the three great arts of self-conduct for those Greeks: dietetics, economics, and erotics (251). Under the first art, sex was seen as more or less pernicious in its consequences, so it required prudence and discretion (116). It was a *techné* that required the subject to control his conduct like a pilot steering between rocks or a statesman governing a city (138-9). The economics of self-conduct gave the wife a privileged place within the household, but allowed the husband certain freedoms in the public realm (e.g. relations with boys, mistresses, etc.).

The third art of self-conduct, erotics, dealt with how adult males treated the young boys they lusted after. There was a moral concern for their fragile beauty, for their corporeal honour, their training, and their future as free citizens, which could be jeopardized by their taking a passive, subordinate role in their sexual relations with adult men (213-5). All three arts led to philosophical reflections on the necessities of personal regimens, self-limitation, and the importance of timing in erotic encounters. However, the great sea change came in the fourth century, when the Socratic-Platonic reflection on Eros creates the figure of the Master of Truth who wins the love of his followers by getting them to renounce the urgings of their carnal impulses towards him and others (241-3). This last move opens the door to the dark and gloomy Christian view of sexuality as unclean, thereby disproving the traditional notion of there being a sharp break between the fun-loving ancients and repressed Christians.

In the end, Foucault's method becomes an aesthetical genealogy, a search for traces as part of an attempt to question past constructions of the self. The last half of Foucault's career was one long flirtation with the sceptical postmodernist notion "anything goes". It is also the acceptance of the self as evanescent and as tied into

shifting norm-granting networks. It remains for his former student Jacques Derrida to put to rest the very notion of constructibility as part of critical and philosophical technique.

3. Derrida: From Meaning to Play

A. The Pharmakon and the Text

Derrida reduces meaning to play by way of a multi-stage process. First of all, we find him saying in *On Grammatology* that there "is nothing outside the text" (in Derrida 1981: xiv). He reads everything, including the self, social relations, and history, as texts. This is tied into his attack on the "metaphysics of presence", which I will discuss in more detail in the next section. Suffice it to say here that this attack involves the destruction of real world referents for language, of the "transcendentally signified", which "extends the domain and play of signification indefinitely" (1978a: 280). Indeed, in a discussion of the poststructuralist elements in Freud's thought, he says that Freud's metaphor of the Mystic Writing-Pad shows how we can see psychic content as a text, and the psychic apparatus as a writing machine (1978b: 199). The text of the unconscious mind is not a presence, but a weave of traces (211). Derrida seeks in the illogic of the unconscious writing machine an ontological platform for his attack on logocentrism, one not available in the rationality of consciousness. In general, postmodernist thinkers implicate the great unmasking tradition of Nietzsche, Freud, and constructivist sociology in their attack on the possibility of any sort of "objective" meaning (whether surface or depth) at all.

In his essay "Plato's Pharmacy" Derrida attacks the privileging of speech over

writing in philosophy. Socrates, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, calls writing a "pharmakon", which means simutaneously poison, cure, and remedy. This *pharmakon* has no stable essence, no substance; we cannot master it, just as no absolute privilege allows us to master a textual system (1972b: 125-6, 96). All the world's a text, and the meaning of this text, just like the irreducibly idiomatic element in the dream-work, is always slipping away. "A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the laws of its composition and the rules of its game" (63). So what is to be done? As we will see, the *déclassé* literary critic/philosopher within our contemporary image culture is left with just the play of the world, *sans* objectivity, *sans* meaning, *sans* teeth, *sans* everything.

B. The Metaphysics of Presence and Différance

Derrida sees the history of metaphyics, the epic adventure of reason in the West, as the determination of Being as presence (whether as *arché* or *telos*) (1978a: 279). Under the sway of the metaphysics of presence (which, as one might guess, favours that which is present over the absent, the trace, the deferred, the different) philosophy and science assumed the presence of a real world of truths, causes, and origins capturable in discourse (Novitz 1986: 41). At the heart of this mythic epic is *logocentrism*, the Western mind's centering itself on the Greek *logos*, the presence of the (spoken) word. Derrida's counter to logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence is *différance*.

Différance is based on the idea of language as a circulation of signs, and the deferral of the moment when we can encounter "the thing itself", make it ours,

consume and expend it (Derrida 1982: 9). The signs of language defer the presence of the thing signified. Derrida's *différance* is not a present being, and exercises no authority. Instead, it "instigates the subversion of every kingdom" with its play of the trace, played out on a chessboard that has no depth but is all the same bottomless (21-22). This image of a bottomless chessboard without depth captures quite nicely the radical postmodernist view of meaning, its simultaneous infinity/plurality and thinness. Within the postmodern intellectual condition, meaning is everywhere yet nowhere: like a sheet of paper, looked at from one angle it seems flat and expansive, but from another it is quite unsubstantial, a mere sliver. Derrida's *différance* puts into play deconstruction as an interpretive technique that is unable to reach the great social world surrounding the scholar's dry-as-dust *biblia* and is thus unable to critique that world.

C. Deconstruction and the Abandoment of Meaning

Derrida's deconstructionist technique abandons the search for the "meaning" or complex of meanings of a text either in the author's intentions or in its social and historical position. In one sense, the deconstructionist rejects both intentionality and structure as grounds for the construction of meaning-full social objects. The deconstructionist sees the signifier and the signified as losing their status as fixed points within some stable order of discourse (Sim 1986: 115). Both are allowed to float freely within the hyper-reality of the intertextual atmosphere. Deconstruction itself wants to tease out the "warring forces of signification" within a text (Johnson in Derrida 1981: xiv). Derrida seeks the law which compels us to apply the name

"writing" to that which "critiques, deconstructs, wrenches apart the traditional, hierarchical opposition between writing and speech, between writing and the... system of all what is customarily opposed to writing" (1981a: 4). Indeed, one of the chief targets of deconstructionism are binary oppositions like presence/absence, truth/falsity, male/female, ferreting out their hidden metaphysical presuppositions. In this limited sense, deconstructionism is the last echo of the search for depth meaning within the unmasking tradition. However, once the metaphysical underpinnings of these binary oppositions are revealed to the world, the deconstructionist goes nowhere, proposing no postive program of a post-metaphysical monism.

All of this seeks to put out of the way any question of a text having a meaningful relation to that in the external world which it describes. We find in the postmodernist abandonment of meaning traces of the evanescence of the image culture, along with what Paglia calls the obsession with language of the "word-drunk" French intellectual. If all the world's a text, if we must defer presence and language games centered on presence, and if our foundational critical method is to give up trying to discover the "actual" meaning of even just the texts themselves (never mind real world events and ideas), it should come as no surprise that we come to see reality by analogy with the flickering lights and dancing sounds of the cinema or television screen.[62]

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[62]Of course, working within the Giddensian notion of the duality of structure, we should remind the reader of the impact of our image-centered culture back onto literary criticism and philosophy.

D. Playing among the Sandcastles on the Shores of Late Modernity

We find the scraps of Derrida's positive program amongst the deconstructed metaphysical sandcastles of late modernity. Or perhaps we should say that we can find traces of Derridean footprints amongst these sandcastles. This program is no longer the search for meaning in any sense of the word, but the play of the text/world. To supply the significatory shortages in Derrida's diet he requires a reading and writing supplement that operates by the logic of play (1978b: 64). The god of writing, in Egyptian mythology Theuth, is sly, slippery, and masked; "an intriguer and a card, like Hermes, he is neither king nor jack, but rather a sort of *joker*, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play" (93). Derrida's project goes forward by paying an annual tribute to Theuth.

Part of this tribute lay in his attack on Lévi-Strauss in particular and structuralism in general. The idea of structure is firmly implanted in the history of *logos* and *épistemé*, philosophy and science in the West. The function of the center of a structure is to orient it, but at the same time it limits its play (1978a: 278). Structuralism is thus derided for being implicated in the metaphysics of presence. Derrida's idea of writing links it to the "play of the world" (1978b: 228); against the "saddened, *negative*, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play" which he ties to the structuralists, he opposes the "Nietzschean *affirmation*, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation" (1978a: 292). Here among the crumbled sandcastles of late modernity we find the sad end of the search for depth meaning.

Thinkers no longer attempt their clumsy seductions of that venerable *dame* Truth. Instead they revel all day in Dionysian dances and joyous destructive acts, at twilight tiring and flopping down onto their beach blankets, slipping into the world of dreams under a postmodern moon.

4. Lyotard & Baudrillard: From an Incredulity to Metanarratives to Embracing Simulacra

A. Lyotard Bids Farewell to Grand Tales

To recapitulate a bit, Lyotard suggests, now that we have entered a post-industrial era (speaking socio-economically) and a post-modern era (speaking culturally), that the essence of the postmodern condition is our incredulity towards meta-narratives. The search for metaphysical depths in the seas of late modernity has been replaced by incredulity, unbelief, cynicism. The *grand récit* has lost its allure, whether in the form of the revolutionary tale of liberation (with its Gallic accent), or the speculative tale of the quest for complete knowledge (with its more Germanic accents) (1979: 63,98). Scientific discourse loses its old meta-legitimacy, being grounded now in pure performativity, the greater rationality of a search for the whole being replaced by the more limited techno-rationality of efficiency.

So all knowledge for Lyotard is stories, tales, maybe even legends. If Derrida says that "there is nothing outside the text", we can easily imagine Lyotard telling us "there is nothing outside the tale". Of course, the foundation of a tale-driven culture is the oral tradition, which transmits in its stories three types of know-how: how to speak, how to hear, and how to do. A traditional community establishes its social bonds by means of this triple *savoir faire*, embodying pragmatic rules in the stories

that elders and chiefs and bards tell the young (40). These stories, in both traditional and modern societies, legitimize culture. For Lyotard narrative knowledge (which in a sense constitutes *all* knowledge) encompasses both traditional and scientific varieties, each of which is made up of a series of Wittgensteinian-style language-games. Within each form of knowledge there are rules that govern the game in question, rules that tell the players which moves are "good" or allowed, and which ones aren't (47). To call a given form of knowledge "scientific" or even "valid" depends on a prior decision to accept the rules of the local language-game: the way we determine the legitimacy of a given *savoir* moves from an epistemological or metaphysical towards an aesthetic or political (if not whimsical) foundation. And the self is not like a theatre, as Hume would have us believe, but more like a gasping tuna caught in nets of communication, stranded belly-up on nodes by which messages are continually passing (31).

These nodes connect together the various language-games the scientists play. The ruling Deity of these language-games, as already hinted at, is not truth in and of itself, but efficiency: a move is a "good" one when it works better and/or costs less. Thus under the present regime of scientific research, an equation is established between riches, efficiency, and truth, with the latter being an indentured servant of the first two (73). Performativity replaces truth at the *telos* of science; one doesn't buy scientists, technicians, and apparatus to know truth, but to augment one's power (76). In the context of the mercantilisation of knowlege, the operative question is no longer, "is it true?", but "what use is it?", or, more often, "can it be sold?" (84).

For Lyotard, science (and research in a broader sense) is now geared towards

technical efficiency in the service of capitalist profiteering. Yet this new dominance of the principle of performativity isn't all bad for him: it excludes in principle adhesion to metaphysical discourse, it requires the abandonment of fables, it needs clear spirits and cold wills, it puts the calculus of interactions in the place of the definition of essences, and it gives to the "players" the responsibility not only for the statements they propose but also for the rules to which they submit to be rendered acceptable (100). All in all, it clears the decks of Western thought of obselete quests, of metaphysical tilting at windmills: even Derrida's deconstruction would have to be measured against the principle of performativity. Its exchange value might well be nil. In this sense the postmodern condition that Lyotard describes is a more radical departure from the search for depth meaning than even Derrida's project.

Thus Lyotard abandons both the search for depth meaning and the meta-ideal of rationality in his post-sociology-of-knowledge position. He is the high sociological theorist of postmodernity, the investigator of the techno-economic grounds of late modern unbelief. The new rules of postmodern knowledge, the brave new world that awaits us, is one where not performativity but paralogy rules the day, where the "little tale" is the form *par excellence* taken by imaginative invention (98). But in the end he betrays his own class origins in this oft-quoted passage from his afterword to *The Postmodern Condition*, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?":

> Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games... By becoming kitsch, arts panders to the confusion which reigns in the 'taste' of the patrons. Artists, gallery owners, critics, and public wallow together in the 'anything goes', and the epoch is one

> of slackening. But this realism of the 'anything goes' is in fact that of money; in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it remains possible and useful to assess the value of works of art according to the profits they yield. Such realism accomodates all tendencies, just as capital accommodates all 'needs', providing that the tendencies and needs have purchasing power. (1984: 76)

Capital may indeed accommodate all needs, and eclecticism may indeed be the degree zero of postmodern culture, but the "one" who wears Paris perfume in Tokyo, retro clothes in Hong Kong, and who picks and chooses the best buys in art galleries is clearly bourgeois, cosmopolitan, and comfortable. Lyotard is telling the tale of the uprooted bourgeois firmly entrenched in the information economy in his *La condition postmoderne:* he is providing that bourgeois with new structural ideals, new rules of the game, under the cover of pure description (with a certain nostalgia for the disappearance of aristocratic taste built in). He is, in short, telling his own story writ large, the story of a man perched on the brink of the postmodern break, from which the socio-cultural flatlands ahead are unmarred by metaphysical heights and valleys.

B. Baudrillard says Hello to the Rule of the Simulacrum

When we shift to Baudrillard's heralding of the age of the simulacrum, we see not just the abandonment of meta-narratives about the real and truth, but a *replacement* of the real with a constructed (simulated) image of the real (and a certain celebratory mood that goes along with this replacement). In his "The Precession of the Simulacra", he starts off by comparing maps of the real with the maps generated by the cartographers of Borges's empire: they are *second order simulacra,* where the map preceeds the territory, engendering it. He says that the age of the simulacrum, our own age, begins by the liquidation of all referentials, leaving only the desert of the

real; they are later resurrected artificially in a system of signs, in the *hyperreal* (Baudrillard 1984: 253). The new maps of the real do not simulate anything, other than the imaginations and desires of their creators.[63] The crisis of the real gives way to its desertification and replacement by the hyperreal, the ontological streams that once fed it (from reservoirs located in the natural sciences, philosophy, and religion) drying up into mere trickles.

Baudrillard sees three phases of the image or simulacrum, a sort of dialectical quartet of the ascent (or descent?) from the real to the hyperreal (256). We can associate these with distinct socio-metaphysical periods:

(1) The image as a *reflection* of a basic reality (which we might call the *high modernist* view of reality, the view of a Bacon, Locke, or Kant, and of a burgeoning capitalism);

(2) The image as a *mask and perversion* of a basic reality (which is the *late modernist* sense of the real, as seen in Nietzsche and Freud's search for depth meaning, in the *fin de siècle's* cultural doubts, and in the socialist critique of capitalism);

(3) The image as a mask of the *absence* of a basic reality (which we can see as the first phase of the postmodern break, e.g. Derrida's deconstructionism, and in the coming of the consumer economy);

(4) The image as bearing *no relation* to any reality at all (which we can see as a "high postmodernism", in Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum, and in the post-industrial information economy).

As Hutcheon notes (1989: 33), Baudrillard has been attacked for his metaphysical idealism, his nostalgia for pre-mass-media authenticity, and his apocalyptic nihilism. But she says that there is a more telling criticism of his theory of the simulacrum: that we have never had an unmediated access to reality, except through representations,

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[63]Perhaps the most perfect map of the hyperrreal is the video game, which seems to reconstruct something real, but is "in reality" a pure fantasy dreamed up by the programmer.

and that there is nothing "natural" about the real.

This may well be true. But Hutcheon misses the "phenomenological" point that underlies Baudrillard's so-called idealism: in the past the representations that people took for the real (e.g. the self, laws of nature, God) *seemed* real, were quite palpable things within the minds of those who believed in them, whereas the mass media images that flood our awarenesses today no longer have that same ontological hardness (except perhaps to the entirely unreflective consumer). They are processed and understood as *unreal.* In the past many believed that they *did* have unmediated access to the real, whereas today this is thrown into doubt. We may well have to accept Hutcheon's conclusion that to exist is to be represented. But her Berkeleyism on this issue fails to grasp Baudrillard's central contention. We do only touch reality through representations. But the more interesting question is, "what is the status of these represention?"

Baudrillard's utopia (or dystopia?) is Disneyland, which he sees as more "real" than the rest of America. It is a third-order simulation, a simulation of a simulation. Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact (for Baudrillard) all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but simulations. "It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle." (1984: 262) It is a simulation of a society and culture which is itself already a simulacrum of the real: Disneyland is a meta-map of a map of a system of signs. Perhaps its "reality" exists mostly in its self-awareness of being a pure simulacrum: Mickey knows he is just a just an actor in a suit angling for tourist

dollars. Disneyland is the enchanted dream of a consumer capitalism that can deliver the goods without exploitation, without conflict, without pain.

Baudrillard is a bit of a structural idealist himself, for this process of the domination of the simulacrum is not an abstract, ungrounded development, but is directly related to changes in capitalist modes of production. Throughout its history, capitalism has been fed by the destruction of every referential, every human goal, truth and falsity, good and evil, "in order to establish a radical law of the equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power" (1984: 268). It sought to liquidate reality in exterminating everything's use value (converting it, of course, to exchange value, the better to sell them with). Now the consumer economy must foster unreality, simulation. But it is threatened by a "contagious hyperreality", so its new slogan is "take your desire for reality!" (268). Capitalism, most notably in advertising, seeks an ontologicization of the desire for the goods it produces. More generally, it gambles on remanufacturing artificial social, political, and economic stakes to restore the reality of the social world it creates. But the production of goods and commodities no longer makes any sense on its own. "What society seeks through production, and overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it. That is why *contemporary "material" production is itself hyperreal."* (268-269) In the end, capital for Baudrillard is a "sorcery of a social relation"; it is not a scandal to be opposed by an alternative economic or political rationality, but a challenge that we must take up "according to symbolic law." (263) It cannot be opposed by an Enlightened Reason, for its very logic (i.e. the ideals that structure our economic activities) is grounded in the production of irrational desires.

Without a doubt, Baudrillard goes too far in saying that all contemporary capitalist production is hyperreal. But being the prophet he is, he is pointing the way to a possible future. Just as Lyotard was the sociologist of the postmodern break, Baudrillard is the cultural prophet of that break, the Cassandra of late consumer capitalism. He sees a new structural ideal coming (indeed, already here in certain social and cultural sectors): that of the hyperreal, of pure info-tainment, endlessly replayable and exchangable. This ideal structures both everyday life and more large-scale economic activities (i.e. with the coming of the "information economy", where the prime commodity is information, not physical goods). I now turn to the broader issue of cultural significance of the hyperreal.

C. The Hyperreal as the Endgame of the Search for Depth Meaning

The "reality question" is very much alive these days amongst the theorists of postmodernity. Linda Hutcheon (1989: 34) sees the postmodern not as a degeneration into hyperreality but a questioning of what reality means; Lyotard (1984: 76) says that modernism discovers the lack of reality of reality; while Albert Borgmann (1992: 12, 119) sees us as in danger of losing our sense of reality, with hyperreality being a thickening network obscuring and choking the real. This debate is rather abstract stuff, but there is an underlying social meaning to all of this. It is that the intellectual structural ideal of the search for depth meaning is under siege by a mass awareness of the allure of the hyperreal, of Baudrillard's second-order simulacra (i.e. the map that maps nothing but the desires of the cartographer). This allure is one of the chief products of late consumer capitalism allied with technotronic techniques (i.e. crisp

video images, brilliant audio, and digital storage, retrieval and manipulation of data).

The hyperreal, which is, after all, more "real" than reality itself, has three distinct qualities: (1) it's brilliant, excluding unwanted information and noise; (2) it's rich; and (3) it's pliable, subject to the user's desire and manipulation. Borgmann defines these three aspects taken together as hyperreal "glamour" (1992: 87-88). Reality is dirty, encumbering, and confining. But hyperreal glamour is disposable and discontinuous: it can be thrown away, or replayed from the beginning at any time. These are the signs of a perfect commodity (96). Exchange value is multiplied to infinity (assuming infinite desire), while a thing's use value is defined purely by the desires of the commodity's potential user.

Frederick Jameson takes the hyperreal into the city street, into the architectural structures of contemporary North America. Postmodern buildings like Toronto's Eaton Center and L.A.'s Westin Bondaventure Hotel aspire to be miniature cities that create "hypercrowds" and hyperspaces, suppressing depth in favour of a packed emptiness (1991: 40-42). Some recent buildings even strive for an overt hyperreality, such as West Edmonton's mega-mall, with its life-size replica of one of Columbus's ships, submarine fleet, and recreation of Bourbon Street (all safer and cleaner than the real things). These buildings are like computer simulations: they try to create a hyperreality that will protect their visitors from the less structured and more dangerous urban reality that surrounds them. The Bonaventure's reflective skin repels the city outside, with its messy and dirty reality, like those reflective sunglasses that repel the glance of the Other (Jameson 1991: 42). Ironically, the Bonaventure plays a central role in the recent futurist thriller *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1995). The

central character in the film, Lennie Nero (played by Ralph Fiennes), is a "clip" blackmarketeer. Clips are CDs on which are recorded little bits of other people's lives - sex, violence, good times, bad times - the ultimate hyperreal escapism, with all the glamour that Albert Borgmann calls for in his dystopian vision of hypermodern hyperreality. They can be replayed on illegal headsets that richly simulate the recorded experience. The crucial final scenes of revenge and redemption for Lennie are played out in the hyperreal city of the Bonaventure Hotel as the year 2000 approaches (counted down on a huge Sony screen in the public square) second by second. The moral of the film is that Lennie, formerly happy to fiddle with his clips while L.A. burned, seems to embrace the real once again, in the person of Macy, an old friend (played by Angela Bassett) whose love is present and palpable, unlike the long-buried emotions of a past lover recorded on Lennie's clips. Forgetting is a good thing, Macy tells Lennie and the audience near the end of the film: it keeps us anchored in the present time and place. I would add that remembering is a good thing too, if that remembering is of history and tradition, of voices speaking authentically to us out of past lives. Both assist us in rejecting the synchronic flatness of the hyperreal, of the propaganda of commodities, and losing oneself in a past that no longer exists or in a future that never will.

But television and computers, not buildings, are the chief ways that hyperreality enters most people's lives. In the act of watching TV we have a concrete viewing of the hyperreal, whether it's a sitcom, a film, or the nightly news. The television sitcom family, in its 22-minute struggle with the problem of the week, exudes a hyperreal glamour unattainable by mundanely real families. Hence its

allure. As Baudrillard notes (1984: 273-274), TV and life dissolve into each other as medium and message merge.[64] Viewers are sucked into television hyperrreality, much like James Woods' charater in David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1982; the first and perhaps only truly McLuhanesque film), in so far as they allow the dancing pixels and audio to penetrate their consciousness. As McLuhan (1967: 26, 41) himself suggested, all media are extensions of some human faculty, going so far as to claim that electric circuitry is an extension of the central nervous system. This extending of our nervous systems can be seen in operation even more clearly in computer programs and games. Indeed, as I sit in front of a computer and type these words, they are given expression on the monitor screen in front of me thanks to a computer's central processing unit and some word-processing software. Computerized intelligence makes products lite, portable, almost wraith-like; now information does not merely organize and refine material reality, but displaces it altogether (Borgmann 1992: 71). The "medium is the message" (or massage, as McLuhan himself hinted tongue in cheek) is the extreme statement of the more valid limited truth that our ideas are powerfully restructured by the videotronic culture that surrounds us. One of the most important effects of the media's massaging of our perceptual systems is the substituting of the hyperreal for the real as the ontological ground of our socio-

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[64]Indeed, in his usual hyperbole, Baudrillard concludes that the media and news services exist only to maintain the illusion of actuality, of the reality of the stakes (280). It would be more accurate to say that the media *manipulate* the reality they report on, in so doing creating *hyperreal reportage*. This reportage, however, is of something: there is an underlying series of events, a sort of nuomenal realm, that feeds media hyperreality. The bombs exploding in Ulster, the world leaders meeting in Geneva, the parliamentary debates in Ottawa are all real things: they become *hyperreal* once the media turns them into video clips and sound bytes.

economic system.

This is the age of TV commericials featuring a basketball superstar going one on one with a Tyrannosaurus Rex (and beating it with a nifty lay-up) to glorify the latest high-tech running shoe, of slick cartoon films made entirely by computer, of the real being crushed by the glamour of the hyperreal. I found a case in point in a café in Waterloo I frequent. Just as Borgmann talks of hyperreal mountain trails replayed in city gyms, this cafe has a TV screen which displays an endlessly looped video of a burning log in a fireplace, complete with the sound of exploding sparks crackling through the café's stereo speakers. This *image* of fire, a hyperreal fire (one that never burns out), is seen by many of the youngish patrons of the cafe as a comfortable illusion. This is, no doubt, to a large degree the result of having been raised within a culture where the video image is the most important purveyor of information and entertainment. With this immersion into the clean hyperreality of the video image we see the endgame of the search for depth meaning in late modernity, for pure hyperreality is pure commodity. The hyperreal, as video images, computer programs, or VR games, is tied only to the apparatus that allows us to experience it: it is endlessly repeatable and endlessly exchangable (assuming we take proper care of this apparatus). It is the techno-economic bottomless chessboard on which consumer capitalism plays out its principle of performativity to all those commodious individuals who make up the majority of the populations of the post-industrial West.

5. The Search for Meaning in Depth as a Disenchantment of the Social World

The decline and fall of the search for depth meaning, linked to the image

culture of late modernity, has left us with a general disenchantment with the social world. The unmasking project of modernity, tied to the meta-ideal of rationalization, wound up burning itself out when it struck up against the wall of the limited remasking drive of consumer culture. Consumer culture attempts to *remask,* to repaint its output with a thick layer of the enamel of irrational need to create a situation where its denizens are in a continual state of alienation from both themselves as inadequate and from their past acts of consumption as unfulfilling. This disenchantment is by no means alleviated by becoming aware of contemporary thought: quite the contrary. Too many have come to realize that this remasking, this propaganda of consumerism, is a mug's game that cannot be won, a happiness sweepstakes where the players always lose. The citizen/consumer/intellectual of late modernity is implicated in the creation and sustenance of four interrelated selves, each with its own theoretical Godfather. Here they are.

A. The Performing Self

In performing in the social world we separate our "real" selves from our social selves, allowing the former to come out only in the privacy of family life, writing, or (in the worst cases) in hidden fantasies. Erving Goffmann's dramaturgical model of the self in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* gives us a striking illustration of this process. Goffman suggests that the reality of everyday life is performance, and that a certain "bureaucratization of the spirit" is necessary for these performances to have consistency from one time to another, and thus to make our audiences trust us (1959: 56). The self is "staged": it is not an organic thing, but a dramatic *effect* arising from

the scenes we play out in everyday life (252). Needless to say, in the videotronic age (from the late 1970s until today) these scenes can even be played back to us, these lasting electronic impressions of our performances serving to reinforce our sense of the reality of the staged self.

B. The Cynical Self

The modern self-aware, cynical self recognizes that many of our public performances are phoney, becoming disenchanted with work, play, relationships, and family life, but soldiering on in a separate enclave of cynical detachment. Peter Sloterdijk sees this cynical self as an integrated but asocial character, a creature of the modern metropolis, his evil gaze not an amoral quirk but the look *de rigeur*, his attitude part of a collective, "realistic" view of things (1984: 192). He sees cynicism as a form of false consciousness, a modernized unhappy consciousness diseased with Enlightenment (192-3). He too ties modern cynicism into the unmasking tradition. The unmasker's treatment of truth "functionalistically" carries with it an immense potential for cynicism, and since "every contemporary intelligence is caught up in the process of such... theories, it becomes ineluctably entangled in the latent or open master cynicism inherent in these forms of thinking" (206). The awareness of standing on the precipice of the yawning empty chasm of truth seen as a tradeable commodity, an intellectual good hawked in the marketplace by loudmouthed merchants, creates a feeling of suspicion of intellectual endeavour in the mind of the cynic. Public appearances become performances. He or she turns narcissistically inward towards a private self. We now cue Christopher Lasch, who has been eagerly waiting his turn in

the wings.

C. The Narcissistic Self

Lasch sees the reality of the performing self as generated by the propaganda of consumer culture, out of the materials of advertising, film, and television, where a vast range of cultural traditions are made all equally contemporary (1979: 166). The overarching reality here is the dying culture of competitive individualism, with its war of each against all, and where the search for "authenticity" and happiness winds up in the dead end of a *narcissistic* preoccupation with the self (8). The narcissist gets involved in the various awareness movements, lives in the hedonism of the present moment, treats politics as theater, and flies from feeling into an easy-going sexual promiscuity that is protectively shallow and cynically detached (330 and elsewhere). Even more than the performing and cynical selves, the narcissistic self is well suited to the economic imperatives of the present economy of mass consumption.[65] It is also admirably suited to the postmodern intellectual condition: fleeing from feeling, meaning, and depth, it is more than happy to have a game of chess on the beach with Derrida's bottomless but paper-thin chessboard.

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[65]We see an allied phenomenon in computer junkies. As Borgmann (1992; 108) notes of those who surrender their substance to hyperintelligence: "Plugged into the network of communications and computers, they seem to enjoy omniscience and omnipotence; severed from their network, they turn out to be insubstantial and disconnected. They no longer command their world as persons in their own right. Their conversation is without depth and wit; their attention is roving and vacuous; their sense of place is uncertain and fickle." Perhaps this points to a new personality type, the digital narcissist, who loses himself not in consumption, sex, and the search for self-awareness, but in endless, pointless journeys through cyperspace.

D. The Private Self

For Pauline Rosenau the "postmodern individual" pulls back from public discourse and privatizes their concerns, realizing that everyone has their own truth. Such individuals become detached, alienated, and private, staying at home and watching television rather than socially interacting (1992: 104). Charles Taylor diagnoses one of the elements of the malaise of modernity as the contemporary culture of authenticity, of a purely personal understanding of self-fulfillment that sees community associations as purely instrumental (1991: 43). This turning away from community is at the heart of the private self. Taylor believes that the search for this brand of authenticity involves the collapse of the horizons of significance for life, for it seeks self-fulfillment in opposition to society, nature, history, and the bonds of solidarity (38, 40). What matters is still the self, but a self unconnected to the great reservoirs of meaning that the Western social and spiritual adventure has generated over the past three millenia. Such a self eventually dries up, and the social world crumbles into diffuse tribes of television junkies who surf through worldviews with channel changers manufactured in Paris by *Les Frères Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard et Baudrillard*, a recently-established firm specializing in leading-edge technologies and ontologies.

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The unmasking tradition, the search for depth meaning, was allied to the rationalization drive of modernity, a drive that stalls with the postmodern intellectual condition and the consumer society. This results in a social world that produces an interlocking network of sophisticated, technologically aware, economically
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prosperous, occasionally super-conscious, but debased selves. Whether this disenchantment with the social world is a permanent or temporary condition is an open and certainly interesting question. If we could but turn the page of tomorrow... but that would be prophecy, not philosophy.

6. Postscript

Over the last two chapters I have tried to tell the tale of the decline and fall of the meta-ideal of rationality within contemporary intellectual culture, along the way relating it to broader socio-economic shifts. In the next I will try to show how structural idealism can rescue cultural critique from sinking into the quagmire of the postmodern critical tropes of parody and irony by looking briefly at five friendly "voices in the wilderness" and how elements of their cultural criticism feed into my own reconstructive project. My final goal, which unfortunately can only be roughly sketched in this thesis, is a unified social theory, a goal that is at least a challenging and worthy one, if insanely ambitious.

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Chapter 7: The Contribution of Structural Idealism to Cultural Critique

1. Prologue: What is Culture?

Before looking at contemporary cultural critique and sketching a structural idealist theory that builds on it, it would probably be useful to define the term "culture". According to Raymond Williams (1963: 16), "culture" originally meant "tending to natural growth" and a process of human training; later, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it meant (1) a general state or habit of the mind, or (2) the general state of intellectual development in a society as a whole, or (3) the general body of the arts; later in the century it came to mean (4) a whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual. These definitions, taken together, are rather expansive, although entirely legitimate. Instead, I will condense these and define culture as *the body of social and historical practices of a people or civilization as expressed in intellectual life, the arts (both high and popular), daily habits, and the material objects and economic structures that make these possible.*

These practices are social in that they are the products of communities of involvement. They are also historical, as MacIntyre notes, because practices always have histories: "at any given moment what a practice is depends on a mode of understanding it which has been transmitted often through many generations" (1984: 221). Thus culture is both a bearer of tradition, in MacIntyre's sense, and a creative force working upon those traditions.

2. Voices in the Wilderness: A Tour of Contemporary Cultural Criticism (1978-1995)

I now turn to a whirlwind tour of five contemporary cultural theorists as a

propaedeutic for a unified theory of cultural critique. These five voices are distinctive, but each of them contribute unwittingly and partially (like Hegel's cunning of reason) to a structural idealist theory of social criticism. I shall look at a key work for each thinker, beginning with Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism.* In engaging each thinker I will look at both the methodology they employ and the actual content of their cultural criticism, hoping to recycle parts of these methodologies as building blocks within my own theoretical edifice.

A. Christopher Lasch and the Culture of Narcissism

In 1978 Christopher Lasch, in his *The Culture of Narcissism,* unleashed a critical broadside aimed at the comfortable consumerism of the American middle classes, a consumerism feeding psychologically on post-sixties liberationist narratives concerning sex and politics and on large doses of therapeutic self-deception. He called this culture *narcissistic,* comparing it to the parallel neurosis that Freud named after the Greek god Narcissus, he who was so fond of his own image reflected in a pool of water. Similarly, Lasch found, in the 1970s, an American society very much in love with its own reflection. This society was one where liberalism was bankrupt (18), where the historical faith that formerly surrounded public events was fading (20), and most importantly where a dying culture of competitive individualism presided over a war of each against all, the vaunted pursuit of happiness leading to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self (21).[66] Lasch sees the overall moral "climate"

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[66]I will refer to Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979; originally 1978) by page number only within this section, following a similar procedure in the sections on Jameson (1991), Borgmann (1992), Taylor (1991), and Saul (1995) for each of their works.

at the end of the seventies as one of self-absorption, where the conquest of nature the quest for new frontiers that characterized nineteenth-century America had given way to an untrammelled quest for self-fulfilment (61).

Lasch's cultural critique starts from a psychological premise: he sees economic man as giving way to psychological man as the final product of bourgeois individualism (22). The specific psychological climate today is a *therapeutic,* one where people seek the illusion of personal well-being, health, and psychic security by various therapeutic means (33). This therapeutic climate is both an internal, psychological phenomenon, and an external one manifested in various social practices. His "psychological dualism" sees social changes as manifested inwardly and outwardly, in changing perceptions, habits of mind, and unconscious associations (355), along with through social institutions. "Every society reproduces its culture - its norms, its underlying assumptions, its modes of organizing experience - in the individual, in the form of personality" (76). This dualism is clearest when he connects the pathological narcissism of individual character disorders with narcissism as a social phenomenon (82): the contemporary prevalence of the former gives us the best evidence of the reality of the later.

Lasch heaps great piles of invective on the narcissist: he or she is charming, but lacks curiosity about others; lacks any real intellectual engagement with the world; has little capacity for sublimation; is parasitically dependent on infusions of admiration from others; and is manipulative and exploitive in personal relations (85). They are, in short, centered on the pursuit of the best means of self-fulfilment. However, these psychic traits are connected to the economic organization of society.

The narcissist is a bureaucratic success because of their manipulative approach to interpersonal relations and their lack of deep attachments (91). The psychic shallowness of the narcissist serves well the needs of managerial capitalism.

Narcissism starts in the peculiar structure of the American family, in the abdication of parental authority and the related transformation of the superego, but this comes from changing modes of production, as industrial production removes the father from the household (302). The abdication of parental authority instills in the young character traits demanded by a corrupt, permissive, hedonistic culture. "The decline of parental authority reflects the 'decline of the superego' in American society as a whole", or its transformation into a harsh and punitive one, based on archaic images of the parents fused with grandiose self-images: the result is the oscillations of self-esteem typical of pathological narcissism (305). Thus Lasch plugs the primal scene of family life into broader socio-economic changes of the present era.

Lasch sees social structural changes like the shift to a consumption economy, the rule of bureaucracies, and the "warlike and dangerous conditions of life" as making the new model of success the Happy Hooker, ready to sell pleasure for a few dollars (107, 122). A similar ethic invades personal life, where a search for competitive advantage through emotional manipulation recreates the stress of the marketplace (126). Everything becomes a commodity: everything can be bought or sold. In the end, all of society echoes Sade's sexual utopia, where people are interchangeable and anonymous sexual objects. "His ideal society thus reaffirmed the capitalist principle that human beings are ultimately reducible to interchangeable objects" (132).

Lasch ties in narcissism with a critique of consumer capitalism in noting that

the later feels compelled to educate the masses in the culture of consumption by means of a "propaganda of commodities". This propaganda is disseminated through advertising, which now manufactures a product of its own: the consumer, "perpetually unsatisfied, restless, anxious, bored"; it promotes consumption as a way of life, educating the masses into an unappeasable appetite not only for goods but for new experiences and personal fulfilment (137). Yet this educational process also has a wider therapeutic purpose, for the propaganda of commodities both upholds consumption as an alternative to rebellion and proposes consumption as a cure to contemporary spiritual desolation and alienation (138).

Lasch brings a number of compelling cases forward as evidence for his central thesis that contemporary culture is deeply narcissistic. Everyday life, he claims, has become a theatre where an escalating cycle of self-consciousness is played out, where spontaneous action is squeezed out by Goffmann's performing self (165). Also, the mass culture of romantic escape, by filling people's heads with visions of experience beyond their means, further devalues routine, leading to an ironic detachment that cripples the will to social change and to restore meaning and reality to everyday life (174). Leisure (especially sports) is now organized as an extension of commodity production, reducing it to an appendage of industry (217). And since advanced industrial society requires a stupefied population ready to consume, education suffers (224). Universities become diffuse, shapeless institutions which serve up courses like items on a cafeteria menu, catering to personal fulfilment: knowledge is commodified like everything else in consumer society (264).

Perhaps the most interesting section of *The Culture of Narcissism* is on the "sex

war". Lasch sees a real intensification of sexual combat as capitalism is transformed into a managerial, corporate, and bureaucratic system, including (1) the collapse of chivalry, (2) the liberation of sex from constraints, (3) the pursuit of sex as an end in itself, (4) the emotional overloading of personal relations, and (5) the irrational male response to the liberated woman (322-323). As a result, both sexes cultivate a protective shallowness and a cynical detachment that embitters personal relations (330). The big escape from all this embitterment and alienation is promiscuity, which Lasch sees as a flight from feeling (339). In the end, the narcissist, with a pallid superego that cannot ally with external authorities (for they have all gone soft), feels consumed by his or her own appetites (342). And getting old is no cure. Due a lack of inner resources, the narcissist looks to others for validation; he or she needs to be admired for the fading attributes of beauty, charm, celebrity, and power; unable to find satisfactory sublimations in love and work, they find little to sustain them when youth passes them by (356).

American capitalism, says Lasch, has rejected priestly and monarchical hegemony "only to replace it with the hegemony of the business corporation, the managerial and professional classes who operate the corporate system, and the corporate state" (370). This corporatism (a key concept in Saul's work, as we shall soon see) makes use of therapeutic forms of social control, which, by softening or eliminating the adversarial relation between subordinates and superiors, makes it more and more difficult for citizens to defend themselves against the state or for workers to resist the demands of the corporation (315). Everything appears to be done for the "good" of the worker or citizen. But make no mistake, Lasch warns us: the

therapeutic elite serves the interests not just of the professionals, but of monopoly capitalism as a whole (394). The conservative critique of bureaucracy conveniently overlooks the close connection between the erosion of authority, the corruption of schools, and the spread of permissiveness on the one hand **and** the rise of monopoly capitalism on the other (which results in bureaucracy in both government and industry) (392).

So what is to be done? In a nostalgic frame of mind, he suggests that we have to look to the tradition of local action, "the revival and extension of which holds out the only hope that a decent society will emerge from the wreckage of capitalism" (20). This tradition is undermined by bureaucracy, so the struggles against bureaucracy and capitalism must proceed hand in hand: ordinary citizens must try to control production and the technical knowledge on which production rests by creating "communities of competence". In short, the productive capacities of modern capitalism must come to serve the interests of humanity (396).

Lasch's form of cultural critique combines psychoanalysis, social psychology, economics, and morals. His psycho-moral categories of culture are linked to the economic base of consumer capitalism, suggesting a last gasp of the Freudo-Marxism of the early Frankfurt school. He hints at the need to "de-commodify" life by somehow restraining consumer capitalism, thereby limiting its output of narcissistic consumer-citizens. How this is to be done is not entirely clear. But he does present a rhetorically convincing, if somewhat hurried and sloppily constructed, picture of a culture where a shallow ethic of self-fulfilment is promoted by a consumer economy in need of a daily intake of rubes into its carnival tents.

B. Frederic Jameson and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

Frederic Jameson's central argument in his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* is summarized by the title: postmodern culture is part of a "cultural logic" of the third stage of capitalism, the post-industrial. To grant originality to postmodern culture is to affirm a radical structural difference between consumer society and the earlier moments of capitalism from which it emerged (55), a concession which Jameson is prepared to make only in part. He instead sees postmodernism as a "systematic modification" of capitalism, or as a new cultural production within a "social restructuring" of late capitalism (xii, 62). And postmodern culture must be viewed politically: every stance on postmodernism is "also at one and the same time, and *necessarily*, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today" (3).

Jameson borrows Ernest Mandel's three-stage model of modern capitalism, which includes market, monopoly/imperialistic, and multinational or "postindustrial" capitalism. Paralleling these three economic stages are three stages of machine evolution: steam, electric/internal combustion (1890s), and electronic/nuclear (1940s and on (35). Consumer capitalism, the third stage, is by no means inconsistent with Marx's analysis, says Jameson. In fact, it is the purest form of capital, "a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas" (36). Jameson rejects McLuhan's enthusiasm for the power of technology to change social structures: he sees the technology of contemporary society as mesmerizing and fascinating not in itself but in so far as it offers a representational shorthand for grasping the decentered global network of power and control of the third stage of capital, the

world system of multinational capitalism (37-38). The world computer network is thus a surface *picture* of the substructural world network of global capitalism. Indeed, the "informationality" of the new technology should not lead us to meditate on language (as the poststructuralists do), but instead to invent new ways of dealing with something that is still a quite material phenomenon (386).

Jameson sees five themes worth looking at within postmodern culture: (1) a new depthlessness in art, (2) a weakening of historicity, (3) a new emotional ground tone of intensities, (4) a whole new technology and economic world system, and (5) a new political mission for art in the new world space of late or multinational capital (6). Within postmodern art, such as Andy Warhol's silk-screened photo reproductions, there is a certain flatness, disappearance of depth, and superficiality, as art becomes pure commodity (9). With the collapse of high modernist style, the producers of culture turn to the past. Dead cultural motifs are parodied in a random cannibalization of all styles, the consumer's appetite for a world transformed into sheer images or simulacra (17-18). Nostalgia films like *Body Heat* dominate the cinema, desperately attempting to appropriate a missing past by refracting it through the iron law of fashion and change (19).

Jameson sees postmodernism as backward-looking and nostalgic. Its architecture is a "complacent eclecticism" that salvages what it can from the past (18-19). But postmodern buildings are also part the new economic order: they therefore try to shut out nature, creating hyperspaces full of offices, shops, and meeting places, with hypercrowds gathering within these spaces, reflecting away the urban decay with glass skins of silver and gold (40-42). The new economic order affects all aspects

of culture. Even religiosity is eroded: postmodern theology attempts to preserve and rewrite the meaning of "an ancient precapitalist text" (one assumes he means the Bible) within the situation of a triumphant modernism, "which threatens scripture along with all the other relics of an agrarian past in full-scale liquidation" (389).

When we look at the status of culture within Jameson's cultural theory, we find him, in his preface to the English translation of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition,* saying that for those committed to radical social change, we still need the category the "mode of production" as fundamental, but that no good model of a given mode of production can exist "without a theory of the historically and dialectically specific and unique role of 'culture' within it" (1984: xv). Thus we need a theory that explains how economic substructures influence cultural superstructures. Jameson's Marxism allows that before the late twentieth century, the cultural sphere may have enjoyed some degree of independence from economic determination. However, it may be the case that this "semi-autonomy" of the cultural sphere has been destroyed by late capitalism, just as the prodigious expansion of this capitalism has penetrated the precapitalist enclaves of nature and the unconscious, which formerly "offered extraterritorial and Archimedean footholds for critical effectivity" (48-49). But now all that is cultural has melted into the solid: the arts, intellectual life, and pop culture all drip with materiality, are all imbued with the cultural logic of late capitalism: commodification.

Postmodern aesthetic production:

> ...has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods... now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation... [the main point is] that this

> whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror. (4-5)

Just as postmodern culture is the expression of the commodification of a formerly independent sphere, its social meaning is the economic domination of the American economic and political empire which, like all empires, is grounded on the possession and occasional use of military power. Decadence within this culture, in the form of weird sects, futuristic films about technological breakdown (e.g. *Blade Runner*), and bizarre fashion styles, is just the ghost of the superstructure, of cultural autonomy, haunting the omnipotence of the base (382).

The difference between seeing postmodernism as one style among many, and seeing it as the cultural dominant of late capitalism, is the difference between a moral judgment of the phenomenon and a "genuinely dialectical attempt" to understand History in the present tense (45-46). Not surprisingly, Jameson explicitly rejects Lasch's psychologizing and moralizing on culture, feeling that there are far more damaging thing to be said about our culture than those emanating from a psychological understanding of it (26). Instead, Jameson suggests that the political form of a critical postmodernism, if it ever comes into being, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of "a global cognitive mapping" that is both social and spatial, one that maps the global nature of multinational capitalism (54). What this global mapping would concretely involve is left fairly vague. But his last word can be found in his preface to Lyotard, where he reiterates that Marxism remains (perhaps without its call to revolution) the privileged mode of analysis for modern society. Further, we cannot expect that any private monopoly of information (i.e. Lyotard's

postmodern managers of knowledge), like the rest of the private property system, will be reformed by a supposedly benign technocratic elite: it can only be challenged by genuinely political action (1984: xx).

Jameson's critique of postmodern culture is squarely within the tradition of twentieth-century Marxist "revisionism" (from Lenin to Lukacs to Gramsci). He includes culture as a semi-autonomous set of practices, but proceeds to deconstruct it as a separate category by linking it to the omnipotence of its economic base: late or consumer capitalism. Postmodernism is the cultural logic of an economic system. His cultural theory has a strength that Lasch lacks, but shows a weakness that Lasch does not share. His strength lies in his refusal to accept that culture can be understood in any terms other than as a projection of the commodified *Weltanschauung* of late capitalism onto all aspects of the social (Lasch waffles on this issue). But his weakness comes in his rejection of a moral element from cultural critique, his refusal to tell us why we should bother resisting this capitalist commodification of culture. As Habermas once asked of Foucault, why fight?[67]

C. Albert Borgmann and Crossing the Postmodern Divide

Albert Borgmann's *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* reveals its basic premise not so much in its title, as did Lasch and Jameson, but in the cover painting on the paperback edition: a huddled, naked young man on top of a mountain enshrouded in darkness looking out over bleak hills into distant hazy bright horizon. His book deals

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[67]This question is one that must be kept in mind when one is engaging the seductive critical power of Marx's historical materialism. I will return to the question of cultural politics at the end of this chapter.

with the cultural landscapes of a dark and decaying modernism, a living but troubled hypermodernism, and a nascent but still distant postmodernism.

As mentioned in chapter 5, the holy trinity of founders of the modern are Columbus, Copernicus, and Luther. Columbus's discovery of America shattered the "locally bounded, cosmically centered and divinely constituted" medieval world; Copernicus's revised solar system "decentered the earth from its privileged position in the universe"; while the Reformation that Luther helped inaugurate, with its focus on the Bible, "fatally weakened the communal power of divinity" (22). The result was also a trinity, of broadly-based social ideals. Through technology and the economy "the modern project was worked into a social order characterized by aggressive realism, methodological universalism, and ambiguous individualism" (5).[68]

Describing a social landscape, says Borgmann, is like drawing a picture wherein no one social vista by itself is significant, but the general configuration might be. One such vista of American modernism is a national mood of sullenness (6). This is connected to the generally private nature of the American economy, whose disavowal of public responsibilities involves the toleration of widespread poverty, damage to the environment, and the trivialization of culture as its depressing concomitants (47). Like Lasch, Borgmann is not afraid to moralize the economic and technological realms. He says that under modern industrialism, ethics cannot keep pace with technology, making us forget that the adoption of a technological device always and already involves a moral decision (110). There is a notable sense of the

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[68]Borgmann is much enamoured of methodological trinitarianism. The obvious lineage of this is back through Hegel to Christian ontology.

duality of human action in Borgmann, between individual intentions and social results, all within the realm of the moral (although the social results often disguise themselves as inevitable). Indeed, he sees "individuals' fundamental material decisions as embedded in collective fundamental decisions that pattern the tangible social setting," suggesting Giddens' duality of structure and my own structural ideals (113).

There are two ways we can go at present: one, the descendant of modern technology, he calls "hypermodernism", devoted to the "design of a technologically sophisticated and glamorously unreal universe, distinguished by its hyperreality, hyperactivity, and hyperintelligence." The other is the "recovery of the world of eloquent things", which accepts the postmodern critique and tries to realize postmodern aspirations: he calls this "postmodern realism", with its emerging characteristics of focal realism, patient vigour, and communal celebration (5-6). Under hypermodernism, life begins to separate itself from the real (i.e. thanks to television, computers, and other technologies, we lose touch with ourselves, others, and nature). Thus one of the dangers of the hypermodern condition is losing our sense of reality (12).[69] One way in which this can happen is through the simulation of the real in hyperreality, for example, a computer simulation of a mountain trail in a suburban gym replacing the real experience of a mountain jog. Hyperreality is like "a thickening network that overlies and obscures the underlying natural and traditional reality", choking off the underlying reality and reducing it "to a mechanical and

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[69]As we shall see, John Ralston Saul centers his cultural critique on the idea that as citizens we have lost our consciousness of reality, thanks to the perversion of language by ideology (mainly by use of the propaganda, both of the political sort and in advertising).

marginal condition" (119).

In the workplace the fleeing of reality is fought by hyperactivity, which mobilizes people into long work hours aimed at success. In general, hyperactivity has its own trinity of features: the suspension of civility, the rule of the vanguard, and the subordination of civilians (14). At the end of modernism, the advanced industrial countries are awash with consumer goods, which not only threaten to exhaust our physical capacities to produce and consume, but also the "emotional hunger that fuelled the immense productive efforts of the modern period" (63). But the commodious individual is still seduced by the glamour of disposable commodities: Lasch's propaganda of commodities still has a lot of rhetorical steam left in it. The hypermodern consumer is in a morally weak position, for their daily decisions are already preformed by fundamental social decisions, which themselves have been shaped by our technological society. Thus the individual consumer is deeply implicated in hyperreality, hyperactivity, and hyperintelligence, being allured by the glamour, fever, and ethereal charm of the new condition (114). Last but not least, Borgmann sees the late modern public realm as massive in its physical presence but devoid of intrinsic or final dignity, bereft of celebration and festivity (42).

Borgmann, showing his idealist[70] credentials, notes that an epoch ends when its fundamental convictions begin to weaken and no longer inspire enthusiasm among its advocates (48). In our case, we are living through the decline and fall of modernism's holy trinity: realism, universalism, and individualism. He sees the

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[70]Speaking methodologically: the notion that ideas, not material forces, are what shape human action, and not in the metaphysical sense of Berkeley's *esse est percipi.*

developments of the past generation as having led us beyond the broad and once fertile plains of modernism to a point where, looking back, we can see that we have risen irreversibly above the unworried aggressiveness, boundlessness, and unencumberedness of modernism. Modernism now seems brash and heedless, if not arrogant and oppressive (78). But (continuing with his geographical metaphor) Borgmann sees hope at the fringes of this landscape. "Communities of memory and practices of commitment still have animating power at the margins of society. These we must learn to recover and to respect" (57).

Yet these communities of memory are not the only source of hope, for he sees a concrete postmodern paradigm developing within our economies, one characterized by information processing, flexible specialization and informed cooperation (5). These together hold out the promise of at least an attenuation of hypermodernism. He suggests that we have to challenge the commodious individualism that is so much a part of our present condition, to de-commodify our sense of our selves. But he remains uncertain whether postmodernism will be just technology by other means (80). Maybe more than merely economic solutions are needed.

> The problem perhaps lies in the very nature of hypermodern labour:
>
> > Since mindless work is uniquely exhausting and debilitating, its subjects are uniquely susceptible to disburdening and diverting hyperrealities. The latter in turn, alienating us most powerfully from the real world, make reentry into reality especially harsh and leave us sad and sullen. Becoming insensible to the radiance of reality, we become confined, as Dante has it, to an infernal and inarticulate condition. (101)

So, in addition to tinkering with postmodern economic changes, spiritual and political solutions may be called for. Part of this is the need for a "real conversation", to talk in a public forum about things that really matter and about common measures that give

these things a secure and prominent place in our midst (116). In addition to some form of dialogical communitarianism (to which both Taylor and Saul will be sympathetic, as we shall soon see), Borgmann wants to put forward a broader program of public spirituality, a program which he christens "postmodern realism" (an odd coinage, but in keeping with his claim that hypermodernism erodes our sense of reality). This would resolve the ambiguities of the postmodern condition with an attitude of "patient vigour for a common order centered on communal celebrations", celebrating reality by allowing things to "speak in their own right" (116-117). Again in keeping with his geographical metaphor for modernity and postmodernity, Borgmann's best case for his postmodern realism (at least in North America) is his evocation of the wilderness, for it has the clearest voice among "eloquent things". This voice "has a powerfully commanding resonance" because it "shows no traces of human intonation. It speaks to us naturally" (120).[71]

The machinery of hypermodernism mechanizes and commodifies celebration itself, weakening and expelling its genuine elements: reality, community, and divinity (134). So what we need is a vigorous shift away from this machinery, towards the support of places where the above three elements are "joined in celebration" (139). Part of the problem here lies in the utilitarian grid, technological concealment, and superficial display of commodities in the hypermodern city (131-3). To erode these

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[71]Interestingly enough, the Unabomber's manifesto (which he forced the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* to publish in 1995 to prevent a continuation of his letter-bombing campaign) also makes a call to ecological awareness the central aspect of his ideology of change. He felt, in true Luddite fashion, that only wild nature was totally unpolluted by the industrial system. It is doubtful, however, that Borgmann would accept the Unabomber as an intellectual ally, despite the fact that they both lived in Montana.

and to make the above shift, Borgmann suggest a transformation of daily urban life that links it to the natural, raises it to the festal, and extends its enjoyment to the poor (133). The result would be an evolution of a festive city from its present counterpart. In his endgame Borgmann pulls out a *deus ex machina*, calling for a heavenly city on earth that celebrates communally through religion (in his case, preferring the Catholic version of the deity) (144-5). But thankfully, before we unbelievers become too nervous, he allows his god to retreat into the clouds, noting that the universal principle of postmodern political discourse is to let everyone speak in the first person, whether this is singular or plural (144).

The basic methodology of Borgmann's cultural theory might be described as *onto-geographical*, with its mix of ontological, spiritual, moral, and geographical categories (the latter being meant primarily as metaphors). Economics and technology seem at times to function as active forces shaping our culture's destiny, at other times as pools of in-itself being that revolutions of the spirit must overcome. But his primary strength as a cultural theorist lies in his identification and understanding of broad historical forces like modernism, hypermodernism, and postmodernism, and his connection of these to substructural changes in the economy and in technology. It may well be that he has bitten off more than he can chew with his evocation of broad trinities of ideals for each historical period, and with his somewhat utopian hopes for postmodernism's capacity to revive reality, community and divinity through a return to nature and through a spiritualized politics. But all the same, he paints an intriguing picture of the landscapes of the modern and the postmodern.

D. Charles Taylor and the Malaise of Modernity

Charles Taylor's *The Malaise of Modernity* (the 1991 Massey Lectures, broadcast by the CBC and later published in book form) presents in a pithy format an outline of his broader social and cultural theory. Like Borgmann, Taylor uses a trinitarian logic to identify the malaises within modernity, suggesting that they are (1) **individualism**, with its associated narcissism and disenchantment of the world; (2) **the primacy of instrumental reason**, with its use of economic efficiency to determine both the best means and the best ends; and (3) **the restriction of political choice** in technological-industrial societies (2-8). Mapping on to these fears are a loss of existential meaning and a fading of moral horizons, an eclipse of ends before the dominance of instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom (10).

If we go back to the cult of sensibility and the beginnings of the Romantic movement in the second half of the eighteenth century, we find the start of the massive subjective turn in modern culture, to a sense of ourselves as beings with inner depths (26). This turn led to the formulation of the ideal of self-fulfilment, or authenticity. The question of the status of the ideal of authenticity is the central one in Taylor's book. He suggests that despite the bitter invective of Alan Bloom, Daniel Bell, and Lasch, there is a powerful moral ideal behind self-fulfilment, that of being true to oneself in the specifically modern sense of the term (13-14). Sadly, the cult of authenticity's default solution to the question of authenticity, and the bane of our culture, is the idea of self-determining freedom. 'This sets up a vicious circle that

heads us towards a point where our major remaining value is choice itself" (69).[72]

Taylor suggests that instead we should believe three things: (1) that authenticity is a valid ideal; (2) that you can argue rationally about ideals and whether practices conform to them; and (3) that these arguments can make a difference (23). As part of this work of retrieval, we have to reject narcissistic modes of culture, realizing that self-understanding involves the acceptance of horizons of significance that exist *independent of my will* (nobility, courage, etc.) (34, 39). Also, due to a purely personal understanding of self-fulfilment, too often political citizenship becomes marginal and personal relationships are seen as secondary to the self-realization of the partners (thus not lasting). To cure this ill, we have to universally accept difference on the public level, and engage in committed, identity-forming love relationships on the private (43, 50). In short, we need more meaningful dialogue. Taylor summarizes his view of authenticity as follows:

> *Authenticity (A) involves (i) creating and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and (iii) frequently, opposition to society's rules and what we see as morality. But is also (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance, and (ii) self-definition in dialogue. (65)*

In several places in *The Malaise of Modernity*, Taylor hints at the notion of the duality of structure, the notion that structures both shape and are shaped by actions and ideals. He rejects the idea that modern technological society is an iron cage: the connection between norms and the civilization supporting them is not unidirectional.

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[72]This critique parallels Michael Sandel's critique (1992) of Rawls' unencumbered self and of neutralist liberalism in general - choice in and of itself is elevated to the highest social good under such a theoretical-political regime.

Instead, just as institutions breed the philosophies of atomism and instrumental reason, these philosophies were abroad in Western lands before the development of capitalism, and acted as an ideological preparation for it (98). Also, political fragmentation is caused in part by the vicious circle linking failing social sympathies and the "lack of the experience of common action" (113). Lastly, in such a fragmented society people find it harder and harder to identify with any sense of community, which results in an absence of effective common action, which further helps to entrench the "initial" atomism (117).[73] So in general, the economic, social, and political structures that support the ideal of authenticity are seen by Taylor as working in an equilibrial relationship with the moral content of this ideal.

Taylor is no backward-looking mystic or Luddite when it comes to dealing with modernity's malaises. He concedes that we have to work within the demands of modern rationality *to some degree* if we are to avoid inner exile or marginalization (97). But we do have to change the way that we approach technology. We have to see it not only as a way of dominating nature, but also within an ethic of practical benevolence (106). His more general cure for these malaises is to retrieve the higher ideal behind the debased practices of modernity by entering sympathetically into the animating ideal of authenticity behind them (72, 79). Instrumental reason and the notion of the disengaged human subject (atomism) separate human thinking from its messy embedding in our bodily constitutions, our dialogical situations, our emotions, and in traditional forms of life: to re-engage our selves, we have to respect the

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[73]Saul would say that these political atomists are acting "unconsciously". One could say that once political actors become aware of the duality of structure and ideal, they "wake up" or become conscious of their political responsibility and power.

embodied, dialogical, and temporal nature of human beings (101, 106). This re-engagement would help us retrieve the ideal of authenticity. To fight political fragmentation, we have to engage in the politics of "democratic will-formation", to prevent people's corporate identities from being transferred away from the their political communities (118). Only by retrieving the ideal of authenticity and a sense of political community will the promise of modern culture be fulfilled.

The dominant metaphor in Taylor's book is a political-medical one, a diagnosis of a culture that is sick but curable, if we administer the proper philosophical potions. His book examines the problems with our current culture from the point of view of a debased and degraded ideal, that of authenticity, and the illegitimate offspring of this debasement, atomism and instrumental reason; he tries to show how through sound thinking and political action we can overcome our cultural malaise. Perhaps it would be unfair to chastise Taylor for oversimplifying the problems of modern culture, given the brevity of this book. But like Lasch, Taylor distils the rich variety of problems within modern culture into one central philosophical issue, and his critique succeeds or fails on the degree to which the reader is intuitively certain that this is *indeed* the key issue in our culture.

E. John Ralston Saul and the Unconscious Civilization

John Ralston Saul's *The Unconscious Civilization*, the Massey lectures for 1995, posits the existence of a structural villain in modern culture: **corporatism.** This, simply defined, is the sense that modern individuals see themselves first and foremost as a member of a corporate group (whether public or private), and not as a

citizen of a democratic society. This sense of corporate membership is exacerbated by the *ideology* of corporatism, which seeks to organize society under the control of interlocking sets of these corporations. Saul sees our civilization as locked in the grip of this corporatism, which is:

> An ideology that denies and undermines the legitimacy of the individual as a citizen in a democracy. The particular imbalance of this ideology lead to a worship of self-interest and a denial of the public good. The quality that corporatism claims as its own is rationality. The practical effects on the individual are passivity and conformism in areas that matter and non-conformism in the areas that don't. (187)

One of the principal results of this ideology is that members of the educated, specialized, and technocratic elites find themselves caught in structures that require courtier-like behaviour of them (26).[74] They are obliged in a large degree to submerge their identities as citizens of a democratic polity in favour of loyalty to the organization they work for. In a corporate society, not surprisingly, debates on public policy take place almost entirely between the representatives of interest groups, the representatives of this or that organization (61).[75] Underlying this political *modus operandi* is the ideology of the market as a mechanism for the production of social

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[74]Sadly, this is just as much the case of the corporations (i.e. departments) of which our universities are composed: the graduate student, sessional lecturer, or junior faculty member seeking tenure are all forced to learn the value of courting the favours of those with the power to dispense them if they have any institutional *phronesis* at all. Whether or not this encourages a vigorous independence of mind I leave to the reader's common sense.

[75]Saul seems to be entirely correct on this point (and on many others, I might add). If you are at all doubtful about this, keep this hypothesis in mind and watch any television newscast: other than a few "man in the street" soundbytes, public debates are shown as taking place entirely between the representatives of organizations, usually large and powerful ones, with a touch of expertise from university professors or think tank "theorists" (who are corporate representatives themselves too) sometimes added as an afterthought.

well being. This ideology makes it difficult to see government as the justifiable force of the citizen, denying the existence of an "actively organized pool of disinterest called the public good" (84).

Saul draws on Enlightenment figures like Hume and Adam Smith to flesh out this idea of the public good, an idea that is purely political and philosophical, and thus free from economic or technological determinism. But our corporate civilization is *unconscious* of this public good. Most people within it are limited to a narrow area of knowledge and practice, showing the naivete of a child outside of their specializations (15). As servants of self-interested corporate fragments of society, we have agreed to deny reality. The result is an addictive weakness for large illusions, a weakness for ideology (which Saul assumes is always a distortion of the truth) (18). Our trust in ideologies to solve our problems is part of a civilization-wide great leap backwards, away from democratic doubt, towards the comfort of utopian illusion.

Saul agrees with Lyotard that within contemporary culture knowledge is bought and sold like a commodity. The ownership of this knowledge is power (42). Like many postmodern thinkers, Saul focuses on language as the key element in culture. But unlike them, he is not interested in deconstructing it, but in reconstructing language with its former clarity and vigour (for example, in the Athens of Socrates, or in the European mini-renaissance of the twelfth century, or in the Enlightenment).

There are two types of language in our civilization, the **public**, which is enormous, rich, varied, but mostly powerless, and the **corporatist**, the sort of language that is attached to power and action, consisting of **rhetoric, propaganda,**

and **dialect** (46). Saul sees rhetoric as describing the public face of ideology, while propaganda is used to sell this face. They are both aimed "at the normalization of the untrue" (60). The selling technique of commercial advertising is essentially the same as that of propaganda: the use of images and music to replace words. These techniques were pioneered in the Germany and Italy of the 1930s, reaching their early pinnacle in Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda film *The Triumph of the Will.* He sees the use of advertising to sell Coke or Calvin Klein jeans as drawing directly on the methods of fascist propaganda, echoing Lasch's propaganda of commodities (60-62).

For Saul the sign of a healthy civilization is the existence of a relatively clear language in which everyone can participate. The sign of a sick one is the growth of an obscure, closed language that seeks to prevent communication (54). In these lectures Saul engages in a running battle with the modern university, given that the university is both the center of higher education and the only public institution which is in theory free to criticize the propaganda of corporate society and to thereby promote clear language. Needless to say, he accuses it of failing to do so. Our universities have become the handmaidens of corporatism, due to both their impenetrable academic dialects and their betrayal of higher education's wider mission, the humanist tradition (67). They feed into the conformity of corporate society when they should be fighting against it:

> While the universities ought to be centres of active independent public criticism, they tend instead to sit prudently under the protective veils of their own corporations... The universities, which ought to embody humanism, are instead obsessed by aligning themselves with market forces and continuing their pursuit of specialist definitions, which are apparently their protection against superstition and prejudice. (70)

Part of the problem is the growth and power of job-training factions like business

management departments within the university. This promotion of university education as a direct conduit to the managerial economy do not help students all that much in the workplace; but it does prepare the young to accept the structures of corporatism (163). In the end, universities are the centers of linguistic obfuscation (primarily, the propaganda of corporatism). The best hopes for the regeneration of language can be found not in academe but in increased citizen participation (173).

Saul is adamant on the power of moral ideals to change reality, rejecting all forms of economic determinism. The basic choices in human relationships never change: they can be affected by material conditions, but are neither created nor destroyed by them (55). He further rejects the idea that the Industrial Revolution and capitalism made individualism and democracy possible. Quite the opposite: every important characteristic of both individualism and democracy has preceded the key economic events of our millennium. It was these, in fact, that made most of the economic events possible, not vice versa (3). Democracy and individualism has often advanced in spite of or against economic interests, requiring financial sacrifice (83). Most interestingly, Saul claims quite convincingly that in its early stages, the Industrial Revolution produced more hardship and poverty than wealth for the masses, and that it was only the actions of the democratic citizenry that forced the economic mechanism to behave morally, i.e. to improve working conditions, to spread out the wealth among the workers, and in general to assume the shape of our modern civilization (116-7).

Saul thus claims that it was the disinterested actions of the masses, working for the public good, that made modern industrial democracies a going concern. More

sweepingly, he suggests that there is an ethical, humanist, and democratic line of thought/action stretching back 2,500 years back to Socrates, "free and independent of the evolving specifics of economics, technology, intellectual elitism and military force, among other periodic expressions of the Western experience" (58). There is thus a "great tradition" for Saul, one which we as a culture have lost consciousness of. To help us recover this lost tradition, he critiques the four pillars of contemporary economic determinism today: the ideology of the market, the rule of technology, the inevitability of a globalized economy, and the money markets as the leading edge of capitalism (132-150). All four are illusions promoted by corporate groups who stand to benefit by them, e.g. the rule of technology by technocrats who are already deeply implicated in its use, globalization by business representatives seeking to evade national corporate taxes. Our economic elites have no desire to effect change: only "a persistent public commitment by the citizenry can bring that about" (153).

Saul's philosophical hero is ancient Athens' gadfly, Socrates, whose annoying habit of examining himself and others in the agora promoted doubt and therefore the democratic spirit (40-1). We must actively question the dominant ideological definitions of economic and political terms like growth, wealth, justice and government. Our society must use "consciousness" to promote action, rejecting economic and technological determinism (112). Part of this action involves an active questioning of elite wisdom. Indeed, Saul sees as the "very essence" of individualism the refusal to mind your own business. This is not a particularly pleasant or easy style of life, often consisting of being annoying to others, stubborn and repetitive. But:

> Criticism is perhaps the citizen's primary weapon in the exercise of her legitimacy. That is why, in this corporatist society, conformism, loyalty and

> silence are so admired and rewarded; why criticism is so punished and marginalized. Who has not experienced this conflict? (165)

Real expressions of individualism are not only discouraged but punished in our society: active, outspoken citizens are unlikely to prosper in their professional careers (31-2). Saul calls instead for "equilibrium", for a society that allows for non-conformism in the public place, that celebrates uncertainty, doubt and participation. Corporatism depends on the citizen's desire for inner comfort. Instead, we need a society that, in recognizing reality, recognizes the need for permanent social discomfort, for consciousness (190).

Saul's deceptively simple language disguises a rich and forceful picture of contemporary culture. He works in the moral-political realm like Taylor, but speaks in a broader dialectic, of democracy vs. corporatism, consciousness vs. unconsciousness, the humanist tradition vs. the specialized, managerial approach to knowledge. His praise of doubt, his understanding of history, his critical examination of language, and his distrust for ideological thinking (especially the ruling economic ideologies of the market and globalization) are usefully tied into a view of civilization as an organization of political, moral, and economic forces. He may indeed go overboard in rejecting economics and technology as causal forces, but only to foreground the democratic control of a culture/civilization by its citizens as the central issue facing us today. Saul most clearly lays out what I take to be a central facet of a structural idealist cultural theory: that the physical resources of our society are defined and controlled by structural ideals like private property, the market, efficiency, and fair distribution, not by the gods, Fate, or economic Destiny. He, more than the other theorists, loosens the iron grip of economic determinism on culture.

3. Explorations in Contemporary Cultural Criticism

I now turn briefly to two schools of thought within contemporary cultural criticism to further enrich the mixture from which I will synthesize my own conclusions on the subject.

A. Critical Discourse Analysis

Born of a marriage of neo-Marxism, literary criticism, and the poststructuralist concern with the text and language, critical discourse analysis sees power relations not as natural or objective, but as artificially created, socially constructed intersubjective realities. Language is seen as the major mechanism of this social construction, a practice that manipulates and consolidates concepts to help ensure the rule of one group or class over another (Fowler 1985: 61). Social discourse produces and reproduces social inequality, especially if the power elites control the media. They have special access to public discourse, and since modern power is mostly cognitive, this control of public discourse leads to political hegemony (van Dijk 1993: 249, 254). This social construction of institutions, roles, and statuses preserves the hierarchic nature of society, aiding the ruling classes in exploiting the weaker ones, and keeping the lower classes subservient by articulating systems of belief that legitimate the institutions of power (Fowler 1985: 64).

The goal of critical discourse analysts is to criticize bits of discourse like newspaper articles, parliamentary speeches, or television reports to prevent social inequalities from becoming normalized. Noble as this goal may be, critical discourse analysis suffers from the same weakness as poststructural philosophy: it takes everything as a text, and assumes that by criticising texts we can change the world.

But if, as Marx himself said, the point is not to talk about the world, but to change it, this cannot be done in polite forums where academics debate over the social meaning of this or that bit of public discourse. It is not texts that have to be engaged, but the moral ideals that underly the ideology and rhetoric in those texts. The discourse analyst may indeed effectively deconstruct the ideological presuppositions of a text, but without constructing their own alternative ideals they fail as cultural critics. So, although interesting, discourse analysis falters in so far as it does not take seriously the reality of the moral ideals expressed in the discourse of our culture, reducing them to epiphenomenal steam emanating from the smokestacks of our socio-economic structures.

B. The Canadian "School" of Cultural Critique

More fruitful than critical discourse analysis is what I shall term the Canadian school of cultural critique, one that had its dim origins in the 1950s, gathering speed in the 1960s, and remaining a strong (if somewhat amorphous) philosophical force within this country. We can posit a loose family resemblance between Canadian writers and thinkers like Northrop Frye, George Grant, Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Margaret Atwood, Gaile McGregor, Arthur Kroker, Mark Kingwell and William Gibson, along with film director David Cronenberg, that sheds light on contemporary culture. This family resemblance is based on our ability to situate them on a continuum of interests that they all share: the interaction of nature, culture, and technology, specifically how these are related in the Canada of the late twentieth century. We can diagram this set of interests and their individual places within it as

follows:

Frye, Grant, Innis, Atwood, McGregor

Nature----------Culture----------Technology

McLuhan, Kroker, Kingwell, Grant, Gibson, Cronenberg

I believe that this tripartite continuum of interest echoes on the level of material and formal culture my own tripartite analytic schema of the social act, as laid out in chapter two:

Nature----------Culture----------Technology
Structure----------Meaning----------Intention

We can see our economic and cultural starting point as what Sartre would call "in-itself being", both nature itself (including the surrounding environment) and our social and economic "nature", i.e. the structures presently existing in our society. Frye, Atwood and McGregor all see the Canadian sensibility as dominated by a dreadful consciousness of a vast, unknowable, threatening Nature empty of human life and values (Beard 1994: 123). Frye talked of how the Canadian "garrison mentality" helped shape our attitude towards nature: Canada, on this account, is a series of human garrisons in the primeval lawlessness and moral nihilism of the wilderness. And this dialectical opposition of a terrible nature and a fragile and vulnerable human life was paralleled by an internal opposition between our bodily natures and culture or mind: "Whatever sinister lurks in nature lurks also in us... the unconscious horror of nature and the subconscious horror of the mind thus coincide."

(Frye 1971: 141).

George Grant, in his *Technology and Empire* and elsewhere, echoes Frye's opposition of nature and culture in the Canadian sensibility, adding technology to the mix as the primary way in which we conquer our natural Other. The encounter of the early settlers of this country with nature was different from the European experience of the wilderness. "For us the primal was much different. It was the meeting of the alien yet conquerable land with English-speaking Protestants" (1969: 19). The very intractability, immensity, and extremes of the new land required that its meeting with the mastering European settlers would be a battle of subjugation. Before that battle, we had no long, pre-industrial history of living with the land. Even our cities are "encampments on the road to economic mastery" (17).

These sternly Protestant early settlers not only sought to tame small islands of the wilderness in the landscape, but also themselves. Their dominations of nature and their bodies ran parallel:

> What did the body matter; it was an instrument brought into submission so that it could serve this restless righteousness... When one contemplates the conquest of nature one must remember that that conquest had to include our own bodies. Calvinism provided the determined and organised men and women who could rule the mastered world. The punishment they inflicted on non-human nature, they had first inflicted on themselves. (23-4)

Grant sees the pure will to technology as more and more the sole animating spirit of the public realm. We live in "the most realised technological society which has yet been; one which is, moreover, the chief imperial centre from which technique is spread around the world." Sadly, our expertise in technique has made us unable to comprehend that technique from beyond its own dynamism (40).

Technology can be seen as the product of a series of intentional reworkings of

the materials given the human race by nature and by previous labour. But technology often has cultural effects that outstrip or warp its intentional components. As Marshall McLuhan observed, the revolution in electronic communication has created a Western world imploding in on itself. Just as the mechanical ages extended our bodies in space, today, "after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both time and space as far as our planet is concerned" (1964: 19). McLuhan not only sees new technologies as shaping human culture and thought, but also in some semi-literal way as involving an extension or self-amputation of our very physical bodies by altering the ratio between our sensory organs and how they relate to the external world:

> Physiologically, man in the normal use of technology (or his variously extended body) is perpetually modified by it and in turn finds ever new ways of modifying his technology. Man becomes, at it were, the sex organs of the machine world, as the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms. The machine world reciprocates man's love by expediting his wishes and desires, namely, in providing him with wealth. (54, 55-6)

These extensions take place mainly by means of our media - print, film, radio and television. A medium shapes and controls the scale and nature of human association and action; the real message of a medium is the changes in the pace and pattern that it introduces (24). Our conventional response to changes in media, that it is *how* they are used that matters the most, McLuhan calls the "numb stance of a technological idiot": the content of a medium "is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind" (32). In short, the medium is the message. For McLuhan, technology and media define the shape of human culture.

The inventor of the cyberpunk genre in science fiction literature, William Gibson, pictures a near-future in his novels *Necromancer, Count Zero, Mona Lisa Overdrive* and *Virtual Light* where giant techno-corporations control the economy, where cyber cowboys psychically "ride" through a super-sophisticated version of the Internet, and where human bodies are subject to infinite reshaping, regendering and renovation thanks to a marriage of flesh and technology. Cyberpunk "is hard science fiction which recognizes the paradigm-shattering role of technology in post-industrial society" (Hollinger 1990: 35). It collapses the "nature" end of the tripartite continuum above, opting for a fusion of culture and technology. This collapse is controlled by the information flowing at light speed through **cyberspace**, which one of Gibson's characters calls (in *Count Zero*, p.40) "mankind's unthinkably complex consensual hallucination", a term he coined for the virtual space that links together the world's computer networks. Gibson and his imitators give us the clearest picture of what a non-catastrophic conquest of nature, including the human body, by machines would look like in a future where the human adventure has been reduced to psychic journeys through simulations of reality. By and large, Gibson's world is one where pure intentionality runs human affairs, as sedimented in the vast computer networks that manage the world's information and thus economy.

David Cronenberg's films have been variously classified as science-fiction, horror, and dystopian fantasies. He cut his teeth both philosophically and cinematographically in the Toronto of the 1960s, the same Toronto where Frye, Innis, and McLuhan all worked - indeed, his films are often explicitly McLuhanesque in their picturing of how technology, notably the media, extends and alters the human

body (this is especially the case in *Videodrome*). They share a concern with the way that technology, the product of human intentions (usually good ones), attempts to tame nature, especially the human body, but in the end it fails, due to human hubris or to nature revolting against technological interventions into her realm. The following chart summarizes how good technological intentions in Cronenberg's films are converted by a terrible nature into unpleasant consequences:

Film and Year	*Intention of Scientist (Technology)*	*Unintended Consequence (Nature Strikes Back)*
Shivers (1975)	To get an overly-intellectual creature back in touch with its body	A parasite that turns humans into sex-crazed zombies
Rabid (1976)	To do an experimental skin graft on an accident victim	Blood-sucking growth that causes a virulent strain of rabies
The Brood (1978)	To bring out repressions and terrors as physical manifestations	Murderous malformed children ("the brood")
Scanners (1979)	Sedative for pregnant women ("Ephemerol")	Telekensis, telepathy, megalomania
Videodrome (1982)	Extra-intense pornographic TV	Altered perceptions, bodily mutations, death
The Fly (1986)	Teleportation	Unstable man/fly hybrid
Dead Ringers (1988)	Gynecological research to create the "perfect" female body	Weird sex, drug addiction, death
Crash (1996)	Auto-eroticism (literally)	Car crashes, death

Cronenberg's films explore how a Cartesian separation of rationality from nature and the tyranny of rationality over the body and the instincts produces a

tension which causes nature to rebel. The ultra-rational scientist, convinced they can improve the human condition through technology, upsets the delicate balance of nature (which we know from Frye and others is a threatening Other). He shows how the projects of the rational, conscious ego come up against the natural chaos of the id, usually in the form of uncontrolled sexuality. This sexuality threatens to bring into consciousness a subordination of the ego-self to the body, disease, and death, resulting in an annihilation of the self (Beard 1994: 121, 125). For Cronenberg, nature/sex is death, the self's extinction. This is not all that far from Grant's Calvinists morally girding themselves against the wild nature without and within.

Technology, the intentional side of human action, and nature, the structural side of human affairs, can be seen as together producing culture, just as intentions and structures can be seen as together shaping social meaning. Culture is thus that which is crystallized out of the dialectic of nature (meaning the material world as either worked or unworked by human hands) and technology (meaning the techniques, machines, and procedures that human beings use to change our world). The Canadian school of cultural critique illustrates, in a variety of ways, the manner in which nature and technology impact modern culture, from Frye's vast threatening wilderness dotted with garrison-cities to Cronenberg's marriage of chrome, vinyl and eros in *Crash*. It is perhaps more accurate to envisage the nature-culture-technology triad not as a linear continuum, but as a snake curled around, eating its own tail, with human technology swallowing the last bits of wild nature, thereby transforming modern culture into something entirely of human manufacture.

4. A Sketch of a Structural Idealist Theory of Cultural Critique

Speaking in fairly specific terms to start with, I believe that a contemporary theory of cultural critique should embody at least the following elements:

1. A recognition of the **economic basis** of culture, and of the philosophical ideals that support it. This is not to say culture is *determined* by economics, but that its structures stand in a give-and-take relationship with economic ones. In the contemporary Western world this involves a recognition of the omnipresence of late or consumer capitalism (as I argue in chapter 6), and the further recognition that this form of economic organization is grounded in certain structural ideals that escape from the realm of economics into our broader cultures. These include the powerful call of the ideal of efficiency (which is tied to the use of instrumental reason as the only valid form of reasoning in the rhetoric of the representatives of late capitalist corporate structures), the managerial or bureaucratic ethic (vs. the entrepreneurial ethic of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), the claim that the market will assure growth and will solve non-economic problems, corporatism (i.e. the notion that only institutions and groups have political legitimacy), and commodious individualism. The subject under late capitalism is by and large reduced to a consumer of commodities, so it is not surprising if art and intellectual life themselves become forms of commodity production. However, the commodification of culture is not a result of purely material causes, but due to the acceptance of some or all of the structural ideals listed above by the producers of culture.

2. Within this understanding of the modern economy, **nature and technology** should be seen as "boundary phenomena". Nature is the purely material substratum of culture, limiting us until technology can find a means by which to conquer it. Grant is right in saying that our encounter with the North American wilderness was a different sort of "primal" relation than that experienced by Europeans over the millennia. Each culture is faced with a different picture of nature, derived from its own distinctive history of relating to its natural surroundings. Nature also provides us with the raw materials for technology, and with idealized pictures of pre-technological terror or bliss for our species. It is thus, along with representing the great Other to human action, a source of social and political ideals.

At the other extreme we find technology, the product of human scientific intentions, which often produces unintended consequences that become "nature" for us (that is, they become embedded in social consciousness as naturalized structural ideals - e.g. "the computer age is with us: knowledge is now, more than ever, power"). Technology involves the reification of our notions of ideal systems of manufacture, travel, communication, and leisure (e.g. the cell phone as an approximation to an ideal personal link to the global communication web, which will be replaced in a decade by some other ideal link). The systemically flawless ideals that surround new technologies often hide from us the real nature of the technological - i.e. that it is *technique*, a way of doing something with machines, a way of doing that is sometimes beneficial to a culture, and sometimes not. It is, in short, human thought/action in machine form, and not a deterministic force external to human purposes.

A subtext here is the need to engage with McLuhan's notion of media and technology as extensions of the human body. While this is not literally true, nevertheless we can see the revolutions in media and technology as modifications of the way we *see* our bodies, as an extension of our sensory fields, and in some cases our bodies, through space (e.g. telephoning Britain in a few seconds, same-day television reports from Russia on the nightly news, jetting to Florida in a couple of hours). Each significant technological change at least in some small way changes the way we handle and control material things, information, or people: e.g. the computer (added to modern filing techniques) made it possible to reduce the individual to a series of recordable and quickly accessible numbers (birth date, social insurance number, height, weight, financial data, school marks, etc.), presumably in aid of bureaucratic efficiency. But the side effect of this intention is the inclusion of the individual human being within a quantified world view, the last stage of the century-spanning quest that Galileo started to read the book of nature in mathematical language.

3. An understanding and critique of **the phenomena of everyday life,** including work, school (including the university), the family, love, sex, and play from the point of view of the currently dominant structural ideals. A case in point would be how the structural ideal of the managerial ethic affects both work life and personal life: how this ethic might reduce all elements of a person's situation to the instrumentally rational exploitation of objects within a time/space field, and consequently how this might debase family life and personal relationships by

bureaucratizing them or subjecting them to the cult of expertise (Lasch's "therapeutic culture") in the form of self-help and how-to manuals, marriage counsellors, or rigidly scheduled time management (e.g. one might read in the daytimer of a corporate executive: "9-12 am: Meetings with clients; 12-2: Lunch with VP; 2-6 pm: Work on Vancouver deal; 7:30-10: Baseball game; 10:30-11: Quality time with wife," as though these activities were all equally "schedulable").

We should accept that once the structural ideals that rule a given category of thought/action in everyday life have been identified through historical or sociological research, we can go ahead and critique these by offering alternative ones (and thus alternative economic and material structures). An example of this would be how Lasch holds up the rugged, frontier-bred individualism of nineteenth-century America to the pallid, narcissistic individualism of the post-war period. However, such a detailed attempt to counterpoise structural ideals is a major project in itself, and is best left to another day.

4. We need a treatment of the moral ideal of **authenticity, self-fulfilment,** or **narcissism** (depending on whether one is for it, neutrally inclined, or against it), all species of individualism, as central to modernity, and of how this ideal is integrated into daily life and into the contemporary economy. We need some sense of whether Taylor is right in seeing authenticity as a recoverable ideal, or Lasch is right in seeing it as a cultural horror that we should reject, or Saul is right that we should focus instead on democratic individualism as a way of recovering a sense of political community. It is without a doubt true that *individualism* is the central social and

political problem of the last two or three centuries, and thus we must gauge its impact upon culture.

5. The role of the **postmodern impulse** in culture, notably in theory, literature, and the arts. As outlined in chapters five and six, I see (with Jameson) postmodernism as a variant of late modernism. More specifically, it is a modification of the structural ideals of the modern period. It is a move away from depth meaning, rationality, and reality towards surface meaning, limited irrationality (as least for the consuming masses), and hyperreality as cultural archetypes. This is linked to modern technology, especially television and the computer, which originated in the impulse to efficiency and economic rationality, but wound up promoting a severing of the link between the content of the technology's narrative (i.e. the television show, the computer simulation) and the real-world narrative that it mimics or copies. Borgmann's hyperactivity and hyperreality are two of the results of the postmodern condition; the new flatness and superficiality (representing the retreat to surface meaning) that Jameson points out in postmodern art are equally present in "postmodern" culture.

6. The notion that cultural critique involves **cultural politics,** i.e. some notion of how our culture can be protected or changed by political action. This could involve Lasch's revival of local action, Borgmann's evocation of the festive city, or Saul's Socratic gadfly stinging the lazy ideological beast of the corporatist polis. At a minimum, a structural idealist theory of culture, in so far as it does not discharge

responsibility for social arrangements onto political destiny, substructural forces like technological change, or economic fate, compels the critic to attempt to understand their culture, to critique the ideals that structure its cultural resources, and if necessary to offer alternative structuring ideals as antidotes to any malaises endemic to their culture. If the critic is also a professional philosopher employed by the state (which is, ideally, the strong right hand of a democratic citizenry), then it is doubly their duty to play the role of the Socratic gadfly, for not only is this a fulfilment of the philosophical legacy of the West, their position within academe gives them the time and financial security to do so. He or she is noblest when emulating the critical spirit of Socrates, and should do so, even if tempted towards silence by a comfortable position or by the social or financial capital that comes from serving corporate interests (whether public or private).

In short, cultural revolutions do not just happen by themselves. It is up to the critic to both involve themselves in contemporary culture, and, if possible and desirable, change that culture through intellectual thought/action (if not political action).

7. The need for cultural **consciousness.** This might involve a wedding of personal and critical qualities like reason, understanding, and at least methodological sympathy (i.e. the capacity to re-enact others' motivating thoughts). We should thus cultivate the ability to see culture as a series of social and historical practices that can be re-constructed through an understanding of the relevant structural ideals. Thus culture can be understood within a unified social and historical field containing a

diversity of motive forces.

Speaking now in more general terms, the core theoretical concept of cultural criticism should be something like **structural ideals.** The notion that the primary purpose of culture is to organize people and raw matter according to a set of ideals that at the same time promote structural relationships between human actors is the *sine qua non* of cultural critique. This notion allows for both understanding and change: culture is freed from economic and other determinisms, and seen as the meaningful core at the point where human intentions and the structures that create and condition those intentions meet. As Saul hints, if we see culture as ruled by structural ideals instead of the result of blind economic or other forces, we can become conscious of our power as citizens to effect changes in the political realm. So, in short, a structural idealist theory of culture *politicizes* change.

Of course, a Marxist like Jameson does precisely the same thing. His explanation of postmodern culture as a superstructural form of late capitalism has built within it the ideal of political critique and change (although probably not proletarian revolution, as the time for this has apparently passed). Yet Jameson rejects the notion that moral ideals are part of what shape modern social structures, having no use for a countering of one moral/cultural idea with another.

Yet we should not go too far to the other extreme, to "transcendental-atomic" idealism, where ideas are seen as the "cause" of human action, but by moving *from* some sort of asocial, transcendental realm *to* individual minds.[76] A structural idealist

theory of culture has as its basic assumption the existence of an equilibrial relationship between the ideals that shape our culture and the social, economic and technological structures that these ideals gave birth to and either support or challenge. Or, to speak more accurately, structural idealism sees these structures as ideals *themselves*, hardened temporarily into concrete determinants of human action by those who choose to remain unconscious of the motive forces in the their own and others' lives. Thus it allows those who desire a way out of what critics have called the narcissistic, commodified, hyperactive or unconscious culture of the day a chance to wake up and act.

5. Towards a Unified Social Theory

So where do we go from here? All of what I have said in this thesis was aimed at contributing to the revival of what Quentin Skinner calls "grand theory in the human sciences". In it I have offered, as my own small contribution to this revival, what I hope is a social theory that unifies various understandings of human action, most importantly, methodological idealism and social structuralism. My theory makes use of a conceptual evolution that involves the following notions: **structural ideals** as the core element in social and historical explanation, the **duality and virtuality of structure** (which I have borrowed from Giddens), the **phenomenological moment** as the theoretical atom in human action, **thought/action** as an attempt to overcome the

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[76]Hegel's *Philosophy of History* is probably the clearest case of this sort of idealism. Of our five cultural theorists, Taylor probably comes closest to this type of idealism, although by no means do I wish to accuse him of engaging in Hegelian hyperbole on the subject of the great moving forces of World History.

dualism of thinking and acting, the **self** as embodied, passionate, purposive, and intellectual, a **tripartite picture of social action** (as intentional, meaningful, and structural), and declining **rationality** and the **end of the search for depth meaning** as the governing meta-ideals of modern intellectual (and to some degree material) culture. If there is a central concept in all of this, it is **equilibrium**: the sense that ideals and structures exist and operate in an endless feedback loop in all human social action that can be meaningfully understood and explained.

I end this thesis where I started it, with the Scots of the eighteenth century. I would like to call for a revival of the eighteenth-century notion of *morals*, as Hume and his contemporaries used the term, as the center of philosophical speculation and education. This would involve not only ethics conceived in the narrow sense, but also psychology, phenomenology, sociology, history, political theory, and literature. It would also involve a breaking down of the barriers between philosophy and these other disciplines. And last but not least, it would broaden the horizons of all those who have fallen victim to the temptations of specialization or of the false rigour of a natural scientific approach to the human condition.

Kierkegaard said upon reading Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that if only he had claimed at the end that the whole thing had been one long thought experiment, it would have been a roaring success. Hopefully my evocation of a structural idealist theory of history and society is something more than such a thought experiment, if something less than the final word on these matters.

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"Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927) *OS*
"The Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927) *THC*
"The Limits of Historical Knowledge" (1928) *LHK*
"A Philosophy of Progress" (1929) *PP*
"The Philosophy of History" (1930) *PH*

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Collingwood's Unpublished Manuscripts

I list below three of the most important of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts on the philosophy of history. These works are quoted extensively in van der Dussen (1981) and Nielsen (1981), my sources for this material (the originals are in the Bodleian Library at Oxford).

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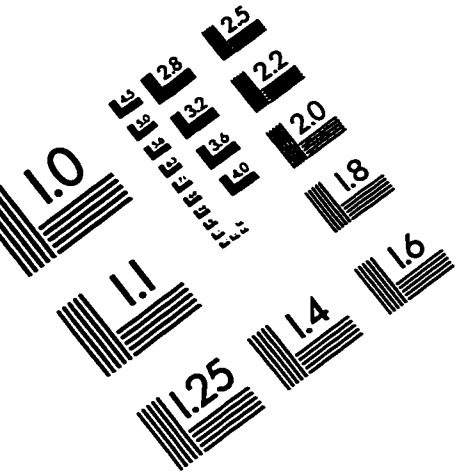
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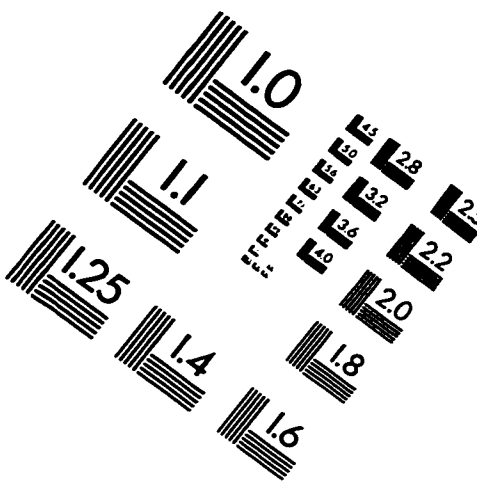
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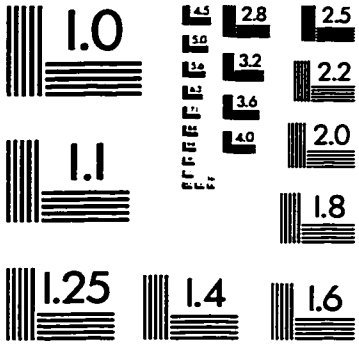
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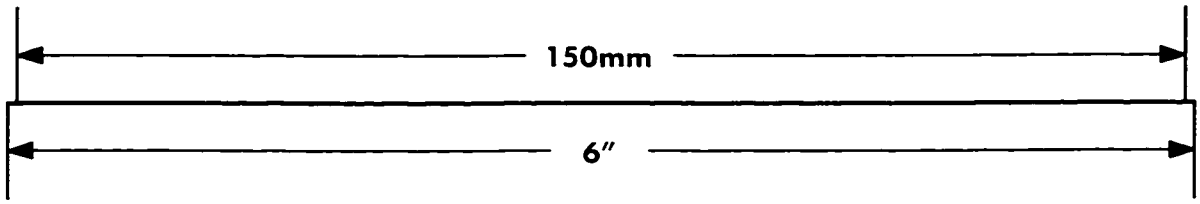
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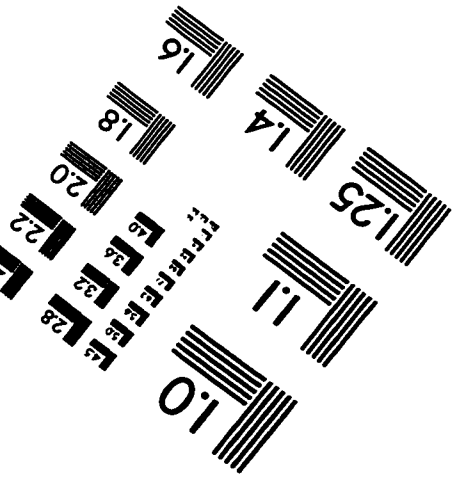
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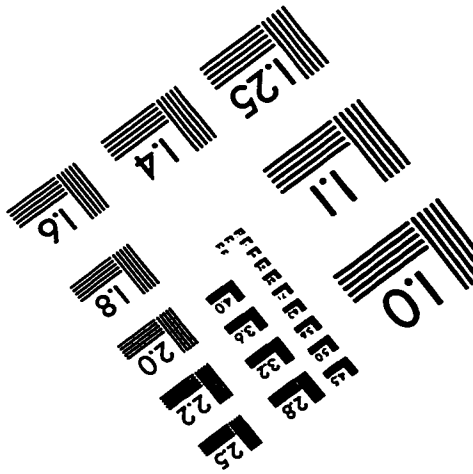












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