

# Polity or Disaster: From Individualist Self Toward Personal Valencies and Collective Subjects<sup>1</sup>

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"Bring your knowledge of disaster"  
(telegram summoning Ch. Beard to Tôkyô after the great  
earthquake)  
The catastrophe is that things go on as heretofore.  
(W. Benjamin)

## 0. Preliminary: On Stance and Epistemology

All concepts wherein a whole semiotic process is gathered up  
elude definition; only what is without history can be defined.  
Nietzsche, *Genealogie der Moral*

I shall be assuming in this essay that the vantage point or  
stance of each of us should be foregrounded in order to compensate  
for unavoidable blind spots, so that it behooves me to begin with  
identifying, as non-privately as possible, my own bearing  
(**Haltung**). Faced with the huge and growing pathologies and  
pandemics devouring our bodies politic, the injunction "Physician,  
heal thyself" preserves its force.

I shall therefore start with some matters I went into at more  
length in other places, including an earlier issue of this journal  
(Suvin "Brecht" and "Theses"), which foregrounded precisely the  
"standpoint theory"—educated by Lukács from some hints in Marx,  
simplified to unrecognizability by the Stalinist sectarians (thus  
proving that the corruption of the best is the worst), and revived  
not at first by Neo-Marxists as much as by Liberation Theologians  
and Feminists (see Hartsock) in the guise of a "preferential option  
for the poor" in one case, and "for women" in the other. This  
position could embrace philosophy's traditional self-reflexivity,  
but it is more ambitious. It claims that *epistemologically* (i.e. at  
a level deeper than merely conceptual ideology) one's **assiette dans  
la vie** or **mise en situation**, in short *one's practical bodily  
position and bearing as member of given social groups*, centrally  
codetermines one's understanding, its limits, and privileged foci.  
And as to my standpoint: it is the one cited in my introduction  
apropos of Benjamin: that of a person who has left his class  
without finding another one — but attempting nonetheless to keep by  
means of work a stance of solidarity in which the dispossessed,  
exploited, and humiliated have a preferential epistemological claim  
on us, citizens and searchers, much transcending the merely  
ethical.

What happens to this point of view in what a poet has properly  
called our indigent times (**dürftige Zeit** —shabby, needy, mean,  
paltry, poor, penurious times)? And how can it deal with the  
Subject?

Let me try to give a personal answer to the first question,  
about the *stance*. It is probably best phrased in terms of a

presently sustainable attitude to Enlightenment. In brief, the valid aspect or legacy of Enlightenment is for me confidence in human reason, in the possibility (however fragile) of people understanding their common world. The dubious aspect is the assumption that this is Reason in caps, i.e. that it arrives at asymptotically absolute values or an *objective* view (in all senses of that term—see e.g. Johnson and others discussed at length in Suvin "Cognitive"). At the root of both aspects is, I believe, the fact that the bourgeoisie sees itself as the representative of the whole people (or nation—and in its confident, revolutionary phase rightly so) and therefore believes that its own revolution and ensuing dispensation is the final one. If final then absolute; if absolute then its value (Reason, Humanity, History) is a lay equivalent of God. The Enlightenment thus attempts to laicize the eye of God. If laicizing means explanation of matter from within itself, being "interpreters of our own enterprise" (Rabelais), this is a great and absolutely necessary phase of liberation. However, adopting the perspective of God's Eye is not: this remains metaphysics. The **aporia** is the historical one of coupling enlightenment and reason with liberal individualism. Our subject of The Subject demands facing and indeed going further than this **aporia**.

However, there still remains an unavoidable problem in *epistemology*: We have learned that any text or event is most intimately shaped by its context, and in particular that the meaning depends on which contextualization is chosen. This is pithily put by Merleau-Ponty: "He who speaks (and that which he understands tacitly) always co-determines the meaning of what he says, the philosopher is always implicated in the problems he poses" (*Visible* 90). The context—in culture, the socialized, usually collective subject—co-determines the object; there is no absolute object. Yet there is no absolute relativity either: for a given context, the object can be established with sufficient precision. This epistemology also has its own context, the reason for adopting such a position. I would call it a "two hands" position. On the one hand, it stands against the despotism of an "absolute" truth, centralized manipulation of people, spatial confinement (emblem: the police). On the other hand, it stands against the despotism of an "absolute relativism," statistical manipulation of people, informational tutelage (emblem: the credit computer). Of course, police can use the computer too: their absolutist fusion is fascism.

Does then the salutary and modesty-provoking relativization of acknowledging and foregrounding one's own (personal and collective) standpoint rob it of any—except a capriciously "me-too"—validity? Is it simply a surrender to this era's narcissistic and tribalized relativism, in which (as long as the market circulates!) I have my right and you have your right, and we are all pluralists—either sincerely or just by making a virtue out of unbreakable constraint? Or may some standpoints and bearings be found that are more equal than others? In other words, if we accept the standpoint theory as a (so to speak) fundamental syntactic gambit, is there a semantico-pragmatic hierarchy of values that may be, in an

analytically posterior but politically and ethically mandatory move, used to judge between various standpoints, once these have been identified? In still other words, how do we avoid the Deconstructionist **mise en abyme** or bad infinite recurrence of saying that this hierarchy is itself dependent on a standpoint, say a macro- or meta-standpoint?

I cannot pretend to have an answer. We are at a point in history when it is obviously too late and too early for any grand, unified theory of anything, or even for a modest approach to it. But I think there are some horizons within which a solution may be found. They would encompass the historical lessons to be drawn from *both* the voluntarist and the estheticist dead-ends, from the Leviathan and the **animula**—the dead ends of historiosophical Hegel without his dialectics vs. the critical Kant without his ethics; or of Lukács vs. Shklovsky, if you wish.<sup>2</sup> A solution would then have to be sought in a distinction between the short-duration and closed-group standpoints vs. the long-duration and genuinely open, dialectical or inter-group standpoints. The latter would, no doubt in historically complex combinatorics, be able to function—albeit provisionally and flexibly—as representatives of a humanizing totality, and thus found a hierarchy of values. That hierarchy would be able to cut out of potentially infinite rhizomes constituting our imaginary encyclopedias (Eco, "Dizionario") a pragmatically here-and-now privileged tree, whose branchings would be a guide for decisions. Yet a most important lesson we ought to have learned is that all (hard-won, unavoidable, indispensable, and rightly cherished) operative certainties must be desanctified by keeping in mind that they are just that, so that formal mechanisms must be found for preventing operative necessities from fossilizing into **longue durée** dogmas (the fate of both Social Democracy and Leninism, as it was of classical revolutionary liberalism earlier on). This means that heresies are to be encouraged and cherished, that the Activist and the Fool must not only coexist (as an **ecclesia militans** with **ecclesia triumphans**), but actually enter into a loving friendship.

Cognitively speaking, a first, very provisional conclusion is therefore that acknowledging one's own situatedness, stance, and orientation does not at all preclude understanding. On the contrary, a non-neutral and non-absolute (e.g., non-eternal) cognition will have the strengths of a pragmatic situatedness of its knowers into bodies, situations, horizons. A "situated knowledge" is defined by Haraway, in her eponymous and as usual pathbreaking article, as being "*simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world" (579; cf. Code 250-64 and *passim*). One could quibble about some terms here, signalled by Haraway's own quotation marks. But I am arguing a **tertium datur** between the untenable horns of Individualist Subject vs. No Subject is to be sought—and may be found. Though Haraway's article speaks about feminist objectivity and she distances herself from "bourgeois, Marxist, or masculinists projects" (593), I believe it

is cognitively exemplary beyond feminism when she asks for a perspective of partiality (pun intended) and formulates this new objectivity (and I would say subjectivity) as "[being] about limited location and situated knowledge," thus "allow[ing] us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (583).

My conclusion could then be pertinently summed up in two cognitive imperatives: against absolutism, *historicize!*; and against relativism, *cognize!* This would leave no room for either essentialism or nihilism. While this may be a "soft" or indeed transitional epistemology, I think that in industrialized societies, with rapid circulation of novelties, only a dialectical, i.e. dynamic and non-theologized, cognition has a chance of being valid. And thus I arrive at the Subject.

## 1. Subject as Social Allegory vs. Self as Interiority and the Pivot Formulation of Descartes

**Mercure:** Qui va là?

**Sosie:** Moi!

**Mercure:** Qui, moi?

(Molière, **Amphitryon**)

1.0. The present most unhappy situation of human affairs, where subjectivity is abused "to unleash economic forces that actually enslave [people]" (Mowitt xiii), may lead us to repeat (e.g.) Sloterdijk's suggestive question: "Is a certain coming about of the 'I' (**Ichwerdung**) perhaps essentially just as catastrophic as the explosion of a nuclear reactor?" (120) Indeed, is not the immensely powerful invention of the disembodied, lone, inner-oriented Cartesian Self strictly analogous, homologous or even consubstantial to the invention of the "value-free" atom, thus leading in a direct line to the atomic bombs and reactors of our century, and lending itself to a fair characterization as a super-Chernobyl of historical or world-line pollution?

As one of the central notional categories registering the deepest shifts in social formations, and in particular the shift first into and then out of the ideological hegemony of competitive or market capitalism, the whole complex of "subjectivity" has been—as researchers have traditionally complained—buffeted and polluted by hurricanes of obfuscation (cf. on the historical semantics the indispensable Williams **ss.vv.** Experience, Individual, Personality, Subjective). Thus, unless one wants to assume this spiritual pollution, there is no alternative but to propose a terminological thesaurus of one's own. E.g., a major piece of present-day ideological pollution can be immediately cleared away by the founding Marxian refusal to postulate "'Society'...as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual. The individual **is the social being.**" (Marx 137-38); this is paraphrased by Volosinov /Bakhtin as the refusal of "binary opposition [between the 'social' and] the individual, and hence...the notion that the psyche is individual while ideology is social.... [All the] properties and attributes of the ideological individual [are social]. "(34)

But after destruction, we have to proceed to at least preparing the grounds for reconstruction. Its semantics have at a minimum to be clearly articulated as to their inner syntax and pragmatic suitability. In order to have a chance at extricating it from the pollution opening with a memorable bang in Descartes, I shall posit that any such thesaurus has to incorporate the historical long duration (Braudel's **longue durée**) and eschew either/or dichotomies in favour of both/and hierarchies.

**1.1.** As I argued in the Propositions for this issue, this mental hygiene can be achieved by *differentiations within the semantic field of subjectivity*. I shall proceed here upon the tracks of Jean-Pierre Vernant's and Paul Ricoeur's approaches to such differentiation in the Colloque de Royaumont "Sur l'individu" of 1985. To simplify, streamline, and sometimes contaminate them, they distinguish three notions, which can in French be elegantly called "l'individu **stricto sensu**," "le sujet," and "le soi" (or "le moi"). The first is a not further divisible physical token of any logical type, and especially of a biological species in Julian Huxley's sense of "indivisibility—the quality of being sufficiently heterogeneous in form to be rendered non-functional if cut in half" (cited in Dawkins 250); in that sense, I translate it, with hesitancy, as *individual* (for that word is often used also in the ideologized bourgeois sense of Self—the third notion here). It designates any Something (this goldfish, maple tree or province) by three principal means: definite description, proper name or indicator (pronoun, adverb, etc.). The second is a human "individual" communicating in her own name, expressing himself "in the first person" with traits that differentiate her from others of the same logical type-token and biological species-variety-race (etc.)—most importantly, from an ethnic, class, and gender group. To the individuation above, this adds *identification*, and I shall call it the *Subject*. For a Subject, the pronoun "I" is no longer a shifter, an itinerant marker applicable to any speaker, but it is anchored in a fixed stance or bearing; this makes dialogue possible, where—however—the anchoring is reversible, "I" can be understood as "thou" and vice versa (cf. Ricoeur 62). Finally, the *Self* (**ipse, Selbst**) is constituted by the practices and stances

which confer upon the subject a dimension of interiority..., which constitute him from within as...a singular individual whose authentic nature resides wholly in the secret of her inner life, at the heart of an intimacy to which nobody, outside of himself, can have access.... (Vernant, "L'individu" 24)

I shall return to what I see as the crucial matter of interiority. But here I wish to note a startling fact: only monotheist cultures seem to have invented the Self and its whole host of attendant ways of understanding and organizing the world: "The notion of person will appear in Christian thought" (Meyerson 476). It is not necessary to enter here into why and how this happened: one can simply remark with Vernant that for the

individual "uncoupled from sociality....[t]he search for God and the search for Self are two dimensions of the same solitary ordeal" ("L'individu" 36). The Subject, overtly constituted by sociality, implies other Subjects. But the Self implies Another: Platonically—The Other, transcendently—God. (Incidentally, this entails that all the worthy talk about The Other, and the ethics deriving therefrom, are still essentially predicated upon the individualistic Self.) The search may be called theology, or—from Bacon and Descartes on—Science, it is in all cases proceeding upon the One True Way. The consequences, from politics to epistemology, were to be huge.

**1.2.** What this effects is a diametrical inversion of vectors. Earlier—in literature and art up to and including Boccaccio, Giotto or Rabelais—the Subject was, for others as well as for himself, a two-dimensional limit-zone where collective bodies or groups (often in the allegorical guise of general types) meet and interfere: a king, an old man, a choleric, a buyer of love for property, etc., stripped finally down to Everyman, all of this goes to make Lear; Agamemnon was rather distinct from Menelaus, but both were largely determined by being rulers, warriors against Troy, and Atreides. Now, the subject begins to be seen, first by herself and then by others insofar as they recognize they are subjects too, as the *central point* around which the world becomes that point's *environment* (cf. Suvin, *To Brecht Part 1*, elaborating upon Lukács), a three-dimensional sphere seen from the inside. Soon, by need for validation and morphological analogy, a central point is found inside the Subject itself which relates to the individual body as that body does to the rest of the environment. That central point, the irreducible principle of utter alterity or originality whose loss would be the death of Self, and thus a fate worse than bodily death, is initially and most clearly semanticized only in relation to God, as the *soul* (defined by Plotinus as that which is found when "everything is taken away"—see Vernant, *L'Individu* 226). Then it is fully developed in the richness of thisworldly relationships as the interiorized *character* seen simultaneously from inside and outside, as public and private, therefore stereometrically or "in the round" (when shamefaced laicized synonyms such as individual **sensu lato**, personality or ego are substituted for soul).

All of this is, of course, centrally a politico-economic, historical trajectory. While the heroic individual of the Renaissance still participated in the plenitude of material life, like Rabelais's giants, from the Reformation on he (sic) devolved into a Self whose freedom was increasingly *interior*, located into an "'inner' sphere" of *consciousness*, observing rather than intervening: "Nothing which is in the world and stems from the world can attack the 'soul' and its freedom; this terrible utterance [of Luther's], which already makes it possible entirely to [depreciate] 'outer' misery and to justify it 'transcendentally,' persists as the basis of the Kantian doctrine of freedom" (Marcuse 56 and 57, and cf. his whole essay "Luther and Calvin"). In the philosophically influential Descartes variant, the topological image of the mind/ consciousness as "inner arena" of

ideas was, as Richard Rorty proves, the principal, epoch-making invention. Human relationships are now, for the first time, construed as experience occurring in the depths of a three-dimensional Self (cf. Toulmin, also Suvin "Soul"), which was—precisely—consciousness. Subject becomes subjectivity, the world begins to split into subjective and objective states, with the attendant huge problems of their possible relationships (cf. Bordo 49ff.). The depth of consciousness grows vertiginous with the Romantics, and as it were self-destructs in Freud.

This most novel idea of Selfhood flew in the face of all human experience and notions, and needed to be validated by a transcendental grounding (or is it assumption?). Whence did the Truth get into the Centre? A mouth-stopping validation is the best answer: Truth was put there by an omnipotent God. In the huge social breakdowns of the late Roman world empire, whose fears and horrors may be comparable only to our century's, where polytheism foundered together with the notion of equal political rights of citizens and communities, this validation from the new universal Lord of (Christian) monotheism won out. For every individual this amounts to the incarnation of truth; it is signalized and symbolized by the Son's incarnation into Jesus, by the breath of the Holy Ghost "in-spiring" such inner truth. In the logocratic tradition of Christianity, mediated by a Holy Scripture and its exclusive interpreters and enforcers, this is the **verbum vitae**, the Word of Life in direct genealogical relation to the Creator, Truth as the offspring of monotheistic authority. In spite of Bacon's reply that Truth was the Daughter of Time (i.e. of understanding through experiment), Romantic anthropology held fast to this Central or Nuclear Truth of Man, a supreme value which has to be unveiled as Thais or shelled as peas from the pod. Every individual was a subject of the Lord, but he also had a divine right to be himself because she had a divine spark in herself.

The Promethean spark of the quondam soul thus persisted after the Catholic Lord had been supplanted by Protestantism and humanism:

In modern Europe the idea of a planned creation of the world order by one single God was secularized, and thus prepared in the interior of people the way to creating a system of formal rights, a rationally organized bureaucracy, and a unified monetary system through the absolute monarch as the free subject of responsibility. The ideational mediation was here exercised by none less than Descartes, who separated spirit from matter and undertook the construction of the world of experience through the cognitive subject (reason [and Self in my sense, DS]) following the principle of the "cogito."  
(Maruyama 56)

I shall not indulge here in philological reconstructions of what Descartes "really" meant; his opus seems rich in doubts, hesitations, and caveats. But this is irrelevant for European intellectual history: its "Descartes" is the juncture of

transplanting from theology to lay philosophy the image "of a single inner space in which bodily and perceptual sensations..., mathematical truths, moral rules, the idea of God, moods of depression, and all the rest of what we now call 'mental' were objects of quasi-observation" (R. Rorty 50). This redistribution of social interfaces into the interiorized Selves brought about "a new form of identity," remarks Vernant, in which the human individual is defined by an unremitting obsession with his interior, e.g. by "his most intimate thoughts, her secret imaginings, his nocturnal dreams, her sinful impulses..." ("L'individu" 36-37). The new space of the Cartesian **cogito** "as precondition and foundation of all knowledge about the world, the self, and god" (Vernant, "Preface" MS 16)—the "Je suis" as locus of individuality and subjectivity, the soul as "moi"—is quite unheard of in all non-individualist cultures, e.g. the Hellenic, East Asian, and even European medieval one.

As the rigid roles of the **ancien régime** broke down in the full assumption of power by the bourgeoisie, the full-fledged ideology of *individualism* emerged. It is a political practice and doctrine according to which the human individual (in this "soulful" sense of a unified and lasting Self) is the final building brick of the body politic,<sup>3</sup> just as other, identically individual entities (e.g. the unsplittable atom) are the final building blocks of all other cosmic levels. The clairvoyant reactionary Tocqueville first identified individualism in the USA, where its semantics were invading all other collective categories, such as time and space, as "a novel expression, to which a novel idea has given birth" (cf. the discussion of character and individualism in Suvin, "Can People" 686-88). Individualism as ideology "engender[s] the cosmo-political dimension and public space itself starting from the sole ethical selfhood...without the originating social dimension" (Ricoeur 72). In Aristotle's *Politics*, we may remember, the only Subjects who could be sundered from the **polis**, which is superordinated to individuals as the whole is to the part, were gods or beasts (I:2:1253a)—in human terms, divine magi or monsters. Thus, all the descendants of Robinson Crusoe in the narratives of political economy and similar fiction brought about by the bourgeoisie would be monstrous for any non-individualist tradition—i.e., for 33 of the 34 world civilizations, if I remember Toynbee's count well. Two or three centuries after Descartes, the "individualistic self-experience" (Volosinov /Bakhtin 89) grew to be one of the lonely Self, and Schopenhauer justly proclaimed such individuation a curse.

## 2. Deconstruction: Hello and Goodbye

[The final result of '68 has in French philosophy been] to engender a hyper-individualism which is perfectly comfortable with the existing social forms.

Ferry-Renault, "Sujet"

2.1. As is well known within the small world of Western academy,



our literary and cultural studies have since the 1970s been beset by a confrontation between the traditional "humanists" and the newfangled "deconstructionists." The Subject (subjectivity, agency, author/ity) has been one of the main campaign theatres, with battle cries of, approximately, "free individual and self-expression" vs. "the I is dead" ("**das Ich ist unrettbar**" was already Ernst Mach's conclusion at the turn of the century). From where I stand both sides have partially good but finally unsatisfactory arguments, and the only theoretically satisfying horizon would be some approximation to a shamelessly Hegelian sublation, i.e. negation plus assumption of both (which practically we may not get in these unpropitious times, so that we have to go on "pluralistically" using parts and scraps of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis). I shall limit myself to a much simplified discussion of the Post-structuralist Deconstructionists.

Their strength lies in the "de-" prefix, in the denial of late-liberal illusions. One can only applaud their assault on metaphysics and essentialist individualism, even if in comparison to Marx and Nietzsche—say Marx's fundamental and constant critique of the Christian and bourgeois "cult of the abstract man" (cf. at least Marcuse 128ff.)—it was both belated and less well argued. Historically, the balance-sheet of individualism is by now badly in the red. Descartes had substituted for the authority of the Church's God that of the secular I of the **cogito**—while letting God back in by a somewhat peripheral garden gate, as the only imaginable outer validation of the I's interiority. In Robinson Crusoe and his novel, or already in Prince Hamlet though not necessarily in the play *Hamlet*, we may see this consciousness—"the Western, transcendent, and masculine norm of autobiographical selfhood" (Brodzki and Schenck 4; though there are interesting exceptions to the masculinity in the "thick" constructs of art, beginning precisely with Shakespeare and Defoe). Yet the bite on reality of this founding individualist myth shrinks in the fullness of bourgeois time from the rich sceptic traffic with the world of a Montaigne, through the illusionist space of perspectival geometry, to an empty space, "ab-solute, un-bound from the world which no longer supports it, and as the reciprocal term of God" (de Certeau, *Heterologies* 94, and cf. Bordo 68ff.). Kant, that exemplary philosopher of the autonomous and rational Self, has the great advantage of beginning to demonstrate how intellect participates in constructing knowledge. Still, so far as I can see, his "critique" never overcame some central **aporias**, e.g. what makes experience and in particular identity possible or how is the Subject's standpoint constituted within history and/or society, and thus led to the dead-end of what is usually called "the problem of the Thing-in-itself" (**Ding-an-sich**). It then becomes visible that whatever Descartes's "I think therefore I am" might have been, it was not (as both he and Kant fervently hoped) a supreme because direct certainty (**cognitio... prima et certissima**). Based on Descartes's own later comments, Nietzsche pointed out that

...**cogito, ergo sum** presupposes that one knows what is "thinking" and further what is "being": thus, if the **est**

(**sum**) were true, this would be a certainty based upon two correct judgments, adding to it a certainty that one had, to begin with, a right to any concluding, a right to the **ergo**—thus, in any case, no direct certainty (*Werke* 641; Heidegger disputes this critique, but in any such confrontation my money is on Nietzsche).

See also the less sweeping though acute objection: "I maintain that **Cogito ergo sum** has no meaning because that little word **sum** has no meaning....'I am'...is no answer to any intelligible question." (Valéry 9: 54)

Nothing fails like success. Around the end of the 19th Century, the Cartesian practice of "maîtres et possesseurs de la nature" (*Discours* 100) leads to a massive shift (first in the France and USA) from the sovereign Victorian—e.g. Emersonian—character, which is good or bad, to the mass-society personality, which is famous or anonymous (in tandem with the non-individual corporation personalized in its trade-marks, which is profitable or unprofitable), i.e. from ethical ideas to commodified PR imagery in which "that which appears is good that which is good appears" (Kipnis 21). This mass-produced Self, moving on the upswing of the Kondratieff cycle from production-directed to consumption-directed goals, increasingly shed the liberal contradiction that the highest Self also implies self-mastery and self-sacrifice for class ideals, and stressed self-expression and self-gratification, which yet must (in a new contradiction) remain sufficiently pseudo-exemplary — replicable or empathizable — for the personality to remain attractive and "fascinating" (see Susman's meticulous reconstruction 271-82 and passim, also Meyer). With the rise of cinema and TV, this soap-opera personality rapidly colonized first the lower classes in the metropolis and then the whole globe, reorganized into political nation-states linked by satellites and computer banking. We see the latest avatar of this—as I write—in the media foo-faw around the O.J. Simpson murder trial.

**2.2.** In the upshot, repeating known truths is never superfluous. But we did not quite need the Post-structuralists (whose **fer de lance** became the Deconstructionists) to point out that the bourgeois dispensation has in four centuries never clarified—theoretically or practically— what (where, how) is this "I"; and in particular, how is its shibboleth of freedom to be taken: I am free for or of what? Truly, the "free" individuals are *free from* most old attachments but then centrally *free to* sell themselves on the labour market, which is lately not buying much. Their "rounded," three-dimensional richness is finally a supermarket and cinerama effect; this is, no doubt, preferable to the empty shelves found at the bottom of the World Bank totem-pole but it is in no way similar to the equally empowered billiard-ball entities demanded by the analytical geometry of human bodies and forces freely colliding on a level-field market and magically producing a social space of dignity for all, as demanded by

bourgeois theory from Descartes through Hobbes to Adam Smith. What Freud called blows to men's narcissism or self-love, evicting the billiard-ball from the centre of cosmology with Copernicus (and even more so Bruno), of biology with Darwin, and of psychology with himself (221), are then on the one hand logical and necessary dethronements of the still semi-theological **ego**. Yet while true freedom from poverty and oppression remains a very precious goal, the series of bourgeois disenchantments into freedom finally reconstructs the Subject into a sellable Self. The **cogito** is thus revealed as a two-faced, thoroughly ideological coinage: its welcome desanctification of fossilized Church dogma has as an increasingly painful obverse the alienation of the cogitators (except for those statistically irrelevant few who possess Descartes's private revenues) into more-or-less one-dimensional sellers of labour-power—including us “value-free” professionals. This should be kept firmly in mind all the time, since outside our little academic world (and indeed at the top of its own power structures) a thoroughly capitalist Cartesianism has never lost its hegemonic constraining capacity, and seems even to be returning onto the theoretical terrain in the present Right-wing rollback (at least in France, see Le Doeuff 122).

However, it is entirely possible to acknowledge a reasonable cultural relativism dethroning the idea of individuality without abolishing the Subject à la Heidegger. Already John Dewey could remark that “The idea that human nature is inherently or exclusively individual is itself a product of cultural individualistic movement. The idea that human nature and consciousness are intrinsically individual did not even occur to any one for much the greater part of human history [and geopolitics, one could add].” (21) Nearer to us, Gadamer concluded: “The self-consciousness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuit of historical life. That is why a person's pre-judgments (**Vorurteile**, prejudices) much rather than his judgments constitute the historical reality of her being.” (261) The Post-structuralists share the only hermeneutics available to us non-PR intellectuals in this historical epoch, which Ricoeur has well named the hermeneutics of suspicion (**soupçon**); but they exasperate it and indeed take it **ad absurdum**. Beginning with a simple “structuralizing” denial of subjectivity—e.g. the famous Barthesian and Foucauldian “death of the author”—this tendency advances to a Derridean polemic strategy wherein by (his) definition the subject is not saying—or doing, though the Post-structuralists speak usually about speaking only—what it seems to be saying, or even what it thinks it is saying (see Ferry-Renault, “Sujet” 109). At best, we are in for either a new literary genre, Derrida's poem-in-prose as philosophy (cf. Cavell 306-09ff.), or a substitution of multiple schizophrenic subjectivities à la Deleuze and Guattari—protons and electrons (maybe even neutrons, not to speak of charms and quarks) in lieu of the unsplittable atom of the bourgeois Self that culminated in Victorian or Wilhelminian patriarchy. But all of this brings its own crippling problems, of which I shall here mention two.

2.3. First, it is by now time to foreground the unacceptable face of Deconstructionism, which I would identify with the influence of the post-**Kehre**, post-*Humanismusbrief* Heidegger. I am reminded here of Ernst Bloch's late and terrible suspicion, whose exact quote I cannot at the moment locate, but which said roughly: behind the **citoyen**, we have seen, came the bourgeois; **Gnade uns Gott** (merciful god), who is coming behind the comrade? We can today answer: the bureaucratic despot, or something similar. Now Ferry and Renault, following Bell and Lipovetsky, have applied this proto-deconstructionist suspicion to the French Post-structuralists and Deconstructionists themselves:

Has the sixties philosophy really been as "revolutionary" and "deconstructive," has it been as much of an enterprise of rupture with existing thought and reality as it had the pretence of being? Or hasn't it rather efficiently accompanied an ongoing social movement [in the West during these last two decades], characterized by the take-off of liberalist individualism and of consumer society...? ("Sujet" 113-14; cf. also their 68-86)

Though one would have to say that the Sixties' movement —even in France —was too contradictory to be judged as a monolith, Ferry-Renault's conclusion about the social conformism of French philosophy issuing from it, cited in the epigraph to this section ("Sujet" 114), on the whole, alas, rings true. The pre-industrial world believed in a fixed and monophonic Truth, and Paul of Tarsus thought the elect would see this Platonic classical Idea "face to face," while in a more sophisticated variant Thomas of Aquinas called it the "adequation of intellect to the thing" and Lenin "the correspondence between our ideas and objective reality" (cf. Eco, *Limiti* 325). If this classical idea is well lost together with all variants of monotheism, from the Vatican to the Kremlin; if we have indelibly learned that we are rather at Paul's "through a glass darkly" (an impure, refracting glass at that); still the second horn of the dilemma, "A chacun sa vérité," is equally untenable. For one thing, it is internally contradictory (let me call this "the paradox of the Cretan truth-teller" or the **tu quoque** boomerang), for another, it is demobilising for any collective (i.e. efficacious) action, for a third, it leaves in practice very non-relative institutions (State apparati, banks, nationalist demagogues, etc.) free to do as they want. Furthermore, the exclusively privatized adversarial stance engendered by the shift from the validity of the theme and argument of a proposition to the unmasking of the proposer's personality is not only singularly unlovely but "it may easily legitimate some forms of a disquieting intellectual terrorism," not absent even from Foucault or Althusser (Ferry-Renault 116). The civility of the critical but finally subsumptive rather than competitive-adversarial mode seems to be dispensed with in most (though thankfully not in a few of the best) Post-structuralists. I would even say that uncritical repetition of Heidegger's somewhat hysterical dicta against science and rationalism, presumably by reason of their reference to

pragmatically verifiable truths, bars the way to consistent thinking and agency, and is thus deeply obscurantist. This is, again, to be found in the weakest moments of both Foucault and Althusser, not to mention the ridiculous sloganeering of Lyotard ("rendre la philosophie inhumaine," cf. Ferry-Renaut 111-12) and innumerable imitators, which does not even shock the bourgeoisie any more—one can well imagine the gloating smirk on the face of an intelligent banker or bureaucrat should he chance to glance at it. My feeling is that Derrida is more cautious here, while the closest (though not very close) approximation to a dialectics of de- and re-construction might be found in some places of the Deleuze-Guattari opus.

Second, even the bad patriarchal ego was able (as Jameson remarked in a 1993 lecture) not only to have an unconscious, to sublimate etc., but clearly *had possibilities of action*. Fragmenting the atomic ego may be a necessary first step and pleasant polemical device, but if we want to *do* anything in this world of bodies and institutions—most pressingly, to contribute our small bits and bytes toward changing the world away from what the Robinson Crusoes have changed it into, i.e. in the direction of an inhabitable planet—we shall have to find ways of reintegrating agency into the electron cloud for given purposes (much like in Stanislaw Lem's novel *The Invincible*). In fact, as I suggested at the beginning, all of us do cut out a Porphyrian tree with branchings for key decisions from the potentially unending rhizome of our cultural encyclopedia. As Eco has wittily remarked, when Derrida asked him for a letter of support for the Collège International de Philosophie, "I bet Derrida assumed that: —I should assume he is saying the truth; —I should read his message as a univocal program...; —the signature which he asked me to put at the bottom of my letter should be taken more seriously than Derrida's at the end of 'Signature, événement, contexte'" (*Limiti* 27). For efficacious Post-structuralist theoreticians, their end forgets their beginning. And one of Barthes's favourite lexemes, **dérivé**, turned into a catch-word by Lyotard, derives after all from the Latin **de-ripare**, the obverse of **ad-ripare**, to get to an (uncrossable) river-bank or shore, which metaphor when sufficiently deadened becomes our "arrive": in order to drift from somewhere one first had to arrive there; so that I would hope that after a period of drifting in the desert (**sous rature**, so to speak) one might if not arrive at least again glimpse some approximations to a Promised Land. Or even, quite modestly, to what William Morris called "an epoch of rest"—a middling, restful land, without the mass murders, hungers, drug poisonings, air, water, and food adulterations, and the myriad other hegemonic insults to people's flesh and imagination.

### **3. To Position a Survivable Polity, Non-Interiority, Valencies for Subjectivity**

Seid ihr wirklich im Fluss des Geschehens? Einverstanden mit Allem was wird? Werdet *ihr* noch?

[Are you really within the flowing of events? Consenting to  
All that is becoming? Are you still becoming?]  
(Brecht, *Der Zweifler* [*The Skeptic*])

**3.1.** As indicated at the beginning, I feel/think that my position (and that of many of my readers) is quite similar to his self-characterization as a person who has left his class and cannot (though he sometimes thought he could) find another practical constituency. Certainly as far as the Subject is concerned, our basic problem seems to me identical to the much maligned project of Left-wing Modernism: how to find—in lieu of Adorno's no more tenable "bourgeois individual, the thinking subject" (230)—some "supraindividual" (and in my opinion also "infraindividual") possibility of agency, i.e. a Subject, which could practically and cognitively use and valorize at least some of our personal experiences without demanding a sacrifice of the personal intellect and civil dignity. If there is to be a politically acceptable "post-Modernism" (a question on which the jury is still out), it would have to set sail again, with all due corrections of course and crew, on this so far shipwrecked project.

Of course, in our epistemological crisis where despondency and obfuscation embrace, just what this project may now cognitively and politically (therefore, if you wish, ethically) be is much easier defined by negatives than by positives. Insofar as our enchantments (e.g., the socialist and then the feminist one) were insufficiently critical and self-critical, our disenchantments are legitimate and cannot be simply "sublated." But this does not authorize us to abandon the quest for a communal positionality or survivable polity—in good politics as well as in good logics: **ex propositionibus mere particularibus nihil sequitur**, it does not follow from a particular historical defeat, however huge and painful, that long-duration necessities—such as, that the survival of **Homo sapiens sapiens** has precedence over the profit principle—are no longer necessary. We need to transcend the simple-minded Post-structuralist opposition of the bad old, centred, stable subject vs. the good new (good because new?), decentred, drifting subject. Rigid patriarchal stability of the personally named firm vs. riding the tempests of Global Capitalism Inc. "like to the leaves in Vallombrosa": the exhilaration may be in both cases real, but it is very limited and limiting. A plague on both your houses! As Jameson formulates it in this issue and in another unpublished document: the opposite of the centred subject does not have to be the schizophrenic subject, but could be the collective one. His exemplar is then Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in which the group is a circulation of positions, so that at a certain time everyone in the group is the centre but overall no one is the centre. Sartre's theory of group formation thus "decenters the individual subject not by dissolving centrality but by making it omnipresent: ...the hierarchical fact of centrality is here overcome by its absolute extension and as it were democratization" ("Representations" MS 27). Benjamin's explicit and Adorno's implicit yearning for a Subject that reconciles a generality without rigidity to a singularity without

privatized marginality—what Brecht discussing his play *Man is Man* called, in opposition to the Nazis, a “good collective”—can thus be given a first, if brief and sketchy, image and figuration.

Half a dozen years ago, in my first clearing of the ground for an approach to the Subject, I went through some of the milestones of its history, from the breakdown of the people's collective body that Bakhtin thought to have identified (in *Rabelais*) through Hobbes and Freud to Foucault and some feminists. My conclusion was that if we still lack a viable theory of the Subject, is this not the case because we have first to estrange the whole doctrinally individualist approach, to hold it at arm's length and eventually break it down, in order to break out of its epistemological and ontological horizon of Death? And how can this breakout happen if not by means of some updated notions of collectivity? This still begs many central questions, to begin with how do we not only affirm the overarching opposition of vitality vs. necrophilia, but also locate precise social groups and actions with respect to this divide. And I concluded that if my whole argument held, Bakhtin could give us the perhaps essential pointer that the subject should not be looked at as a monad. Indeed, one way of formulating the dead end of what in Fichte's term can be called the “perfectly sinful” capitalist society is to say that in it “being human coincides with the physical individuality”: “And this same principle: 'Me and therefore not the others,' each person in this society practices against each person, and this for each and all thing-tokens of any commodity which that person needs for its own existence, and therefore all around itself for all that its existence altogether *is*” (Sohn-Rethel 113 and 201). To the contrary, the personal individuality should be understood as a limit-zone of collective bodies and subjects (Suvin, “Subject” 187).

This is not merely or primarily a utopian wish (in itself a beginning of wisdom). I do not know any tenable discussion of subjectivity which would not conclude it is constructed in relationships between non-isolated people. Bakhtin reminds us that individuals communicate by means of the “social material of signs” which “can arise only on *interindividual territory*” (Volosinov 12). Wittgenstein has reminded us that private normativity and private language are impossible (349ff.). Child psychologists from Piaget and Vygotsky, and lately feminists, have reminded us just how contradictory is the Cartesian position that, on the one hand, reason is distributively universal (well—at least for adult upper-class Western males), yet on the other, cognition is introspection of an individual mind for whom any embodiment and all traffic with other “I”s is irrelevant (cf. Code *passim*). As against this hegemonic individualist position—which runs through Rousseau, Kant, and Mill to the *Reader's Digest*—, clearly our central experiences are all relational, our lives are interdependent, and even (especially!) the most intimate recesses of our personalities are constructed through these relations and interdependencies (cf. Baier).

**3.2.** A central correlative of the hypothesis of a primacy of autonomous individuals (ontogenetically and phylogenetically so easy to falsify), which we must postulate to account for its intuitively small possibility is *the experience of solitary labour*, shared by all of us isolated—usually male—professional intellectuals from Descartes on. The “constructors of autonomy-centred theories” must have dispensed with child-raising labour, observes Code (85); and I would add, with physical labour in general. I shall return to this crucial topic in the next section.

Within any stance denying the billiard-ball Self, its *distinction outer-inner* is, for better or worse, if not quite lost at least radically reconfigured. Biologically, the separation of organisms from “their” environment is only allowable for strictly limited analytical purposes (biologists then have to speak of an “inner environment” inside the organism); in fact, a complex mutual enfolding is the usual case. In terms of human societies, interaction through labour never required depth psychology, only many-tiered “flat” (horizontal and vertical) coordinations—Deleuze and Guattari might say plateaus. Haraway gives us a fascinating pointer how a multiply permeable self—therefore not a Self in my terms—is figured in the discourse of immunology (and today of AIDS). In it, “What counts as a ‘unit,’ a one, is highly problematic, not a permanent given.” This new kind of Subject is “able to engage with others (human and non-human, inner and outer), but always with finite consequences... situated possibilities and impossibilities of individuation and identification... partial fusions and dangers” (“Biopolitics” 15 and 32; cf. also Dawkins 83ff. and *passim*). The shift from Outer (interplanetary or intergalactic) to Inner (psychological) Space was foreshadowed in “New Wave” science fiction from the 1960s on; alas, in J.G. Ballard or Harlan Ellison it often identified inner space as a kind of Jungian archetypal jungle, so that for more sophisticated and politically literate figurations one has to go to Lem and the Strugatski Brothers (Ursula Le Guin and Philip Dick waver between these poles, inclining after the collapse of the 60s’ movement toward the former; cf. *Suvin Positions*). Twenty years later, this shift has permeated the PR discourse of NASA and biomedicine (see Haraway, “Biopolitics” 26-27 and *passim*).

Now, it is astounding how well this can be fitted in with Karatani's book on the origins of 20th-Century Japanese orientations, which can be learned from precisely because the Japanese Meiji (19th-Century) restructuring of a whole society had to effect in two generations an abbreviated recapitulation of four centuries of European economic, power, and ideological development; so that even the despotic deviations of that recapitulation brutally show up the underlying skeleton of its European model (a bit as the abbreviated “ontogenesis” of the embryo recapitulates in a differing, much foreshortened context the “phylogenesis” of the species). In Karatani's witty central argument, “Interiority was not something that had always existed, but only appeared as the result of the inversion of a semiotic constellation” (57). Interiority—which we can also read as the Cartesian **cogito** in



interiorized space whose only quality is its imaginary extension (62), i.e. depth—is a “discovery”: e.g., Rousseau caps the trend I mentioned in 2.1 à propos of Shakespeare and Defoe by discovering that language mediates the immediate “inner” experience (68, based on Starobinski). In the ultimate triumph of Karatani's favourite Marxian figure, inversion—the **camera obscura** of ideology—, interiority grows into a system which “was not, in fact, inside us, but rather [it was] we who were incorporated within it” (70). Exactly the obverse of the Hellenic city-state: “To imagine the world does not consist in rendering it present *inside* our mind. It is our thought which is of the world and a presence in the world.” (Vernant, “Preface” MS 17, and cf. Richard Rorty 47)

Thus, getting out of this bourgeois interiority, the system of Self, and then redefining a two-dimensional but multivalent Subject is ineluctably on today's historical agenda. Let us hope we can do this athwart the military-scientific power complex diagnosed by Haraway in its presently most dangerous sector, the biomedical one.

**3.3.** Anticipating my argument about labour, I am positing that cognition is a material practice. If so, any cognitive agency, producing or creating through labour, is *necessarily concrete people, within specific historical relations, material resistances, and thus social constraints*. Subjects are *always* located in a very specific nexus of human relationships, direct or very indirect (e.g. mediated by humanly constructed technology and finance as frozen forms of human labour, cf. Marx, *Grundrisse* 690-711), in a *particular spacetime* with a *limited choice* of available or affordable *agents and actions*. This is also why, as suggested in the “Introduction,” the “thick descriptions” or Possible Worlds of fiction or fine arts are to my mind much more useful than purely conceptual cogitations (e.g. much philosophy; so that I can read Derrida with pleasure as a Mallarméan prose poet but not as philosopher with any transferrable system). Sharing some of the empirical world's limitations and resistances, the Possible Worlds of storytelling can traffic much more richly with our usual, i.e. hegemonic constructions of the world, in a mutually verifying and falsifying feedback (even though the cognitive increment does not come about in “scientific” ways).

As to the empirical actions of a person, they rarely —after the industrial revolution, never —happen within one unchanging nexus. Therefore, as a rule they do not swallow or even engage the whole person but only—to borrow a term from chemistry—some of its “valencies” for a given type of action: the teaching valency for teaching, the fishing valency for fishing, and so forth; on the present physical model of the divisible and recombinable atom, one might think of such possibilities as based on infra-individual units less akin to various Freudian layers or drives than to free protons-electrons or maybe even charms-quarks. The successful Althusserian interpellations can then be thought as outside pressures keyed into the suitable free locks in the atom of personality. I see no difficulty in such interpellations redefining the hierarchy that constitutes the personality by means of their docking onto a suitable slot, on the model of the cell's protein or

the rotating space station: personality engineering was practised by shamans much before we acquired the metaphors from molecular engineering or science fiction (or Sloterdijk). If I were to write a book about freedom and personality, such Harawayan topologies (cf. her "Biopolitics") would underlie the argument presented in 2.2. I could even find a somewhat too oligarchic pointer in Nietzsche: "...perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interactions and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general?... [An] aristocracy of [equal "cells"], used to ruling jointly and understanding how to command?" (*Will* 270)

My reader may dismiss this mix of metaphors about human imagination and therefore agency as a too "thick" fancy. I could defend myself by citing not only chemistry, atomic physics, cell biology or immunology but, say, Richard Rorty's pragmatism, the insights of feminist critics such as Kaplan about "fluctuant identity" (226), the misnamed "object relations" theory of Melanie Klein and others, Tinbergen's study of instinct, or indeed venerable discussions in philosophy. But in fact, this can of worms was logically opened by the radical shift away from the body politic discussed in 1.2. If the supra-personal group, consanguineous or territorial, is not the locus of agency and responsibility, and indeed of intention and value, why stop the disintegration at a person? Because it has an "individual" body in Huxley's sense? But that body may well be seen, e.g., as subject to "outside" possession —by a demon, a slave-owner or a **pater familias** —and thus split between different and changing responsibilities, say after exorcism or emancipation. Physical agency is in possessed persons (in both senses of the adjective) divorced from legal personhood: slaves were "speaking cattle" for Aristotle, and women empty-headed ninnies for the same Victorians who accepted the fiction of "corporate persons." This indicates that delimitation of which bodies are persons is tricky in all dimensions, inferior, superior, and even lateral: is a chimpanzee, a robot or an Alien also a person? In just what ways?

To strengthen the infra-personal hypothesis, I could further jump from demonic possession and slavery to quite contemporary processes, such as Artificial Intelligence or even the division of economic firms into competing sub-units (cf. a survey in Elster ed.). AI authorities have found it necessary to postulate the mind as a "society" of quite circumscribed sub-"agents" organized into larger "agencies" and those in turn into higher-level systems, where the levels can rapidly shift for a needed action (cf. Minsky, also Minsky and Papert). Yet finally I could not dispute the gentle reader short of an essay the size of this one ("Cognitive," to appear elsewhere). Still, I think we have sufficient evidence, from Freud and Sartre to present-day cognitivism, that there are mental processes about which we are still deeply in the dark but which cannot be even limned except by postulating a shifting congerie of sub-personal units in the cognizing subject, i.e. by fragmenting the unsplittable Self. Nonetheless, such shifting, changing, even contradictory Subjects would in given cases (depending on the presuppositions and interpellations) be quite ready for agency. And

to any given type of agency there would correspond a sufficiently unitary Subject —thereby explaining the experience most of us have that we possess some unity, that the loving or painful impingements of reality are happening to a Subject with a unique body and memories that may at its best attain to what Nietzsche has in his meditation on Schopenhauer wondrously called a “productive uniqueness,” which cannot be simply dismissed as individualist ideology.

As Jameson suggests in this issue, such types would be correlative (and insofar as they certainly have some kind of substance, beginning with a semantic and ideological one, they would be consubstantial) to their field of action, constituting, e.g., a mathematical, scientific or aesthetic—but also a fatherly or collegial—Subject. The most important of such Subjects would be anchored in the historically most durable institutions such as the law and codified religion (both of which also insert speech into political decision-making in the guise of rhetorics), medicine (which inserted semiotics) or warfare. Further, a lot of work has been done both in sociology and theatre studies on the notion of “role,” which should be reread with the intention of freeing it from its unwarranted presupposition of marginality to a central “actor.” In fact, I strongly suspect we already have a good approximation to the mercurial Subjects of my preceding paragraph in the nomadic collectives and personalities from both the successful neo-capitalist “power-elite” (as Wright Mills concluded long ago) and the neo-tertiary-sector (cf. e.g. Poster's somewhat enthusiastic view of computer writing, 114ff.), whose twists and turns have so stymied all “nuclear”—e.g. old-fashioned trade union—expectations. As I suggested above, the Post-structuralist theory comes from an one-sided, unproductive absolutization of the neo-tertiary personal experience (most clearly in Baudrillard), since university teachers belong to it. It remains, as the Left from the feminists to Paul Smith and Jameson has been asking, to make the new Subject available for democratic resistance and reconfiguration, against the horizon of a survivable community.

#### 4. Briefly, On Body Politics

Those who believe in substantiality are like cows; those who believe in emptiness are worse.

Saraha (9th Century C.E.)

**4.1.** Descartes's philosophical soul apprehended metaphysics and cognized through a reason opposed to the fallacious bodily senses. As he wrote, “this 'me,' that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body.” “I am a thinking thing,” proclaim the *Meditations*, whereas “I possess a body with which I am very intimately conjoined” (*Works* 1: 101 and 190). This may lead us to notice that if in the sentence **[ego] cogito ergo [ego] sum**, the first and outstanding problem is the “I” (**ego**), yet a correlative, and in some ways even anterior or constitutive problem is **cogito/sum**, the relationship of mind and body. As almost

all commentators have underlined, the sovereign epistemological Self, which will by the time of Kant also understand itself as ethical, is in Descartes predicated on a reason "autonomous... in two senses":

First, the quest for certain knowledge should be... undertaken separately by each rational being; and second, that quest is a journey of reason alone, unhindered—and hence also unaided—by the senses.... [Descartes's] account of knowledge-seeking is of an introspective activity that depends neither on the embodied nature of a knower nor on his (or her) intersubjective relations. (Code 112)

What has less often been foregrounded is whether there is (as I think) a necessary linkage, within this understanding of understanding—or this meta-epistemic stance—, between the two "narcotizings," that of the body and that of the epistemic or primary collectivity. (Of course, nobody but the crassest solipsist denies the secondary social collectivity of the knowers' communicating the results of inquiry, certainly not Descartes.) Yet it seems probable that the loss of body as validation for inscribing the Subject's time, space, and name into the socially recognized chronotope and identification (e.g., gender, class, race...), necessarily devalues what Marx called "the ensemble of social relationships" constituting the embodied personality. The body's sensual perceptions unified by a personal brain and participation in a network of interpersonal relationships are simply the two faces of the same very permeable interface (of membership in one another, as Paul of Tarsus the communal organizer—for once laudably—said). How would, e.g., the thinking **ego** be fed, kept from fever by shelter and clothing, supplied with pen and paper to fix its cogitations, and indeed taught the language for them, without a whole array of (often female) caring and/or employed family members, teachers, helpers, suppliers, and so forth? Is there not an at least partial analogy here between a factory organizer and the cogitating pure mind? Descartes's very Platonic despisal of the body's desires and sensuality as epistemic prison, and indeed his logically following downgrading even of the brain with its inferior imaging and perceiving, in favour of a pure mind (cf. Bordo 89-95), is diachronically a direct continuation of the original Christian horror of body and fixation on the soul; but synchronically, it is an absolutist and dualist project to master and eliminate the inimical and potentially rebellious mob of unruly passions: "even those who have the feeblest souls can acquire a very absolute dominion over all their passions..." (*Treatise on the Passions*, *Works* 1: 356). Only when properly subdued, senses and emotions may be practically indulged in, particularly in the company of women. On top of the division of labour into physical and mental, there is in Descartes a "sexual division of mental labour" wherein it is the woman's task "to preserve the sphere of the intermingling of mind and body.... [She] will keep [soft

emotions and sensuousness] intact for [the Man of Reason]." (Lloyd 50)

The Cartesian full split between the **res extensa** and **res cogitans** is thus a pseudo-materialist translation of the body vs. soul theologeme which both modifies its terms and preserves its deep structure for an ostensibly lay, bourgeois rather than clerical, philosophizing. The thinker is for Descartes in fact a God-like demiurge in no place or time, his "I" has no name or face. In the 19th Century this pernicious stance will be exfoliated to say that Truth can be found either *inside* the objectivized space-filling stuff (body) for each of us, as best seen in art, or alternatively *outside*—though through—the thinking stuff for all of us, as best seen in science. The logical horizon of the first stance is primary solipsism (from which Descartes himself was not always that far, see e.g. his replies to Gassendi's reasonable materialist doubts, Works 1: 212ff.) and it entails the pretence of Romantic artists that they are not thinkers. The logical horizon of the second stance is secondary scientism and it entails the pretence of Positivist scientists that they are value-free.

In this suppression of matter the stubbornly material bodies are reduced to "absolutely dominated" objects. The Cartesian space is (absurdly) divided into the pure billiard-ball Self, an isolated subject of power and knowledge, outside whom remains the world, "nature" —but a nature as **corpus vile**, "reduced to the status of an inexhaustible fund against the background of which its products appear and from which they are wrested" (de Certeau, *Practice* 157). The mind is then posited as a mirror to nature, though it is not clear what authorizes this metaphor (cf. R. Rorty). The body, evacuated in the first Cartesian *Meditation*, returns as dead, inert object, to be policed in its desires (especially the sexual ones) by a ferocious conscience (cf. Vernant, "L'individu" 36 and Karatani 79, 89, and *passim*) and dissected by an all-powerful anatomist, correlative to a metaphysics of Death (cf. Barker 95-112 and *passim*). As amply shown by Foucault, the discourse of clinical medicine predicated on the isolated individual is (I argue this in "Subject" 195) defined by the horizon of death: not only do death and disease "scientifically" constitute each body's individuality and intelligibility, but Death is the end as well as the essence of abstract human life. This has in our century been proved both by Nazi doctors and by practically all big business (chemical, pharmaceutical, tobacco, agribusiness, etc.) precisely on our systemically tortured, infected, poisoned bodies.

Thus, the apparently highly esoteric philosophical problem of cognitive certainty with which Descartes began, finally, when pursued under the aegis of a monotheist craving for Oneness, threatens the *value* and even *possibility* of a shared world. While the latter is simply a self-defeating proposition, even if sufficiently mystifying within our circles of an epicyclical intelligentsia, the former leads to today's frenzied individualism, masqued as the **dernier cri** of PoMo fashion, becoming the cynical obverse of oppressive hegemonies. The Western narcissism of unique Selves has in the last 20 years even abused the body as an alibi for the "me only" stance, constructed with help of much pop

psychoanalysis, and in some French feminist theory also linguistics, that displaces relationships among people onto the purely sexual or purely aesthetic (cf. Kipnis 85ff.). But the bodily stubbornly remains enmeshed with the political, as a *collective standpoint*. The exemplum of Japan may again show (but we have so many other examples, from precisely the analysis of the Cartesian moment through Foucault to the Greenblattian "self-fashioning"!) that the modern subject was established "in tandem with... the modern state," its economic and educational pressures, as its **frère ennemi**, obverse or complement whose shocked retreat into inner-oriented depths forgot "that 'interiority' is itself politics and that it is a manifestation of absolute authority" (Karatani 94 and 95). For "politics [especially liberating politics, note DS] rests on the possibility of a shared world" (Haraway, "Cyborgs" 10) —shunned by individualists such as Japanese or other intellectuals while hollowed out and usurped by the State as protector and policer of Foucault's "controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production" as "an indispensable element in the development of capitalism" (141). Shared-world politics would mean that institutions whose ultimate horizon is private profit regardless of destructions of our senses and sensorium (whose nexus is the brain), are merchants of death in all the literal and metaphoric senses of that phrase. Such a structural "worship of death" (Haraway, "Cyborgs" 20) was part of the reasoning behind my conclusion in "Subject," and in 3.1 above, that the epistemological and ontological horizon of doctrinal individualism was Death, so that it is indispensable to get rid of it before it gets rid of all of us.

But how may we break out of this deadly subject vs. objects split? As far as I can tell, with help of at least two key strategies. One, as suggested earlier, is a focus on labour, whose bearer is, of course, the body. One of the decisive contributions of Marx's is his replacement of Feuerbach's, and Kant's, passive and one-way pivot for people's relationship to reality, *perception* (itself ambiguously oscillating between universality and individuality, just as Descartes did), by the interactivities of *labour*. This provides at least the horizon for using Vico's contention that people can understand history because they have created it: for Marx, labour is the "objectification" of generically human life, since "[man] duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world that he has created" (114). "[I]t is not the isolated individual who is active in labour," comments Marcuse: "in and through the objects of labour, men are shown *one another* in their reality" (23, and cf. the whole discussion 7ff. *passim*). Finally, the meaning of labour is to find, beyond the here and now, lineaments of alternative worlds of things and relationships "visible for each 'I' under a plurality of aspects," the possibility of "taking possession of an indefinite [i.e. plural, note DS] time and space; and one could easily show that the signification of speech or that of suicide and of the revolutionary act is the same" (Merleau-Ponty, *Structure* 175).

However, the body is not only a substratum subjected to political economy, whose crucial hegemony, that occupies between two thirds and one quarter of the weekly time for all "gainfully employed" bodies, Marx rightly challenged –but therefore also followed –step by step. The quite indispensable Marxian paradigm would have to be expanded following Nietzsche's kindred insistence: "Essential, to start from the body and to use it as the red thread" (*Werke* 635) –a stance in fact prefigured in the young Marx's Epicurean assumption that the development of the senses is the central criterion for both hominization and alienation, and continuing as a **basso ostinato** throughout his opus. As best envisaged –to my knowledge –by Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology*, also *Structure*), *embodiment* is both a lived experience of being body and a realization that the body is the site of *cognition* or understanding, which is itself inextricably tied to embodied action as preparation, surrogate, response or feedback validator for it. Reintegrating the body into our knowledge theory by means of its being the *co-determining anchorage for stance or standpoint* –to begin with, for personal and possessive pronouns as well as for all deixis and all metaphors of vision and orientation –is, I would conclude, indispensable for any further clear thinking about the Subject.<sup>4</sup> (A third focus, de Certeau and a host of other extrapolators from linguistics would argue, should be speech, but I would prefer it integrated into Bakhtinian ideology or Foucauldian discursive genealogies. At any rate, such focal categorizations are pragmatic matters and my suggestions are open-ended.) As Jameson says toward the end of his essay here, these foci might offer "some more adequate approach...to agency and praxis in general" (MS 26).

**4.2.** From Marx to Foucault, we have been shown how the blood-soaked birth of the capitalist labour-force and of bourgeois subjection (e.g. sexuality) has, by physical eviction of villagers off their land or physical surveillance of city-dwellers, reconstituted the shape of human bodies and subjects more intimately and thus more radically than any Oriental despotism. Today's threats of molecularly engineered species modification, lurking behind the noble curative phrases of the human genome mapping, is a logical continuation of this line: we may well be in for an electronically enhanced version of Wells's Lunar society (*The First Men in the Moon*, varied in much SF of the last 40 years). Diachronically, this latches on to the no doubt remedial but also oppressive medicalization and medical construction of subject Foucault has so relentlessly pursued in his whole opus. But even brute physical force was always accompanied by ideological rationalizations; and the ruling classes of economically complex, industrialized societies have learned from the World Wars that it is on the whole more profitable and less dangerous to have wars and counter-revolutions on the periphery only. Beyond physical force, the relative importance of ideological constructions of subjectivities has grown enormously in the last 200 and especially in the last (say) 60 years. The discourse of the media, from the mass press through radio and cinema to today's electronics, is

perhaps now the dominant divulgator of such constructions. But the actual terms for these media were invented elsewhere: at a first remove, in theatre and literature; but going further into the depths of our cultural encyclopedia, we encounter the privileged eldest discourses of (I think) warfare, religion, medicine, and law. I shall in spite of my technical ignorance attempt to supply a few hints only about *the legal subject*.

Jameson speculates, though in a prudently conditional clause, that it might perhaps underlie other "conceptions of subjectivity" he had mentioned, the epistemological, logical, and psychological one ("Representations" MS 25).<sup>5</sup> At any rate, the legal subject is clearly the pivot between State power and both the oral and written discourses of individuation. While the martial, the medical, and the religious (or at least the magical) subjects predate class society, Athenian law is consubstantial with the rise of the State (and with the first "mass medium," Attic tragedy, as exemplarily foregrounded in its first, religious-cum-political-cum-legal masterpiece, Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy). "Above all, the individual appears at the heart of the [**polis**] institutions through the development of law" (Vernant, "L'individu" 29). The Athenian codification of, and indeed bifurcation into, criminal and civil law has remained effective until today: in the first sector, the passage from consanguineous (clan) vendetta to civic tribunals constructs "the notion of the criminal individual... as subject of crime and object of verdict (**judgement, judgment, sentence**)"; in the second sector, the institution of a personal testament (third century) allowed the posthumous transmission of goods by the "will" of a particular, irrespective of the "house" or "dynasty" (ibidem 29-30). Further systematic developments of such (of course, strictly limited) juridical personalization will come in the Roman State, where jurisprudence became the hegemonic discourse and whence it was transmitted to all subsequent European discourse. For one example, the notion of judgment clearly underlies the Christian idea of Judgment Day. For another, the Roman (political) law is the precondition for the idea of laws of nature. For a third, this idea together with its source in the statutory pole of law, seems the precondition for ethics, certainly for the Kantian categorical imperative that is formulated as the inner correlative to the Copernican vision of astronomical order.

In modern European thought, the key testimony occurs in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, where it is unambiguously stated that "person" (as different from an individual substance and a human being)

is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery. This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness —whereby it becomes concerned and accountable. (Book 2, ch. XXVII)

Almost each clause of Locke's has rightly been the subject of wide and ongoing debate (cf. A.O. Rorty ed.), but beyond noticing how



the English 18th-Century practice had evacuated the military, medical, religious, and theatrical antecedents, I wish to discuss the stress on agency and on continuity with a past. Locke anchors all other attributes of agenthood (intelligence, feeling, consciousness) in legal practices such as appropriation and accountability. His insistence on the past and memory is necessary for the juridical purposes of liability. However, from the times of Balzac on, ambition in big cities can be discussed in terms of personal qualities—looks, education, energy, etc.—being the Self's capital to be wisely invested (Bourdieu). Therefore we have today, in a society "hotter" than Locke's largely land-based one and which has instituted "futures trading" in all stock-markets and planning in almost every company and State, no choice but to focus on, or at least integrate equally, choice and future. This reveals that what a society defines as agency and person depends on its hegemonic priorities (cf. A.O. Rorty 5).

In spite of this **longue durée** history, as Nietzsche's meditation on history argues, literal equality—preeminently the one before the law—strives to abolish history, which consists of unique existents, in the eternal return of the same (Benjamin). Literally, this equality is of course untenable, and the tension between practice and ideology has been incorporated into the law itself, e.g. as one between the **casus** and the statute. The latest moves in this age-old gambit are revealing: what have been somewhat ironically called conversions to "juridical humanism" (Ferry-Renault 112-13) of the ex-68ers such as Foucault, who earlier proclaimed that "one has...to get rid of the subject itself" (*Power* 117), come hand in hand with the ideology of the end to history. This might serve to indicate also how the juridical (legal) subject is from Plato on certainly the key to the "political subject," more usually talked about in terms of ethics (Kant) or power (Machiavelli, Hobbes). As Balibar convincingly argues, the Roman juridical figure of the **subiectus** (person submitted to **imperium**, sovereign authority) reaches through Christianity right up to the theory and practice of the citizen, i.e. up to today.<sup>6</sup> But I would have to confess that I know of very little contemporary argument about the political subject that usefully follows or indeed corrects Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, and/or Lenin. And yet it is evidently a matter of highest concern right now how at the time of these names (i.e. since the rise of modern nation-states and Braudel's commercial capitalisms) there comes about on the basis of the legal subject first the citizen (who in our century acknowledges and subsumes labour under the State), then the **homo oeconomicus**, and finally the chauvinist. A huge array of legal studies in our time (say from Pashukanis and Rawls to Negri) at the crossroads of philosophy and politics, awaits examination here.

**4.3.** The huge problematic of the body finally may be seen to become a key for socialized perception and imagination, and for envisaging not only the Subject but also all agency as stances. I have proposed in "Soul" that the relations of bodies to their perception of the mutually enfolding world can be (provisionally, if you wish etymologically) called aesthetics, while for the

interplay of collective and personal bodies no other word but politics will do; and I would assume these are today two key agential fields, because they are both, quite ineluctably, both personal and non-personal. We could call them transpersonal vectors, bearing transpersonal or collective subjecthoods: just try to imagine solipsist politics, sex or art! As to imagination and its topologies, I pursue this matter in "Cognitive." Keeping to minimal, yet I hope suggestive, indications, I must here content myself with this much, aware that my approach may well not have entered into large areas of possibly central importance.

## 5. An End (*finis*, not *telos*)

Only he who builds the future has a right...to pass judgment on the past.

Nietzsche

"...the classic conclusion, in which a book's central arguments are rehearsed imperturbably for one last time, as if closing the door on everything that has been said, is inappropriate in a work of history," concluded Braudel after 2,000 pages (619). Since to my mind all our arguments are ineluctably historical, this holds **a fortiori** for any work of a much smaller scope. But I would like this to be a final twist of the essay's spiral, picking up some problems in the light of what has been argued in it earlier and looking at their horizons.

5.1. While the issue for which this is written was being prepared, a book appeared called *Who Comes After the Subject?*, initiated by Jean-Luc Nancy and co-edited in the somewhat changed English version by Eduardo Cadava and Peter Connor, with numerous contributions by a representative array of French philosophical luminaries of the day. Far from feeling "scooped" (the intentions and addressees of this issue are rather different), I am happy to have had the opportunity to reflect on it while writing this, e.g. on the important contribution by Balibar cited earlier, and I would like to cull a very few questions from it. If this were a survey of the volume—but it is not—, I would start by noticing that the briefest contribution, two pages by Deleuze, is to my mind the most magisterial one (this is a compliment), arriving as it does at its end upon the declaration that "the notion of the subject has lost much of its interest on behalf of *pre-individual singularities and non-personal individuations*" and upon further horizons of this whole "field of questions" (95).

Nancy's "Introduction" identifies the book's question as the sign of a rupture in philosophy and history, which would yet like to avoid the dilemma of "the subject's simple liquidation" and "a 'return to the subject' (proclaimed by those who would like to think that nothing has happened...)" (5). I agree that the only wise strategy is **tertium datur** (Hegel is not a dead dog): the one-sided exaggerations of technocratic structuralism and of somewhat overcholeric thinkers such as Foucault, a useful author before he descended into orthodox Heideggerianism, are by now

behind us; while a return to Kant or even phenomenology (not to speak to the crassest German Idealism) can only be of any conceivable use if it is a **reculer pour mieux sauter**, productively cannibalizing them. However, I then secondarily think it is unwise (because impossible) to jettison all existing terminology; an impulse to reinterpret, if need be subversively, a term like The Subject seems to me to do better justice to the long-duration continuities of human history, while avoiding PoMo Babylonian flashiness (what Derrida here calls "the vested confusion of the **doxa**," 98). However, I am not sure what is the use of all this talk about "rupture" (except self-puffery that goes before a fall): every age since, say, 1800 is both a continuation and a rupture, depending on what one wishes to envisage. Have the Gulf War or the Yugoslav Nationalist Wars been a rupture with the Opium War of 1839-42 or the Balkan War of 1912? Is dying from Agent Orange, Chernobyl radiation or AIDS more dignified and palatable than the great plague epidemics of Boccaccio and Defoe? Maybe because of the new technologies involved? Has the hunger and cold of the homeless not only in Bosnia but also in San Francisco broken with the hunger and cold before 1960 or 1940? Is the worldwide division into Disraeli's "two nations" of the rich and the poor not just as lopsided and bad today as at the time of Chinese or Roman emperors? Is it growing smaller? Isn't it even ethically and politically (though not sensually) worse because human creativity has in the last 100 years finally given us the means to make this planet habitable? And since the answers to my rhetorical questions are clear, what is the function of the self-congratulatory "rupture" slogan today? Wouldn't elementary modesty require that we think rather with Benjamin and Brecht about an ongoing normality of catastrophe in order to estrange it and begin coping with it?

If we did, we would have to start asking quite referential questions about agency and responsibility, directly dovetailing philosophy and politics. For example: Who is murdering the citizens of Sarajevo? Serbian guns? No: guns do not aim and discharge themselves. Serbs? No: many people of Serbian origin (the best) have chosen to remain in the hardships of Sarajevo and defend a non-ethnically-cleansed, bastardized, joyously intermarrying polity. And so on. So what kind of Subjects are those brainwashed murderers (and their ethnic counterparts on all other sides of those wars)? Where is the locus of responsibility and intentionality: in their selfish genes? No. In their (anti-nationalist, but alas quite inefficient) schooling in Tito's Yugoslavia? No. Obviously it must be in some vectors going through desperate people rather than emanating from their hard centre.

Thus on the one hand we could analyze this as a subjectless web of fluctuating pressures within global economic and political conjunctures (the World Bank loans and the impoverishment of a fairly well-off Yugoslav population, the separatist sympathies and financial intervention of Germany and the Vatican, the withdrawal of both the menacing Russian and supporting US empire) encroaching upon each other. And on the other hand there are *potential collectives* who get, in Eco's terms, "narcotized," e.g. the working class or the patriots of a federal Yugoslavia, or "boldfaced" as

selfish elites (equally in the Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian power-centres) construct "threatened ethnicities." From different stances both the subjectless fluxes and the collective Subjects are potentially mobilizable ("true") for practice and for explanation. Finally, if one needs a support and constituency for action, preferably on a large scale, one would have to arrest the flux and name a collective in any particular chronotope for any particular agency (Slovenian or Croatian elites engineering separation from Yugoslavia, or Serbian elites engineering Great Serbia). So while it is true that totalizing collectives are today, after the demise of what ought to be called "really non-existent socialism," in disrepute among theoreticians, obviously they practically exist (e.g. the World Bank with all of its arteries, veins, and capillaries). Alongside with Foucauldian micro-collectives, their quicker and more complex **modus operandi** is what may have to be re-theorized in the age of computers.

**5.2.** This means, however, that *cognitive communities* thrashing out epistemological-cum-political stances are more than ever needed for the task of exploring the varieties of infra- and supra-personal Subjects, of *understanding* the construction of these new, sometimes very dangerous but sometimes very exciting, collective Subjects. This has been clear in science since Bacon and theorized since Peirce: "the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a community" (quoted in Eco, *Limiti* 336-37, and see Eco's epistemological conclusions from this against the Derridian unlimited **dérive** in the whole essay, 325-38, also 27-28). Thus, Peircean pragmatism is a good ally insofar as it substitutes for the Cartesian "pure observer" epistemology the epistemology of an agent in a community of agents. However, in order to follow the rapid changes around us and to inflect them in a liberating way, I doubt this can be confined to what sociologists call "found communities" (families, nations, professional groups) which supply identities at the cost of orthodoxy and boundaries of admissibility for people and for stances. To my mind, an existing professional **doxa** similar to that proposed by Fish (if I understand him well) is much too involved in little power-grabs of its own to seriously square off against, e.g., the business ethos or nationalist pride. As always, valid cognitive communities are "chosen" rather than "found" (cf. Hartsock *passim* and Code 276-77). Themselves dynamic, by definition non-monolithic, and subject to the often healthy pull of overlapping subcommunities (cf. Nelson 148-50 and *passim*), they exist on the unstable interface between pragmatic and utopian realities, the powerful **status quo** community as found and the productive or creative future-oriented community as chosen.

"Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will," proclaimed Sorel and Gramsci. Optimistically, I think of this issue, including my contribution to it, as a very modest approximation to such a cognitively productive community.

## Notes

1. My thanks go to Marc Angenot, Anna Antonopoulos, Caroline Bayard, Catherine Graham, Fredric Jameson, and Yamada Kazuko for discussions and indications of much relevant secondary literature; and for financial support to the SSHRC and a Canada Council Killam Fellowship. I cannot expatiate upon my debts to this issue's contributors, but I have learned much on the Subject from work with them. All non-attributed translations into English are mine.

2. In an essay whose body and bibliography have grown uncomfortably large, I have to be impaled on one horn of the dilemma whether to expressly differentiate within the sometimes very self-contradictory authors —e.g. Nietzsche —as well as polemicize with the to me unacceptable ones —e.g. Lyotard —or whether to simply leave out what I found useless. The first is philologically proper but uneconomical and often boring, the second may come across as abrupt **obiter dicta** and somewhat arrogant. Time and space being what they are today, I have decided for the second horn, and my polemics will (with few exceptions) mainly be by omission. However, omission from the bibliography may also indicate that some modern classics, mentioned by name only, are omnipervasive in our —my—discourse (so that they can be found in the apparati of other works cited, including mine). As to the rest, I imitate Molière and **je prends mon bien où je le trouve**.

3. Usually, however, it can be observed that there are limitations on those admitted to fully individual status, roughly similar to the Athenian exclusion of women, children, slaves, strangers, and other "speaking cattle" from democracy. Much of the Foucauldian micropolitics of "human rights" (from Blacks to gays and indeed "animal rights"), taking note of the failures of revolutionary changes of the capitalist framework, consists of efforts to break down these limitations within that framework.

4. In this cluster of problems the present extraordinary fashion of denigrating *vision* would have to be faced. As Jameson suggests in this issue, the original Foucauldian and then feminist onslaught on vision —including image, e.g. in movies —unfortunately relied much too one-sidedly on the "essentially theological tradition of the sinfulness of looking as such, and the relationship of that visual libido to the sinfulness of the body in general" ("Representation" MS 23); it should be added that some main perpetrator of this translation of monotheism into psychoanalysis, Mulvey, has laudably had second thoughts though the harm persists (a stimulating brief critique is in Kipnis 8-10, 108-09 and *passim*). Cf., beside the fundamental Merleau-Ponty (all titles below), Berger, Code 140-53 and 252-53, Jonas, Keller and Grontkowski, Lowe Strawson 90ff., and the splendid pages by Vernant in this issue on the close link between vision, cognition, and sight as presence to the community (MS 17-24), which could well be extended from the Hellenic **polis** to all other non-individualist civilizations (cf. Suvin "Soul"). Having been much preoccupied with this in my work on theatre, I sketched in "Theses" some first questions about the necessity of vision with an acknowledged seer and with the proper (e.g. Brechtian) distance for understanding —without a Truth in the depths— as well as in an alliance with other

senses. From that point of view (sic), I find the argument that vision necessarily means alienation and subjugation useless for discriminating when it actually does so —e.g. often in Cartesianism and post-Cartesian "objectivism" relying on an absolutized "mind's eye" (cf. Haraway, "Situated" 581).

5. I confess to sharing deep suspicions against that (seemingly dominant) post-Cartesian individualist psychology which usually does not concern itself with relations between people but with the individual's mental events (perceptions, sensations etc.). I would much rather follow the lead of Mauss and talk about possible bodily "syntaxes of gestures" —walking, eating, erotics, etc.—into which "psychological" phenomena are embedded and which can be understood as given stances. Even Freud, whom —despite what I see as the nonsense of his key concepts, beginning with the Oedipus complex—, I revere as a great if mistaken Columbus of our mental life, great novelist, and great literary and cultural critic, assumes the bourgeois individualist body as his basis and horizon. Therefore, he has little to say about class or race, what he says about women is best forgotten, he limits his dethroning of consciousness mainly to an apparatus of a few, relatively neatly divided thermodynamic levels (cf. Suvin, "Subject" 192-94), and the practice of psychoanalysis has been coopted for adjustment to rather than questioning of the **status quo**. Jung's horizons seem to me unacceptable for much the same reasons as Heidegger's. Even so, I have found a number of texts in psychology, from James and Piaget to Bruner, as well as in psychoanalysis, fascinating, and I attempt to use some of them in "Cognitive."

6. See on subjection also Barker. I wish to eschew here debates by historians of philosophy (and **Blut und Boden** etymologists like Heidegger) whether the post-Cartesian "subject" is really in a straight line of descent from Aristotle's **hypokeimenon** (the underlying), which with Balibar and Williams I strongly doubt. At any rate the legal-cum-political **subiectus**, the subjected person, seems to me at least as important as (and probably the origin of) the **subiectum**, the subjective person or indeed the underlying existent. Again, we could take the foreshortened process in Japan as an example: "The modern Japanese subject... emerged through the conflation of [being subject to the feudal Lord] whose historical origins had been forgotten, with the psychological ego" (Karatani 95).

7. In his latest book *Spectres of Marx* (éd. Galilée, 1993) Derrida wishes to reactualize the lesson of "a certain Marx," most urgent in face of the new consensus that glosses over its spreading "plagues": "never on Earth have so many men, women and children been enslaved, starved or exterminated." I am very happy that my essay converges with such bearings (of a book I have only had time to superficially peruse, and quote mostly according to review echoes) and with their horizon that intellectuals have responsibilities toward suffering people and economic justice. Derrida's appeals for a "new International" (his quotation marks) may be here a key move. It is, however, not clear how he thinks this link "without coordination, without party, ...an alliance without institutions" could effect "a (theoretical and practical)

critique" of such matters as "international law or the concepts of State and nation." Surely at least a loosely linked (to begin with, telematic) focusing of cognitive forces is a precondition for any impact beyond evanescent academic effervescence – which is a welcome oasis but also a debilitating ghetto unless transcended. For a "practical critique" to intertwine with lectures and books, intermittent and non-freezing *groupings* (and where else are e.g. the Deconstructionists?) and institutions (to begin with probably teaching centers and publications) and a solidarity around concrete, democratically chosen *objectives* seems absolutely needed. Otherwise, we shall have vague horizons without political agents or Subjects of resistance.

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