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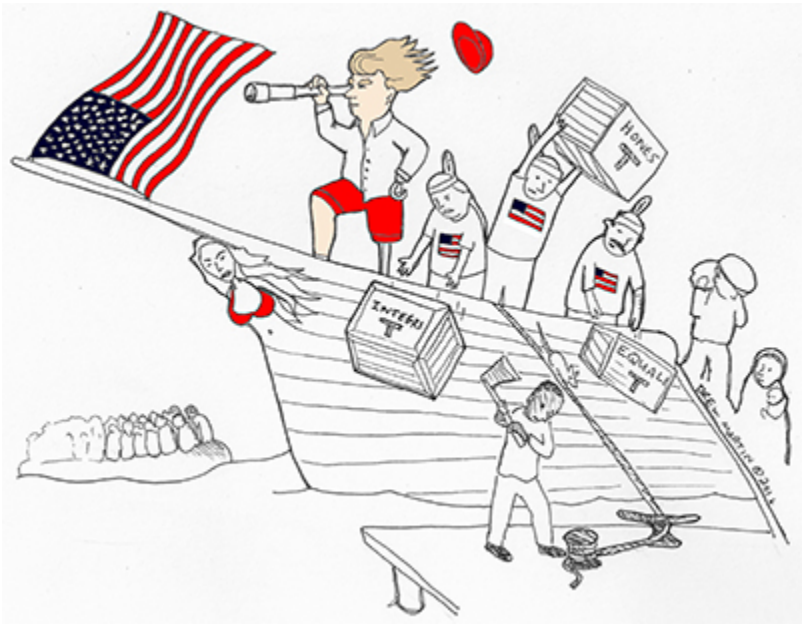

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Poisoning the Well: Demagoguery versus Democracy

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I am your voice.
Donald Trump, Republican National Convention, July 2016

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham Jail"

Nearly all of us have been participants to informal, social conversations about contemporary politics or what's commonly known as current events.

Whether with family or friends over a meal or with strangers in a bar or coffee shop, there's always a sense of equality in these moments; everyone's opinion has equal value and import. In part, this situation is magnified (and repeated) when others find out you teach government and politics for a living. The conversation often starts with the innocent, inquisitive "So, what do you think of the elections?"

Our preferential tact is to turn the question back on the questioner, soliciting their analysis. In this election cycle the common refrain about Trump is a version of "He says the things that are on people's mind. He says what lots of people think but don't have the nerve to say." When you probe further your (social) friends might try to fill in the blanks with "about immigration" or "about the rights of hard working Americans" or "about what's wrong with this country." [pullquote]Trump has tapped into a sentiment expressed as hatred of the political, and an existential fear that something is very wrong with America that only a singular "strong man" can rectify.[/pullquote]The response, often vague but indicative of a strongly felt sense of loss about something positively existential; about how things are not as they once were, how working people can't achieve what they once could, how we're no longer the great nation we once were, somehow lost at sea without a rudder. As Trump proclaims, he's going to – personally – make America great again. And for this reason he is lauded.

Seemingly with each passing day Trump unleashes another racist, sexist, anti-Muslim, xenophobic comment; disparaging remark about the disabled or prisoners of war; a contradictory or incoherent policy statement; a veiled incitement to violence. The problem with these comments about the present state of affairs in America and how Trump says what is on

"everyone's mind" is that *he* does it. The people don't. But the people also take no responsibility to illuminate or clarify what exactly is the problem and how it can be – democratically – remedied. Maybe there's a reason why people who feel this way don't feel any need to reasonably clarify their feelings; because we know they're inconsiderate, selfish, privileged, marginalizing, exclusive, objectifying, dominating and deeply undemocratic. Trump is awarded for speaking like the bad child in the elementary school class. He alone speaks out of turn, caring little about the ramifications of his words. He says what others only wish they could say but thankfully, at least until now, know better than to be so brash.

As we have argued elsewhere, Trump capitalized on a conservative touchstone in the history of America – fear, disdain for established social, political and international norms, and the proposition that leadership through strength is the solution to the malaise created by 'soft' liberalism and political correctness.[1] Trump has tapped into a sentiment expressed as hatred of the political, and an existential fear that something is very wrong with America that only a singular "strong man" can rectify. It's deeply undemocratic and speaks to a dangerous kernel of authoritarianism that lurks behind the veil of equality and liberty for all.

What emerges from this admiration for Trump as the one who speaks what's on people's mind is a voice conveying a passion for white ethnic nationalism, militaristic anti-Islamism, and appeals to bloodlust in foreign policy not to mention a desire to physically assault or incarcerate the political competition. These kinds of sentiments are not particular to Trump. Recall in the early days of the political season Trump was not alone in making public personal, bigoted statements. Both Ted Cruz and Ben Carson made such forays only to be outlasted by Trump who made such statements the centerpiece of his campaign. Despite occasional, tepid criticism of Trump's comments by the standard bearers of the Republican Party House Speaker Paul Ryan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, and Chair of the National Republican Committee Reince Priebus have stood by the Republican Presidential Nominee indicating the Republican establishment's concurrence with the Trump vision.

What these candidates – or better the words they use in public – have managed to do is lower the bar on what might have always often been with us in the American political vocabulary and thoughts, a xenophobic and racist desire to scapegoat racial minorities and non-white immigrants. Hardship, whether it be real or perceived stokes racial as well as nativist resentment among underemployed, low wage, and middle-class whites whose economic position has eroded over the past forty years. The symptoms are real. Concern is with the perceived source of the problem and the proposed, nearly insane solutions such as a border wall with Mexico, trade wars, recusal of judges due to ethnic or religious bias, mass deportation, incarcerating the opposition, physically threatening those who dare criticize the nominee.

For many on the right, equality is synonymous with white oppression, politics synonymous with corruption and thoughtfulness synonymous with weakness. Donald Trump is not the first candidate to draw on these resentments among whites. Patrick Buchanan in his presidential runs in the 1990s did as well, framing whites' economic insecurity as the product of racial

equality, immigration, and economic internationalism. A passion for someone who says “what’s on people’s minds” in this instance is troubling because it obscures an understanding of the real culprit of economic hardship for whites, blacks, and Hispanics, namely, market fundamentalism. Market fundamentalism is economic system and accompanying ethic in which the maximization of profit and accumulation of wealth by corporations and investors is hegemonic. The power of corporations and wealthy individuals to manipulate the political and economic system to their corporate bottom line is the source of American workers’ predicament. It is undeniable that manufacturing employment in the US has been decimated. Undocumented immigrants have a large presence in our agriculture, food processing, landscaping, food service, and construction industries. The average American sees this when he or she unpacks his/her brand new electronic device and notices it is made in China. Or, when driving along the interstate and noticing Latino (documented or undocumented) agricultural workers picking the vegetables that end up at our dinner table. The average American’s immediate reaction may be that Latino workers and “the Chinese” are responsible for underemployment, stagnant wages, and increased economic insecurity. What this average American does not see are the massive profits of agribusinesses or tech companies, all of whom in the interest of maximizing profit margins have made the conscious decision not to employ the American workforce, insure dignified working conditions, and pay respectable wages. Trump himself boasts about these profit preoccupied employer decisions by hiring foreign guest workers at his resort and manufacturing his own ties in China. And this man proclaims as he accepts the Republican Party’s nomination for President of the United States, “I am your voice”? The insatiable pursuit of profit and wealth accumulation rests upon a compliant or confused political system that conflates results for causes and redirects people’s legitimate anger toward those least responsible for their condition.

In July 2016 Newt Gingrich can say in a CNN interview about national trends in crime and FBI violent crime data (what Gingrich refers to as theoretical facts) that, “as a political candidate I will go with how people feel and I’ll let you go with the theoreticians.” [2] That he would choose campaigning on feelings versus campaigning on facts (suggesting that feeling are facts) makes it easy to see how people’s economic condition can be supplanted by *feelings* rather than viewed through the lens of policy analysis and political discourse.

Public policy has exacerbated the upward transfer of wealth, the power of capital over labor, and the resultant economic crisis afflicting the vast majority of Americans. Both Trump and Bernie Sanders acknowledge this condition and empathetically spoke to these aggrieved Americans, hence Trump’s belief that Sanders’ voters will flock to him in the general election. Sanders’ analysis correctly placed the blame for the current economic state of affairs on powerful economic actors (corporations and the wealthy) and their friends in government. Tellingly, Sanders’ robust populist campaign was actively sabotaged by the Democratic Party. [3] Whereas, Donald Trump’s vague, dystopian diagnosis was legitimated by the GOP who refused to challenge him and by the circus-like media coverage his campaign received.[4] For those most acutely hurt by this unprecedented shift in wealth and power in America the political discourse has been framed, broadcast, and reified in cultural terms as the *feeling* that America is not what it once was. As vague and general as this sounds it is the dominant

narrative that trickles down from the political class to the public discourse, then repeated as the new reality.

And so where does this leave us as educators who live for enlightened public discourse, a desire to continuously learn how to relearn what we know, to build on what's good and make it better, to balance a passion for politics with a sense of the fragility of the status quo, an understanding of history and the dangers of demagoguery inherent in our democratic system? How do we as professionals dedicated to balance, reason, and teaching people how to think, speak, and behave politically confront this moment in history? Just how do we respond to such hatred, fear, passion and short sightedness?

To be sure, what we cannot do is to ignore divisive, hateful speech and hope that it is only a temporary manifestation and that it will go away if/when Trump is defeated. Nor can we retreat from it deriding such talk as frustratingly irrational, racist, xenophobic, etc. and so justifying our disengagement from the conversation. Democracy requires a commitment to rational discourse and to a public philosophy informed by the notion that the people need to know how to govern and be governed. To return to our hypothetical but common conversation with which we began the essay engagement prioritizing the principle of rationale, factually based public discourse constitutes the core of the democratic project. Such conversations might contribute to a greater understanding about America, so that, as King aptly states, "*…the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities*" and we might, as educators, point the way towards an informed and civil democratic discourse.

Notes

[1] James E. Freeman and Peter Kolozi, "Trumpism is Conservatism: The New Conservative Mainstream," *Logos* 15.1 (Winter, 2016), https://logosog.chrismordadev.com/2016/freeman_kolozi/

[2] Alisyn Camerota's interview with Newt Gingrich at the RNC. See, "Feelings vs. Fact-Newt Gingrich-RNC Topic on Violent Crime-Feelings trump FBI Stats!", youtube.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnhJWusyj4I (published July 27, 2016)

[3] Marquita Peters, "Leaked Democratic Party Emails Show Members Tried to Undercut Sanders," *NPR* (July 23, 2016), https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/07/23/487179496/leaked-democratic-party-emails-show-members-tried-to-undercut-sanders.

[4] On a comparison of media coverage of presidential primary candidates see Harvard study, Thomas E. Patterson, "Pre-Primary News Coverage of the 2016 Presidential Race: Trump's Rise, Sanders' Emergence, Clinton's Struggles," *Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy* (June 13, 2016), https://shorensteincenter.org/pre-primary-news-coverage-2016-trump-clinton-sanders/

Donald Trump as Authoritarian Populist: A Frommian Analysis

By | 2016: vol. 15, nos. 2-3

In this article, I discuss in detail how Erich Fromm's categories can help describe Trump's character, or "temperament," a word used to characterize a major flaw in Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), Fromm engages in a detailed analysis of the authoritarian character as sadistic, excessively narcissistic, malignantly aggressive, vengeably destructive, and necrophilaic, personality traits arguably applicable to Trump.[1]

I will systematically inventory key Fromm socio-psychoanalytic categories and how they can be applied to Trump to illuminate his authoritarian populism.

Trump, in Freudian terms used by Fromm, can be seen as the **Id** of American politics, often driven by sheer aggression, narcissism, and, rage. If someone criticizes him, they can be sure of being attacked back, often brutally. And notoriously, Trump exhibits the most gigantic and unrestrained **Ego** yet seen in US politics constantly trumping his wealth,[2] his success in business, how smart he is, how women and all the people who work for him love him so much, and how his book *The Art of the Deal* is the greatest book ever written -— although just after saying that to a Christian evangelical audience, he back-tracked and said *The Bible* is the greatest book, but that his *Art of the Deal* is the second greatest, which for Trump is the bible of how to get rich and maybe how to win elections.

Trump, however, like classical fascist leaders, has an underdeveloped Superego, in the Freudian sense that generally refers to a voice of social morality and conscience. While Trump has what we might call a highly developed Social Ego that has fully appropriated capitalist drives for success, money, power, ambition, and domination, biographies of Trump indicate that he has had few life-long friends, discards women with abandon (he is on his third marriage), and brags of his ruthlessness in destroying competitors and enemies.[3]

Drawing on Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* and other writings, and studies of *The Authoritarian Personality* done by the Frankfurt School, Trump obviously fits the critical theory model of an authoritarian character and his 2016 Presidential campaign replicates in some ways the submission to the leader and the movement found in authoritarian populism. Further, Trump clearly exhibits traits of the sadist who Fromm described as "a person with an intense desire to control, hurt, humiliate, another person," a trait that is one of the defining feature of the authoritarian personality."

Frommian sadism was exemplified in Trump's behavior toward other Republican Party candidates in primary debates, in his daily insults of all and sundry, and at Trump rallies in the behavior of him and his followers toward protestors. During the 2016 campaign cycle, a regular feature of a Trump rally involved Trump supporters yelling at, hitting, and even beating up protestors, while Trump shouts "get them out! Out!'" When one Trump follower sucker punched a young African American protestor in a campaign event at Fayetteville, N.C. on March 9, 2016, Trump offered to pay his legal expenses.

Despite the accelerating violence at Trump rallies during the summer of 2016, and intense pressure for Trump to renounce violence at his campaign events and reign in his rowdy followers, Trump deflected blame on protestors and continued to exhibit the joy of a sadist controlling his environment and inflicting pain on his enemies, as police and his followers continued to attack and pummel protestors at his events. When Trump's campaign manager Corey Lewandowski was charged with assault on a reporter, Trump continued to defend him, although Lewandowski was fired when the Trump campaign brought in veteran political hired gun Paul Manafort, who had served dicatators like Angolan terrorist Jonas Savimbi, the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence with notorious al Queda links, Ukrainian dictator and Putin ally Viktor Yanukovych, foreign dictators such as Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Mobuto of Zaire, and many more of the Who's Who list of toxic dictators and world-class rogues (among whom one must number Manafort). Apparently, involved in a power struggle within the Trump campaign with Manafort, Lewandowski was fired.

Fromm's analysis of the narcissistic personality in *The Sane Society* (1955) and *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* helps explain the Trump phenomenon, given that Trump is one of the most narcissistic figures to appear in recent U.S. politics.[4] For Fromm: "Narcissism is the essence of all severe psychic pathology. For the narcissistically involved person, there is only one reality, that of his own thought, processes, feeling and needs. The world outside is not experienced or perceived objectively, i.e., as existing in its own terms, conditions and needs."[5]

Michael D'Antonio is his book *Never Enough. Donald Trump and the Pursuit of Success* sees Trump as the exemplification of the "culture of narcissism" described by Christopher Lasch and notes:

> *Trump was offered as a journalist's paragon of narcissism at least as far back as 1988. The academics and psychologists got involved a few years later would go on to make the diagnosis of Trump into a kind of professional sport. Trump makes an appearance in texts for the profession, including Abnormal Behavior in the 21st Century and Personality Disorders and Older Adults: Diagnosis, Assessment, and Treatment. He also appears in books for laypeople such as The Narcissism Epidemic: Loving in the Age of Entitlement; Help! I'm in Love with a Narcissist; and When you Love a Man Who Loves himself.*[6]

Trump's extreme narcissism is evident in his obsession with putting his name on his buildings or construction sites, ranging from Trump Towers to (now failed) casinos in New Jersey to golf courses throughout the world. Yet Trump often fails, as in his attempt in 1979 to get a New York convention center named after his father, or his failure to get a football stadium named the Trumpdome, in an unsuccessful endeavor in the mid-1980s, when Trump, first, was blocked from getting an NFL football team, and then saw the USFL football league in which he had a team collapse.[7] Indeed, Democratic Party opposition research, as well as all voters and especially Trump supporters, should read the Trump biographies to discover the grubby details of all of Trump's failed projects, including a string of casinos in New Jersey and at least four major bankruptcies in businesses that he ran into the ground, since Trump grounds his claims for the presidency on the alleged success of his business ventures.[8]

Although Trump presents himself as the People's Choice and voice of the Forgotten Man, Trump himself has been especially exploitative of his workers, and in his life style and habitus lives in a radically different world than the hoi polloi. For example, in 1985, Trump bought a 118 room mansion in Palm Beach, Florida Mar-A-Lago that he immediately opened for TV interview segments and that launched Donald's second career as a frequent start of "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." Trump became an exemplar of what Thorstein Veblen described as "conspicuous consumption," a trait he continues to cultivate to excess up to the present. Indeed, Trump has been particularly assiduous in branding the Trump name and selling himself as a celebrity and now as a presidential candidate his entire adult life.

However, perhaps the conceptual key to Trump's authoritarian personality is related to Fromm's analysis of "malignant aggression" developed in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973). Trump arguably embodies both spontaneous and "bound in character structure" aspects of what Fromm characterizes as malignant aggression (270ff), spontaneously lashing out at anyone who dares to criticize him, and arguably his deep-rooted extremely aggressive tendencies help characterize Trump and connect him to classic authoritarian leaders. Trump typically describes his opponents as "losers" and uses extremely hostile language in attacking all of his opponents and critics. In his TV reality show *The Apprentice* (2005-2015), which features a group of competitors battling for a high-level management job in one of Trump's organizations, each segment ended with Trump triumphantly telling one of the contestants that "you're fired!" — a telling phrase that Trump filed for a trademark in 2004, and which revealed his sadistic joy in controlling and destroying individuals.

As Henry Giroux argues, "loser" for Trump "has little to do with them losing in the more general sense of the term. On the contrary, in a culture that trades in cruelty and divorces politics from matters of ethics and social responsibility, 'loser' is now elevated to a pejorative insult that humiliates and justifies not only symbolic violence, but also (as Trump has made clear in many of his rallies) real acts of violence waged against his critics, such as members of the Movement for Black Lives."[9] "Loser" means exclusion, humiliation, and abjection, a trope prevalent in sports, business, and politics where "winners take all" and losers are condemned to the ignominy of failure, the ultimate degradation in Trump's amoral capitalist universe.

Hence, I would argue that both Trump's TV reality show *The Apprentice* and Trump's behavior on the show and in public embody Frommian analysis of malignant aggression. Indeed, it has not been enough for Trump to defeat his Republican Party opponents in the 2016 Presidential election, but he must destroy them. He described his initial major opponent Jeb Bush as "low energy" and gloated as Jeb failed to gain support in the primaries and dropped out of the race early. Rubio is dismissed as "little Marco," Cruz is disparaged as "Lyin' Ted," and as for the hapless Ben Carson, Trump tweeted: "With Ben Carson wanting to hit his mother on head with a hammer, stab a friend and [claiming that Egyptian] Pyramids [were] built for grain storage – don't people get it?" Curiously, despite these malignant insults, the ineffable Carson endorsed Trump after he dropped out of the race, and continues to support him on TV.

Already during the primary campaign, Trump began referring to Hillary Clinton as "Crooked Hillary," and by the time of the Republican National Convention his audiences shouted out "lock her up" whenever Trump uses the phrase. In a Pavolovian gesture, Trump has his troops orchestrated to perform in rituals of aggression, as, for instance, when he refers to the wall he promises to build on the Mexican border, and calls to his audience, "who's gonna pay," the audience shouts out in a booming unison: "Mexico!"

In fact, Trump's attitudes and behavior toward women exhibit traits of Fromm's malignant aggression, as well as blatant sexism. The day after the initial Republican debate on August 6, 2015, Trump complained about *Fox News* debate moderator Megyn Kelly, whining: "She gets out and she starts asking me all sorts of ridiculous questions. You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever."[10]

As outrage over Trump's comment spread, he took to Twitter to deny that he meant to imply Kelly was menstruating, claiming in a Tweet: "Mr. Trump made Megyn Kelly look really bad —- she was a mess with her anger and totally caught off guard. Mr. Trump said "blood was coming out of her eyes and whatever" meaning nose, but wanted to move on to more important topics. Only a deviant would think anything else."[11]

Trump's appalling reference to Megyn Kelly's blood is paralleled by his off-color comments about Hillary Clinton ranting that her use of the bathroom during a Democratic Party debate was "too disgusting" to talk about — "disgusting, really disgusting," he repeated. He also delighted in recounting how Ms. Clinton got "schlonged" by Barack Obama when she lost to him in the 2008 Democratic primary.

Trump's aggressive and compulsive Tweets and daily insults against his opponent exemplify the "vengeful destructiveness" described by Fromm as part of malignant aggression, which is another defining trait of the authoritarian leader. As an example of Trump's propensities toward vengeful destructiveness, take Trump's remarks toward Judge Gonzalo Curiel's Mexican heritage who Trump claimed had an 'Absolute Conflict' in being unable to rule impartially in a fraud lawsuit against Donald Trump's now defunct real estate school, Trump University, because he was Mexican-American. Trump claimed that the Mexican-American heritage of the judge, who was born in Indiana to Mexican immigrants, was relevant because of

Trump's campaign stance against illegal immigration and his pledge to seal the southern U.S. border with Mexico. Despite the fact that the Judge was ruling on a case involving Trump University, the Donald just couldn't help making nasty vengeful and destructive remarks against the Judge, who was a highly respected Jurist and who was widely defended by the legal community against Trump's attack.

Further, Trump threatened the Republican Party in March 2016 with riots at its summer convention if there was any attempt to block his nomination, and in August 2016 as his poll numbers are falling and Hillary Clinton is widening her lead, Trump is claiming that the election is "rigged" and threatens that his followers may riot if he doesn't win.[12] Throughout the Republican primaries, Trump threatened the Republican Party with destruction if they attempted to block his candidacy in any way, just as he has consistently attacked and threatened *Fox News*. The specter of a Republican Party candidate attacking the party that has nominated him and its chief media propaganda apparatus, *Fox News*, exhibits, I believe, an out of control malignant aggression and vengeful destructiveness syndrome.

Indeed, although Trump made it through a chaotic 2016 Republican National Convention and was proclaimed their official party candidate, even after beating his maligned and deeply insulted opponents in the Republican primary contest, Trump continued his defamations in even more destructive and offensive discourse. As Maureen Dowd pointed out Jeb Bush was "'a one day kill' as a gloating Trump put it, with the 'low energy' taunt. 'Liddle Marco' and 'Lyin' Ted' bit the dust. 'One-for-38 Kasich' fell by the wayside."[13] And after John Kasich refused to intend the Republican convention crowning Trump, even though it was held in a city in which he is governor, and after Ted Cruz told delegates to vote their consciences in the election, as a dig at Donald, a bitter Trump proclaimed on numerous weekend TV interviews after the convention that he was considering raising over ten million dollar funds to assure his Republican nemeses defeat in their next election campaigns.[14]

More astonishing, after Trump lashed out against a Muslim family that had lost its son in military service and testified to their loss and disgust at Trump's attacks on Muslims at a much-discussed moment in the Democratic National convention, Trump attacked the family, targeting the grieving mother who had stood as a silent witness beside her husband and whose silence he attacked as evidence that Muslims didn't let women speak in public. Trump's attacks on the Khan family continued for days after the convention and when major Republicans distanced themselves from Trump's rancorous and vile comments, Trump proclaimed on August 2 that he was not endorsing Republican House Leader Paul Ryan, former Presidential candidate John McCain, and others who had criticized him, thus threatening to blow apart the Republican Party – driving Party leaders to declare that they were staging an "intervention" with Trump over the weekend to try to persuade their candidate to act more "presidential" and to stop attacking Republican leaders – a gesture his base seems to love.[15]

Demonstrating Trump's deeply rooted and uncontrollable malignant aggression, Trump had what observers saw as the worst week of his campaign in early August as he continued to malign the Khan family, praised Vladimir Putin and called on the Russian strongman to hack

Hillary Clinton's email, refused until the last moment to endorse fellow Republicans Ryan and McCain, threw a crying baby and its mother out of one of his rallies, and continued to make crazy off-the-cuff remarks. Topping off his going over the top, on August 9, 2016 in a rally at Wilmington, North Carolina, Trump appeared to suggest that gun rights supporters might take matters into their own hands if Hillary Clinton is elected President and appoints Judges who favor stricter gun control measures. Repeating the lie that Clinton wanted to abolish the right to bear arms, Trump warned that: "If she gets to pick her judges, nothing you can do, folks," Mr. Trump said, as the crowd began to boo. He quickly added: "Although the Second Amendment people — maybe there is, I don't know."

Some members of the audience visibly winced and for the next several days the news cycle was dominated by discussion that Trump had suggested that "Second Amendment" people (i.e. gun owners) might have to take the law into their own hands if Clinton was elected, raising the specter of political assassination and reminding people of the wave of political assassinations in the 1960s of JFK, RFK, and Martin Luther King, and assassination attempts against Presidents Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan. Democrats, gun control advocates, and others, accused Trump of possibly inciting violence against Hillary Clinton or liberal Justices. Bernice A. King, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., called Mr. Trump's words "distasteful, disturbing, dangerous," and many other prominent Americans denounced Trumps dangerous rabble-rousing as further evidence that he was not fit to be President of the United States.[16]

As usual, Trump and his surrogates spun Trump's statements and attacked the media for twisting his meaning, and other Republicans like Paul Ryan dismissed it as a bad joke, but it was clear that this was further evidence that Trump was seriously unbalanced and highly dangerous. The extremely destructive behavior typical of Trump's entire campaign leads me to suggest that Fromm's analysis of the "necrophiliac" as an extreme form of malignant aggression also applies to Trump. Fromm illustrates the concept of the necrophilaic personality through an extensive study of Hitler as the paradigmatic of a highly destructive authoritarian personality, as he did a study of Himmler to illustrate his concept of the sadistic personality.[17] Fromm argues that the "necrophilaic transforms all life into things, including himself and the manifestations of his human faculties of reason, seeing, hearing, tasting, loving. Sexuality become a technical skill ("the love machine"); feelings are flattened and sometimes substituted for by sentimentality; joy, the expression of intense aliveness, is replaced by 'fun' or excitement; and whatever love and tenderness man has is directed toward machines and gadgets."[18]

In Fromm's analysis, the necrophilic personality type is fundamentally empty**,** needing to fill themselves with ever more acquisitions, conquests, or victories. Hence, it is no accident that the best single book on Trump by Michael D'Antonio is titled *Never Enough. Donald Trump and the Pursuit of Success*. Trump's need for adoration and his malignant and destructive rage at all criticism and opposition shows an extremely disordered personality who constitutes a grave danger to the United States and the world.

The necrophilic personality fills his emptiness with sadism, aggression, amassing wealth and

power, and is prone to violence and self-destruction. Accounts of Trump's business dealings and entanglements with women show an incredible recklessness. When his first two marriages were unraveling, Trump carried out well-publicized affairs and seemed to revel in all the dirty publicity, no matter how demeaning. Likewise, in the 1990s when his business empire was spectacularly unravelling, Trump continued to make risky investments, put himself in impossible debt (with the help of banks who were taken in by his myth as a business man), and conned business associates, financial institutions and the public at large as he spiraled into near bankruptcy.[19]

Trump's destructive aspects are almost at the heart of his run for the presidency. Revealingly, Trump's initial "argument" for his presidency was to build a wall to keep immigrants from pouring over our southern border along with a promise to arrest all "illegal immigrants" and send them back over the border, a highly destructive (and probably impossible) action that would tear apart countless families. Trump promised to totally destroy ISIS and threatened to bring back waterboarding "and worse, much much worse!" he shouted repeatedly at his rallies and in interviews, although some Generals and military experts pointed out that Trump could not order troops or other Americans to break international law.

Hence, the peril and threats we face in a Trump presidency raises the issue of what does it mean to have an arguably sadistic, excessively narcissistic, malignantly aggressive, vengeably destructive, and necrophilic individual like Trump as president of the United States? If Trump indeed fits Fromm's criteria of the malignantly aggressive and necrophilic personality, this should be upsetting and raise some serious questions about Trump. Fromm was obsessed for decades about the danger of nuclear war and would no doubt be extremely disturbed at the thought of the Donald having his itchy finger on nuclear weapons launching. What would a foreign and domestic policy governed by a malignant aggression syndrome look like?

Hence, Frommian categories applied to Trump help illuminate why Donald Trump is so chaotic, dangerous, and destructive, and how risky it is to even contemplate Trump being President of the United States in these dangerous times. It is also worrisome to contemplate that Trump has developed a following through his demagoguery and that authoritarian populism constitutes a clear and present danger to U.S. democracy and global peace and well-being.

Notes

[1] Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973.

[2] See Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud). New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990 [1923]. For Freud, the Id represents the irrational and aggressive components of the personality, while the Ego represents the rational self which can suffer, however, narcissistic tendencies that undercut its rationality. We shall see below how Fromm builds on Freud's psychoanalytic

categories in ways that they can be applied to demagogues like Hitler and Trump and mass movements of authoritarian populism, or neo-fascism.

[3] See D'Antonio, *op. cit.* and Gwenda Blair, *The Trumps* (New York: Simon and Schuster). The chapter on "Born to Compete" in Blair, op. cit., pp. 223ff. documents Trump's competitiveness and drive for success at an early age.

[4] See Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1955, and, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973.

[5] Fromm, *Sane Society,* op cit. p. 36.

[6] D'Antonio, *op. cit.* California Congresswoman Karen Bass (D-Cal) began a petition to request that mental health professionals evaluate Trump for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), insisting that he had all the symptoms. See Wayne Rojas, "Karen Bass Wants Mental Health Professionals to Evaluate Trump. Calif. Democrat suspects GOP nominee has Narcissistic Personality Disorder," *Rollcall,* Aug 3, 2016 at https://www.rollcall.com/news/politics/karen-bass-wants-mental-health-professionals-to-evaluate-trump#sthash.75ABMmmT.dpuf (accessed August 2, 2016). On the traits of Narcissistic Personality Disorder and how Trump embodies them, see Bill Blum, "The Psychopathology of Donald Trump," *Truthdig.* July 31, 2016 at https://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_psychopathology_of_donald_trump_20160731/ (accessed August 2, 2016).

[7] Barrett, *op. cit.* pp. 342ff.

[8] See Barrett, op. cit.; D'Antonio, op. cit.; and John O'Donnell and James Rutherford, *Trumped!: The Inside Story of the Real Donald Trump-His Cunning Rise and Spectacular Fall*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.

[9] Henry A. Giroux, "Donald Trump and the Plague of Atomization in a Neoliberal Age," *Truthout*, August 8, 2016.

[10] Gabriel Arana, "Here Are All The Ugly Remarks Trump Has Made About Megyn Kelly. As if to prove her point, the reality TV star has continued to spew sexist vitriol after the presidential debate." *The Huffington Post*, August 8, 2015 at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-megyn-kelly-debate-fox-news_us_55c5f6b3e4b0f73b20b989a7 (accessed August 10, 2016).

[11] Bill Trott and Steve Holland, "Donald Trump Drawing Fire From All Corners Of GOP," The Huffington Post, August 8, 2015 at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-drawing-fire-from-all-corners-of-gop_us_55c668dde4b0f73b20b9937e (accessed August 10, 2016).

[12] Josh Voorhees, Donald Trump Is Trying to Undermine the Democratic Process Itself,"

Slate, August 2, 2016 at https://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2016/08/02/trump_s_rigged_comments_are_the_most_dangerous_thing_he_s_said_yet.html (accessed August 5, 2016).

[13] Maureen Dowd, "Donald Trump's Disturbia," *New York Times,* July 23, 2016 at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/24/opinion/sunday/donald-trumps-disturbia.html?_r=0 (accessed July 25, 2016).

[14] On Trumps' threat to form "Anti-certain candidate PACs" to defeat those Republicans who opposed him, see Phillip Rucker's interview with Trump appended to Chris Cilizza, "Donald Trump's *Washington Post* interview should make Republicans panic," *Washington Post,* August 3, 2016 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/03/donald-trump-has-a-secret-state-strategy-that-you-cant-know-about/ (accessed August 4, 2016).

[15] The intervention did not take place, but Trump did endorse Ryan and McCain reading his tepid endorsement from note cards and not looking directly up into the camera, signaling that he lacked enthusiasm and was making the endorsements under duress.

[16] Nick Corasaniti and Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Suggests 'Second Amendment People' Could Act Against Hillary Clinton," *The New York Times,* August. 9, 2016 *at* https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/us/politics/donald-trump-hillary-clinton.html?_r=0 (accessed August 11, 2016).

[17] Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, op. cit. pp.* 325ff.

[18] *Op. cit*. pp. 350ff.

[19] For an account of both Trump's marriage and financial disasters, see Blair, op. cit., 385-452.

Critical Theory and the Persistence of Right-Wing Populism

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Introduction

Although the rise of right-wing populist movements and parties in Europe in the past few decades and the more recent success of the Tea Party in the United States has received ample attention from social scientists, the continuing growth of these parties in Europe and the current success of Donald Trump in securing the presidential nomination of the Republican Party has confounded and surprised many scholars.

Seven or eight years ago, very few scholars would have predicted that right-wing populist parties would be actually governing (as in Hungary and Poland); threatening to govern (as in France, Austria, and Switzerland); forming powerful and influential opposition parties (as in The Netherlands, Denmark, and Slovakia); or emerging as a new force in electoral politics (as in Britain, Sweden, Finland, and even Germany). Seven or eight months ago, very few scholars would have predicted that Donald Trump would win the Republican presidential nomination. [pullquote]the Critical Theorists' analyses of right-wing populism and authoritarianism can still explain key aspects of the Tea Party and Trump that have taken many contemporary social scientists by surprise.[/pullquote]In what follows, I would like to argue that this widespread astonishment among social scientists, and their difficulty in explaining the persistent and growing success of right-wing populism in Europe and the United States reflects historical and critical theoretical blind spots in their work, which could be addressed by revisiting the rich body of work on right-wing populism and authoritarianism in the writings of the members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Beginning the late 1920s and continuing into the post-war period, Max Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institute produced a number of important historical, theoretical and empirical studies that can still shed light on the persistence of right-wing populism and authoritarianism from the twentieth into the twenty-first century.

The first part of this essay will provide a brief overview of these studies, with a particular emphasis on the aspects that are most relevant to understanding contemporary right-wing populist movements and parties. The second part of the paper will examine the emergence of the Tea Party and Donald Trump's more recent efforts to expand and intensify this right-wing populist movement by harnessing it to his own authoritarian leadership. Drawing on the conceptual resources outlined in the first section, I will demonstrate how the Critical Theorists' analyses of right-wing populism and authoritarianism can still explain key aspects of the Tea Party and Trump that have taken many contemporary social scientists by surprise. Throughout

this essay Critical Theory and right-wing populism will be situated within two levels of historical periodization. The first – to which I will only gesture – will be the modern bourgeois epoch as whole. The second will be specific periods within that epoch: in particular, the historical periods that coincide with the emergence, decline and re-emergence of right-wing populism from the late nineteenth century to the present. The aim of the latter periodization is to illuminate the specific historical and social conditions that have inhibited or favored the emergence of right-wing populist and authoritarian movements.

Revisiting the Critical Theorists' Analyses of Right-Wing Populism and Authoritarianism

Crucial to the development of Frankfurt School Critical Theory were their ongoing efforts to understand fascism. They understood fascism to a significant extent as a form of right-wing populism, which reached unprecedented extremes in National Socialist Germany, but which was by no means unique to Germany. They viewed fascism as a result of powerful socio-historical and social psychological tendencies that were present in all advanced capitalist societies. "Der Fascismus ist kein Zufall gewesen," as Adorno once put it.[1] A good point of departure for a reexamination of the Critical Theorists' rich body of work on authoritarianism is Max Horkheimer's 1937 essay, "Egoism and Freedom Movements: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Epoch," in which he analyzes the historical origins of fascism in terms of a transformation of populism from the left to the right, which corresponds to the historical transformation of the relationship of the bourgeoisie to the lower classes that occurred in Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is important to revisit Horkheimer's essay not only because of its argument about the transformation of populism, but also because it provided the historical and theoretical foundations for much of the empirical work on authoritarianism that the Institute carried out in the United States in the 1940s. As Martin Jay put it, "as a seed-bed for much of the Frankfurt School's later work, it is virtually unparalleled."[2]

In the "Egoism" essay, Horkheimer examines different leaders of popular social movements in the early modern period, whose attempts to mobilize or to control the lower classes consolidated the power of bourgeois society. His case studies are Cola di Rienzo and Savanarola, the leaders of populist movements in Rome and Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century; Luther, Calvin and the Reformation; and Robespierre and the French Revolution. In each case, Horkheimer stresses the peculiar relationship between the bourgeois leaders and the lower classes that plays itself out over the course of these movements. He writes,

> *The bourgeoisie's efforts to push through its own demands for a more rational administration against the feudal powers with the help of the desperate popular masses, while simultaneously consolidating its own rule over the masses, combine to account for the peculiar way the struggle for the "the people" is carried on in these movements.[3]*

On the one hand, Horkheimer emphasizes the genuinely progressive aspects of these social movements, which result from the shared interest of the bourgeoisie and the lower classes in overthrowing aristocratic and/or absolutist rule. On the other hand, Horkheimer pays close attention to the authoritarian aspects of these movements, which express the incipient divergence of the interests of the bourgeoisie and the lower classes. After the bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this latent conflict of interest would emerge with the rise of a powerful socialist movement in the nineteenth century, which would challenge the new hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The emergence of fascism in Europe in the 1920s represented something qualitatively new, insofar as it broke with the traditional conservatism of the nineteenth century and involved the mobilization of "the people" against a perceived threat from the socialist left. Looking out over a rising tide of fascism in Europe in 1937, Horkheimer wrote,

> *The uprisings that have taken place in the most recent past in some European states are […] not absolutist or clerical reactions but the staging of a bourgeois pseudo-revolution with radical populist trappings, wholly contrary to any possible reorganization of society. The forms they take seem to be a bad imitation of the movements previously discussed.[4]*

Here we can see that Horkheimer stresses the populist elements of fascism, but also the different function these elements play within the changed social and historical conditions of early twentieth-century Europe. Simplifying somewhat, one could say that the progressive elements that had characterized the early modern movements disappeared, and only the authoritarian elements remained.[5]

The main point for our purposes here is that Horkheimer's essay provides a historical analysis of the transformation of populism within the larger transformation of bourgeois society, which highlights the emergence of powerful right-wing populist tendencies in Europe in the late nineteenth century and which led to successful fascist movements in several European countries in the 1920s and 1930s. One must stop to reflect upon the fact that the very idea of a "right-wing populism" must have seemed like a contradiction in terms at the time. Populism and appeals to "the people", "das Volk", were a staple of 19th-century liberal and democratic movements, and 19th-century traditional conservatives were firmly anti-democratic and anti-populist.

Yet, by the late 19th-century they had also come to realize that the battle against democracy was hopeless; if conservative elites hoped to protect their positions of power in an "age of the masses" they would need to learn to play the game of democracy, to insure outcomes that were favorable to them.[6] Symptomatic of the new right-wing populist strategy was the arch-conservative *Kreuz-Zeitung*, which changed its masthead after WWI from "Vorwärts mit Gott für König und Vaterland" to "Für das deutsche Volk."[7] But as more recent historical scholarship has emphasized, this new right-wing populism was by no means simply an

invention of conservative elites.[8] Such elites were eager to manipulate it, but its origins were genuinely spontaneous and popular. The emergence of right-wing populism at the beginning of the twentieth century as a qualitatively new social and political force in advanced industrial societies must, in other words, be understood as a combination of genuinely grassroots activism and attempts by conservative elites to manipulate these movements for their own purposes.

Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institute were interested in both of these aspects of right-wing populism. Already in their first major empirical study of blue and white-collar workers in the final years of the Weimar Republic, Horkheimer and Erich Fromm sought to determine how susceptible German blue and white-collar workers were to the temptations of authoritarian political movements on the right.[9] The study indicated that if such a movement attempted to take power in Germany, resistance from these groups would be minimal. Their findings would be confirmed just a few years later. The Institute's next major empirical study sought to examine how authoritarian attitudes among the middle and lower classes in Europe and the U.S. were conditioned by the changing structure of the family. For my purposes here, I would like to dwell a bit longer on the empirical studies that were carried out in the United States in the 1940s, which illustrated the basic assumption that right-wing populist and authoritarian social and political tendencies were by no means limited to Germany or Europe.

But before proceeding to a discussion of some of the findings of these studies, I would like to examine briefly the paradigm shift in Critical Theory around 1940. This shift reflected the larger socio-economic, historical and political transformations that had occurred in Europe and the United States over the course of the 1930s. Summarizing quickly, one can say that the Great Depression led to the final collapse of the old liberal economic order and the rise of new forms of state-centric capitalism in Europe.[10] This global economic and political realignment was registered most clearly in Horkheimer's Critical Theory in his adoption of his friend Friedrich Pollock's state capitalism thesis, which had far-reaching implications for the Institute's theoretical and empirical work in the following decades.[11] Whereas Horkheimer's Critical Theory in the 1930s had rested firmly on a critical, and undogmatic Marxist theory of the historical transformation of modern bourgeois society, Pollock's state capitalism thesis implied that Marx's critique of political economy was no longer as important, since the independent dynamic of capitalism had been brought under control by relatively autonomous states. Social domination was now exercised directly through politics, rather than indirectly through underlying economic relations.

Other symptoms of the paradigm shift in Critical Theory included the theory of rackets and of the totally administered society, which Horkheimer and Adorno introduced in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. These theoretical categories reflected the new hegemony of the Fordist-Keynesian model of capitalism that developed in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, and was consolidated in Western Europe after World War II. From our vantage point today, we can see that this period of twentieth-century capitalism, which lasted through the end of the 1960s in Europe and the United States, was an anomaly. Historians and economists such as Eric Hobsbawm and Thomas Piketty have described it as a "Golden Age," because of the historically

unprecedented growth of capitalism and the redistribution of wealth downward that occurred during this time.[12] The hegemony of Keynesian models of economics and the broad acceptance of a robust welfare state during this time also created a historical climate that was unfavorable to right-wing populist movements in Europe and the United States, with a few exceptions, such as McCarthyism in the United States and the Poujadist movement in France.

That said, when the Institute was carrying out their major empirical studies of anti-Semitism, prejudice and authoritarianism in the United States in the 1940s they were still very much concerned with the question of "could it happen here?"[13] The fact that the Institute attributed so much importance to this question, demonstrates once again their belief that right-wing populist authoritarianism was not merely a pathology of German culture or German backwardness, but was instead a potential threat in all advanced capitalist societies, and one that could become more powerful in the future if objective conditions changed. In his 1949 preface to Lowenthal and Guterman's *Prophets of Deceit*, Horkheimer justifies their study of the techniques of authoritarian agitators in the following way:

> *American hatemongers are at present at a low point in influence and prestige. […] But because the emphasis of the book is on the meaning of the phenomena under analysis, the agitator should be studied in the light of his potential effectiveness with the context of present-day society and its dynamics, rather than in terms of his immediate effectiveness.[14]*

In short, even though the objective conditions for authoritarian social movements were unfavorable in the U.S. in the 1940s, Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institute dedicated much of their energy and resources to studying them. *Prophets of Deceit* is an excellent example. In the preface to the study, they explicitly acknowledge their theoretical debt to Horkheimer's analysis of the social and social-psychological dynamics at work in earlier mass movements.[15] Through a content analysis of the speeches and writings of American right-wing populist agitators from the 1930s and 1940s, Lowenthal and Guterman sought to uncover the unconscious dynamics at work in the relationship between leaders and followers in authoritarian movements. In their study Lowenthal and Guterman identify approximately twenty different themes that recur in the texts of the agitators. Many of themes have remained remarkably relevant in terms of analyzing right-wing populist movements in Europe and the U.S. right up to the present day. In what follows, I will focus on just a few that are directly relevant to the right-wing populist movement in the U.S. that began with the Tea Party and continues at present under the leadership of Donald Trump – both of which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Lowenthal and Guterman emphasize that, in contrast to European fascist movements, the American authoritarian agitator has no pre-liberal-democratic tradition to fall back on, yet this lack "does not prevent him from conveying the principal social tenets of totalitarianism to his audience."[16] They write, "The American agitator falls back on the clichés of professional

Patriotism, Fourth of July Americanism."[17] "All he can offer is a rededication to the established institutional and ideological framework of the American republic as it has persisted since the founding fathers. […] If anything has gone wrong, it can be only because we Americans […] have strayed from American ways."[18]

The agitator appeals to "individualists who still believe in Constitutional government and the American way of life."[19] Populist anti-intellectualism also figures prominently in his rhetorical arsenal. They write, "Seizing on the 'simple folk' theme as a pretext for fostering an aggressively anti-intellectual attitude, the agitator describes his American Americans as a people of good instincts and, he is happy to say, little sophistication."[20] Despite these appeals to conservative tradition and the common people, the agitator is hostile to politicians and the government, especially to Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal. He is "amazed at the lack of courage exhibited in America by its foremost business executives and managers to resist the aggressions of political bureaucrats and revolutionists in Washington."[21] Lowenthal and Guterman continue, "Such seemingly trivial remarks serve to glorify the direct rule of economic power groups at the expense of representative government."[22] Although the agitator is hostile to the government, he "invariably identifies himself with the forces of law and order, and especially the police."[23]

In his contribution to *The Authoritarian Personality* Adorno addresses many of these same themes, especially in his discussion of the concept of pseudo-conservatism, which was his most direct attempt to describe the typical beliefs and character structure of those most drawn to authoritarian populist social movements in the U.S. In contrast to the genuine conservative, who is willing to defend basic democratic institutions such as minority rights and representative government, the pseudo-conservative "is a man who, in the name of upholding traditional American values and institutions and defending them against more or less fictitious dangers, consciously or unconsciously aims at their abolition."[24]

The pseudo-conservatives' suspicion of existing democratic institutions is based on what Adorno calls a "usurpation complex," which is the idea that these institutions have been captured by forces that are hostile to "genuine Americans." In the 1940s this pseudo-conservative vitriol was often directed against Roosevelt, whom they viewed as both a socialist and snobby elitist. Roosevelt and other progressives are seen as usurpers because they "assume a power position which should be reserved for the 'right people' […] legitimate rulers are those who are actually in command of the machinery of production – not those who owe their ephemeral power to formal political processes."[25] Adorno argues that "the pseudo-conservative mentality strives – diffusedly and semiconsciously – to establish a dictatorship of the economically strongest group. This is to be achieved by means of a mass movement, one which promises security and privileges to the so-called 'little man'."[26] Pseudo-conservatives' deep distrust of government and politicians as a whole, goes hand-in-hand with a lack of empathy for the poor and rejection of social welfare programs. Adherents of "economic rugged individualism," pseudo-conservatives object to state interference in the "natural" laws of the market and embrace the spirit of the adage, "those who do not work, shall not eat." This contempt for the poor as parasites usually goes hand-in-hand with admiration for the wealthy

and successful as the supposedly most productive members of society.

This ideology of producers and parasites also reappears in the Institute's study of anti-Semitism among American workers in the 1940s.[27] The study revealed that, when comparing the United States to Europe, anti-Semitism was not only more widespread among workers than among the middle class, but also that it assumed more "modern" forms. In other words, American workers were largely free of the more vulgar and crudely conspiratorial forms of European anti-Semitism, which portrayed Jews as lecherous and/or violent predators. The forms of anti-Semitism widespread among American workers almost always involved economic issues and the belief that Jews sought to avoid manual labor at all costs.

Through deception and manipulation, they survived as parasites and exploiters among the majority of virtuous, hard-working Gentiles. Interestingly, this form of anti-Semitism among American workers corresponded most closely to what Horkheimer and Adorno described in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as "bourgeois" anti-Semitism. Bourgeois anti-Semitism rested upon an ideological distinction between the "schaffend" and the "raffend." The former, the virtuous producers, include not just workers and peasants, but also manufacturing and large industry. The latter, the immoral parasites, include bureaucrats, politicians, merchants and especially bankers. Drawing on Marx and Engels' critique of Proudhon, Eugen Dühring, and of left and right-wing forms of populist anti-Semitism in the 19th century, Horkheimer and Adorno point out that bourgeois anti-Semitism rests on the concealment of social domination in the ownership of the means of production. Whereas Marx and Engels had focused on the exploitation of wage labor by capital, populist anti-Semitism and fascism portray wage labor and capital as productive allies in the struggle against parasitic politicians and bankers.

The fact that these bourgeois forms of anti-Semitism were so widespread among American workers, points to what Adorno would describe later as the "radically bourgeois" character of American society as a whole; that is, to the fact that socialist consciousness – which in Europe had also included a critique of anti-Semitism as the "socialism of fools" – was virtually non-existent among American workers.[28] Their anti-Semitism was a distorted protest against the capitalist exploitation of labor, but one which rested upon a complete identification of workers with the bourgeois values of hard work and self discipline.[29]

Before continuing with some remarks on how the Tea Party and Donald Trump exemplify many of the characteristics of right-wing populist movements identified by Horkheimer, Adorno and Lowenthal, I would like to return to my earlier reflections on how the development of Frankfurt School Critical Theory fits into the larger history of the twentieth century. I mentioned earlier that the rise of state-centric forms of capitalism in the mid-twentieth century created conditions unfavorable to authoritarian social movements in the U.S. and Western Europe. In the 1970s there was a transition from the Fordist-Keynesian model of capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s, to a new post-Fordist, neo-liberal phase, which has lasted through the present.

If only briefly, I would like to advance the claim that these changed social conditions have created a climate which more closely resembles the 1920s and 1930s in some ways and which

is more conducive to right-wing populist movements in Europe and the United States. After a period of transition in the 1970s, the new hegemony of neo-liberal ideas was marked by the elections of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, but also by Helmut Kohl and the conservative "Tendenzwende" in West Germany in the early 1980s. In all three cases, some key right-wing populist ideas were adopted and put into practice – albeit in a more moderate form – by newly dominant conservative parties. Even in France, François Mitterand was forced to abandon his ambitious campaign promises of socialist economic reforms and to adopt much more business friendly policies in the early 1980s. France offers a particularly clear example, not only of the defeat of traditional socialist ideas, but also the emergence of new right-wing populist, authoritarian political movement in the 1980s.

At the same time that the French socialist party was making serious concessions to the new neo-liberal orthodoxy and the French communist party was entering a period of terminal decline, the right-wing populist Front Nationale was emerging as a new force in French electoral politics. As the Dutch political scientist, Cas Mudde, has pointed out, the Front National was only one of a whole new family of right-wing populist movements and parties that would emerge in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s.[30] The collapse of Soviet Communism in 1989 only reinforced the now triumphalist hegemony of neo-liberalism and the "Washington Consensus." Bill Clinton and Tony Blair made clear that "new" Democrats and "new" Labor had fully embraced neo-liberal ideas. When asked in 2002 what her greatest achievement was, Thatcher replied, "Tony Blair and New Labor."

The larger point I am trying to make here – far too briefly – is that the 1980s and 1990s were marked by very significant shift to the right in the overall political spectrum in both Europe and the United States. Socialists, Democrats and Social Democrats' embrace of neo-liberalism; rising levels of inequality and unemployment; and the threat of new capitalist crises, such as the one that occurred in 2008, have created fertile ground for the emergence of new right-wing populist movements. To be sure, democratic institutions and traditions are much stronger now in Europe than they were in the 1920s and 1930s, and even the new right-wing populist parties accept the pre-conditions of democracy, rather than opposing them.

Nonetheless, three and a half decades of neo-liberal hegemony have created conditions – rising levels of poverty, insecurity, hopelessness – that resemble the 1920s and 1930s more closely than the 1950s and 60s. For this reason, I think it is also worth revisiting what I have called elsewhere the model of early Critical Theory, which guided the Institute's work in the 1930s and which explored the relationship between capitalist crisis and authoritarian social movements. Horkheimer's essay on "Egoism and Freedom Movements" is – as mentioned – paradigmatic in this regard, but Erich Fromm's closely related writings from the 1930s on the social-psychological dynamics of authoritarianism should also be mentioned in this context.[31] In contrast to the post-World War II period, when social and economic conditions were not conducive to the emergence of authoritarian movements, Horkheimer and Fromm's writings from the 1930s are based on direct observations of the links between capitalist crisis and right-wing populism and, thus, should be revisited in light of the recent reemergence of crisis and authoritarianism in the U.S. and Europe.

The Resurgence of Right-Wing Populism in the U.S.: The Tea Party and Donald Trump

In the next section of my paper I would like to take a closer look at the Tea Party movement in the United States. The Tea Party burst upon the American political scene in the Spring of 2009, in response to the election of Barack Obama and the economic crisis of 2008. The original call for Tea Party rallies came from a reporter in Chicago by the name of Rick Santelli, who went ballistic over newly elected President Obama's declared intention to help people threatened with losing their homes as a result of the sub-prime lending crisis. In his rant, which soon went viral on You Tube, Santelli accused the government of "rewarding bad behavior" and he called on "America's capitalists" to protest measures to "subsidize losers' mortgages."[32] The Tea Party soon developed into one of the largest upsurges of grass roots political activism in the United States since the 1960s.

This grass roots activism, combined with generous support from wealthy, ultraconservative national political organizations and powerful conservative media outlets, such as Fox News, made the Tea Party a new political force to be reckoned with. At the highpoint of its political influence, the midterm elections in November, 2010, the Tea Party contributed significantly to a Republican landslide. The Republicans won 63 seats in the US House of Representatives, six seats in the Senate, six new governorships and they made equally impressive gains in state legislatures across the nation. Many of the victorious candidates supported by the Tea Party had defeated more moderate Republicans in primary elections. The overall effect was to shift national politics significantly to the right.[33] Polls conducted in 2010 and 2011 demonstrated repeatedly that approximately 30% of Americans "supported", and 20% "strongly supported" the Tea Party. Although they failed to prevent Barack Obama's relection in 2012, they played an important role in the Republicans' sweeping gains in the midterm elections of 2014. In their recent study, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, the Harvard sociologist and political scientist, Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, argue that the Tea Party has succeeded in revitalizing the Republican Party, which as recently as 2009 seemed like a party in decline.[34] In the process, the Tea Party has also succeeded in pushing the Republican Party to the right on many issues; one could say, using Adorno's aforementioned distinction, that Tea Party pseudo-conservatives have succeeded in strengthening their position vis-à-vis traditional conservatives within the Republican Party.

Contrary to some commentators who viewed the Tea Party as a new independent force in American politics, Skocpol and Williamson argue convincingly that it represents "the most recent incarnation of American conservative populism."[35] So when one studies the Tea Party more closely, it should not come as a surprise that a strikingly high level of correlation exists between their unifying beliefs and the main characteristics of the right-wing populist agitators and authoritarian personalities that Horkheimer, Adorno and Lowenthal studied in the U.S. in the 1940s. These include hyperbolic "4th of July Patriotism" and frequent appeals to the Founding Fathers and a return to government based directly on the U.S. Constitution, which is interpreted dogmatically as supporting Tea Party doctrine.

One very popular book among the Tea Party called *The Five Thousand Year Leap*, purports to

explain the links between the Bible and the U.S. Constitution.[36] Such historical fundamentalism also illustrates the widespread belief among the Tea Party that the United States has been corrupted by foreign elements and needs to purge itself in order return to its former pristine state – what Adorno called the "usurpation complex." Such foreign elements include undocumented immigrants, whom 82% of Tea Party members view as a "very serious" problem. Much more serious, however, in the eyes of almost all Tea Party members, is President Obama himself. It is not a coincidence that the Tea Party emerged shortly after his election. Not unlike Lowenthal's agitators and Adorno's authoritarian personalities, who viewed Franklin Delano Roosevelt as both a communist and a snobby elitist, Tea Party members view Obama as a socialist and a condescending elitist, but also as a foreigner and a Muslim. Skocpol and Williamson stress the centrality of Obama as "the devil incarnate" to the Tea Party, and "free-wheeling anti-Obama paranoia" as common fare. Hatred of Obama is also fueled by the Tea Party's more general distrust of government, which is grounded in their ultra-liberal and Social Darwinistic economic views. The "natural" laws of the market must be allowed to run their course and government should not intervene to help the poor. The Tea Party is anti-union and pro-business for the same reason. They make no distinction between small businesses and large corporations and they are opposed to raising taxes on anyone, including the wealthiest Americans.

A few interesting exceptions to their generally anti-government views include a lack of concern about large military budgets, a pro-police and pro-military stance, and the belief that stricter policing of undocumented immigrants is necessary. Here we see the same anti-government, pro-police attitude that Adorno described in *The Authoritarian Personality* and also linked to the rise of fascism in Europe.

I would like to dwell slightly longer on the other exception to the Tea Party's anti-government views, because it represents one of Skocpol and Williamson's most interesting findings. They found that most grass roots members of the Tea Party do support certain government programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, which they view as helping "deserving" American citizens. Some of the far-right libertarian national organizations that have supported and funded local Tea Party groups, advocate for the privatization of Social Security and Medicare. But these views remain unpopular among rank-and-file members, whose sense of deserving and undeserving members of society is even stronger than their opposition to government. Skocpol and Williamson write,

Above all, Tea Party activists see themselves as productive members of society. […] A well-marked distinction between workers and nonworkers – between productive citizens and the freeloaders – is central to the Tea Party worldview and conception of America. As Tea Partiers see it, only through hard work can one earn access to a good income and to honorable public benefits.[37]

Here I think we can see another important link with earlier forms of right-wing populism analyzed by Horkheimer, Adorno and Lowenthal, namely, the ideology of producers and parasites.[38] We saw how this ideology figured prominently not only among right-wing

populist agitators and authoritarian personalities, but also among anti-Semitic American workers. We also saw this ideology in the Nazis' distinction between the "schaffend" and the "raffend." Horkheimer's analysis in "Egoism and Freedom Movements" of the historical formation of dominant character structures in the modern bourgeois epoch, can still offer us important insights into the origins and function of the ideology of producers and parasites. We are dealing here with an attitude that became widespread first among the ascendant bourgeoisie, but which was gradually imposed upon the lower classes as well, during the long, drawn-out process of integrating them into modern capitalist society.[39] The ideology of producers and parasites was used during the French Revolution to justify a revolt against the aristocracy, and it was taken over in the 19th century by some non-Marxian socialists to attack the bourgeoisie. But it also found its way easily into the fascists' ideological arsenal.[40] This shift of the ideology of "producers and parasites" is a prime example of the transformation of populism from the left to the right, which I discussed at the beginning of this paper in relation to Horkheimer's essay on "Egoism and Freedom movements."

More recently, Donald Trump has succeeded in harnessing and expanding the right-wing populist movement, which exploded onto the political scene with the Tea Party. In order to understand Trump's remarkable and ominous strides towards capturing the nomination as the presidential candidate of the Republican Party – much to the chagrin of the party's traditional leadership – one needs to look more closely at some of the similarities and differences in his rhetoric and that of the Tea Party. In many regards, Trump has continued to emphasize key elements of Tea Party ideology. These include, for example, virulent and frequently conspiratorial denigration of President Obama;[41] celebration of the police and Second Amendment gun rights, combined with scathing attacks on the current government and government, in general; hyper-patriotic calls to restore the U.S. to a nostalgically imagined state of former greatness; and scathing attacks on immigrants.

Regarding the latter, Trump has – as is well known – gone well beyond the Tea Party in his call for the immediate deportation of over ten million undocumented workers, the revocation of citizenship for their children born in the U.S., and the construction of a wall along the Mexican border, which will prevent any further immigration and will allegedly be financed by the Mexican government. Trump's claim that many Mexican immigrants are murderers and rapists, combined with his reinforcement of the popular, prejudicial association of Muslims with terrorists, and his threat to severely limit Muslim immigration to the U.S., have demonstrated his willingness to outstrip even the Tea Party in xenophobic rhetorical excesses.[42] Another key area in which Trump has adopted and amplified Tea Party rhetoric is in regard to what Adorno called the "usurpation complex." Like the Tea Party, Trump constantly suggests that the government has been captured by special interests (for example, politicians beholden to lobbyists) and needs to be "taken back" in order to properly serve the people. Trump emphasizes his status as an outsider, who is financing his own campaign, rather than accepting any corrupting money from established special interest groups, and who is running for president only because he is "fed up" with the "crooked system" that is destroying American

democracy and thwarting the expression of the will of the people.[43]

Trump repeatedly assures his audience that "the last thing I ever thought I would do is become a politician." But, in words that could have been taken verbatim from any number of the proto-fascist agitators studied by Lowenthal in the 1940s, Trump explains to his audience that he has decided reluctantly to enter politics, because the U.S. needs to get its house in order and that he is the perfect man for the job. He insists that his achievements as a wealthy businessman, successful real estate developer and tough negotiator are the ideal qualifications to "make America great again." Here one sees, even more clearly than in the Tea Party, Trump's appeal to those who believe that government should be run like a business and that political power should be placed in the hands of "those who are actually in command of the machinery of production – not those who owe their ephemeral power to formal political processes," as Adorno described the pseudo-conservative attitude towards government.[44]

Trump has also adopted the rhetoric of "producers and parasites," which plays such a central role in Tea Party ideology. In fact, at a speech that Trump delivered at a Tea Party convention in South Carolina on 16 January 2016, he dedicated nearly half of his time to describing a project to build an ice-skating rink that he took over from the government of New York City, because it was behind schedule and over budget. He then boasted how, under his direction, the project was completed ahead of schedule and under budget, thereby contrasting his own productive efficiency to the wasteful incompetence of government.[45] Trump always describes his own professional activity as a real estate developer as contributing directly to the productivity of the U.S. by directly employing many thousands of people. Probably the single most important way in which Trump has set himself apart from other Republican candidates – particularly those of the party establishment – has been his embrace of economic populism and protectionism. He promises to make America powerful again by bringing back the hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs that have disappeared in the U.S. since the 1970s as a result of trade agreements like NAFTA, which have benefited large corporations at the expense of American workers. Trump promises to punish corporations who choose to produce abroad by levying hefty tariffs on their products. He rails against government and corporate elites who have completely forgotten, or are against, "wage earners."[46] He has even promised to transform the Republican Party into a workers' party.[47]

While many commentators have argued that Trump's xenophobia and racism appeal most to his constituents, other veteran scholars of American right-wing populism view his economic populism as more important.[48] The ideology of producers and parasites is also apparent in Trump's frequent criticisms of finance – in the form of "paper-pushing" hedge fund managers – and banking. Trump repeatedly criticized his most serious challenger in the Republican primaries, Ted Cruz, for his willingness to take money from big Wall Street banks.[49] In contrast to Cruz and the rest of the Republican primary candidates, Trump never lets his audience forget that he is financing his campaign with his own money. He even extends the rhetoric of producers and parasites to international military and trade relations. One of the first things he claims he will do when he becomes president is to force countries like Germany, Japan and Saudi Arabia, which allegedly rely upon the largesse of the U.S. for their military

defense, to either pay for this service or provide for their own defense. Similarly, in international trade, Trump points again and again to Mexico, and China, in particular, as deceiving the current naïve and/or inept American government and taking advantage of the American people by running large trade surpluses.

The final, but probably most important way in which Trump has adopted and intensified the rhetoric of the Tea Party lies in the cluster of ideas – discussed above – that Adorno refers to as "pseudo-conservativism." In order explicitly to link the key concept of pseudo-conservativism in *The Authoritarian Personality* to Horkheimer's earlier analyses of authoritarian tendencies among bourgeois freedom movements in the early modern period, it is worth recalling that Adorno views pseudo-conservatism as a deep historical tendency, which has accompanied the rise of modern capitalism as a whole, but whose expression is hindered or facilitated by the social and political conditions that exist in different periods within the modern bourgeois epoch.[50] To understand the recent success of the Tea Party and Trump, it is also worth recalling the reason why Adorno distinguished "pseudo-" from genuine conservatives, namely, to contrast the authoritarian tendencies of the former to the more or less successful identification of the latter with the ideals of liberal democracy.

According to Adorno, a crucial defining characteristic of the latter's acceptance of the "antirepressive and sincerely democratic" aspects of U.S. political ideals is an "unqualified rejection of antiminority prejudice."[51] Adorno's prediction that "the 'genuine' conservatives will be driven into the liberal camp by today's social dynamics," seems to have been confirmed by the deep divisions that have emerged within the Republican Party in the past decade, first with the Tea Party's and now – to an even greater extent – with Trump's open rebellion against traditional conservative elites within the party. Many powerful Republican Party elites, such as George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Mitt Romney, as well as some of the wealthiest donors to the Party, such as the Koch Brothers, are refusing to support Trump, which has created an acute crisis within the Republican Party. Although it is still too early to know how this crisis will end, there is no question that the pseudo-conservative rebellion begun by the Tea Party and expanded by Trump is threatening to take control of the Republican Party. That said, several high-ranking Republicans who have been very critical of Trump in the past – including the current Speaker of the House of Representatives, Paul Ryan – are already demonstrating a greater willingness to work with Trump. In short, Trump's success is creating a sort of litmus test that forces Republicans to identify with him, as a pseudo-conservative, or against him, as a genuine conservative.

If one asks how Trump's rhetoric reflects the content of pseudo-conservatism, as described by Adorno, many continuities with the points outlined above in relation to the Tea Party are readily apparent. But one also sees what I would like to argue is the biggest difference between Trump and the Tea Party, namely, Trump's much more explicitly authoritarian rhetoric and self-presentation. Whereas the Tea Party still prided itself on being a grass roots, decentralized movement, Trump has given the movement a new centralized focus with his pompous and aggressive leadership. Adorno describes the desire of pseudo-conservatives for authoritarian leadership in the following way:

> *Their idea of the strong man […] is colored by an image of real strength; the backing of the most powerful industrial groups. To them, progressives in the government are the real usurpers […] because they assume a power position which should be reserved for the "right people." Pseudoconservatives have an underlying sense of "legitimacy": legitimate rulers are those who are actually in command of the machinery of production – not those who owe their ephemeral power to formal political processes […] Formal democracy seems to this kind of thinking to be too far away from "the people," and the people will have their right only if the "inefficient" democratic processes are substituted by some rather ill-defined strong-arm system.[52]*

Although Trump is not himself an industrialist – which may itself be of less significance in a "post-industrial" period – he certainly presents himself as productive and efficient businessman with an intimate understanding of "how to get things done" in the "real world" of the economy, and as someone who will apply these methods in order "to make America great again." Although there has been a debate among scholars and journalists about whether Trump is more authoritarian or populist, this debate overlooks the fact that right-wing populism and authoritarianism very often go hand in hand, as the experience of European fascism in the 1920s and 1930s made clear.[53] This is not to say, as other commentators have claimed, that Trump is an outright fascist himself. Although his calls for the deportation of over ten million undocumented workers and his threats to use violence – and tolerance of it among his followers – against his enemies and opponents certainly places his rhetoric well within fascist traditions, he has not called for the overthrow of U.S. political institutions and he has yet to form his own anti-democratic political party or militias – although a number of militant far-right and/or white supremacist groups have expressed their support for him.[54]

However, Trump and many of his followers do fit the mold of authoritarian right-wing populism – that is, what Adorno described as "pseudo-conservatism" – very well. And as Adorno kept repeating until his death in 1969, the threat of authoritarianism in modern capitalist societies that comes from *within* democracy is probably greater than the threat posed by explicitly anti-democratic movements.[55] In *The Authoritarian Personality* Adorno describes this threat in the following way:

> *It cannot be disputed that formal democracy, under the present economic system, does not suffice to guarantee permanently, to the bulk of the population, satisfaction of the most elementary wants and needs, whereas at the same time the democratic form of government is presented as if […] it were as close to an ideal society as it could be. The resentment caused by this contradiction is turned by those who fail to recognize its economic roots against the form of democracy itself. Because it does not fulfill what it promises, they regard it as a "swindle" and are ready to exchange it for a system which sacrifices all claims to human dignity and justice, but of which they expect vaguely some kind of guarantee of their lives by better planning and*

organization.[56]

Trump plays on this type of populist, anti-political resentment, when he states repeatedly in his speeches that the current political system is corrupt, but that he as an individual possesses the wherewithal not only to reverse America's lamentable decline, but to do so quickly: "You need somebody fast," and "it's gonna go fast," and "I alone can fix this problem," as he told a huge audience at a speech on April 10, 2016 in Rochester, New York – a city decimated by post-industrial decline.

Trump's message of economic protectionism, which sets him apart from other Republican candidates and from the neo-liberal ideology of American conservative elites more generally, is tailor-made for predominantly white, lower and lower-middle class audiences, such as the one he was addressing in Rochester. Not unlike the National Socialists' promises to restore a powerful *Volksgemeinschaft*,[57] Trump tells his listeners to join his "movement" to restore a mythical United States in which we will "protect and love one another." Trump rails against big banks and corporate lobbyists and tells his audience that he is "the only one who will save social security."[58] Here again we can see Trump very perceptively placing himself on the side of the grass roots activists in the Tea Party, and against the neo-liberalism of conservative elites, such as the Koch Brothers and Paul Ryan, who favored the privatization of Social Security. So Trump has appropriated the communitarian elements of the Tea Party ideology, while at the same time intensifying them, by combining them with his own appeal as an authoritarian leader who allegedly possesses the power to enact them and to punish those "enemies of the people" – both domestic and foreign – who are responsible for America's decline.

Conclusion

> *One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge – unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it untenable.*[59]
>
> *— Walter Benjamin*

These words that Benjamin wrote in the face of the undiminished appeal and continuing advance of fascism in Europe in the late 1930s, can still illuminate dominant, unreflective historical attitudes of the twenty-first century that have led to a significant underestimation of the threat – and consequent surprise about the actual rise – of right-wing populism in Europe and the United States. As we have seen, Horkheimer, Fromm, Adorno, and Lowenthal grounded their analyses of fascism, authoritarianism, and right-wing populism in a historical theory of the modern bourgeois epoch as a whole. The provocative thesis of Horkheimer's path-breaking essay, "Egoism and Freedom Movements" – which provided the historical and

theoretical foundations for much of the Institute's later work on authoritarianism – was that the particular social and social-psychological dynamics that led to fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s had been present from the beginning of modern bourgeois society.

To be sure, the constellation of social relations between the aristocracy, middle, and lower classes underwent a transformation as the bourgeoisie gradually established its hegemony over a period of centuries. It was not until this *dialectic of bourgeois society* had reached its later stages that fascism became an objective possibility, and then a catastrophic historical reality.[60] In contrast to many "progressive" and "evolutionary" theorists in the post-WWII period, who attributed the success of fascism in German and Italy to a *Sonderweg* – that is, a "modernization deficit" in comparison to other Western democracies – Horkheimer and the Critical Theorists recognized that fascism had sprung from some of the deepest and most powerful tendencies slumbering in modern capitalist societies and that these tendencies had not been removed by the unconditional surrender of fascists in 1945.

Adorno's reformulation of Kant's categorical imperative in the 1960s – "unfree mankind [must] arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen" – expressed his conviction that, even with post-war liberal democracies, such tendencies still existed. Even if one questions claims – as I do – that the Tea Party, or even the more explicitly authoritarian Donald Trump can be described as "fascist," the Critical Theorists' insight that fascism represents an extreme form of the right-wing populist tendencies that have deep roots in modern capitalist societies, provides a very important corrective to the naïve and ahistorical approaches to right-wing populism and authoritarianism, which have been caught off-guard by their recent reemergence in the United States. Critical Theory offers a much more incisive explanation than such ahistorical approaches of the (not so) surprising *persistence* of right-wing populism into the twenty-first century.

Examples of the historically naïve approach can be found in a number of recent journalistic essays on Trump which describe the recent "rediscovery" of authoritarianism among American academic social scientists. Rather than exploring the merits and demerits of this social scientific literature here, I would like simply to make note of the remarkably blithe dismissal of the entire corpus of the Critical Theorists' studies of authoritarianism. For example, in March, 2016 Amanda Taub published a widely discussed article in the on-line political journal *Vox*, which explored this new body of work on authoritarianism and its implications for understanding the surprising success of Donald Trump. Her giddy confidence in the forward march of progress in the social sciences comes through clearly in the following statements: "after a period of junk science in the mid-20th century, a more serious group of scholars has addressed this question, specifically studying how it plays out in American politics." Eliminating any doubt about the culprits in question, Taub continues,

> *the early work wasn't particularly rigorous by today's standards. The critical theorist Theodor Adorno, for instance, developed what he called the 'F-scale,' which sought to measure fascist tendencies. The test wasn't accurate. Sophisticated*

> *respondents would quickly discover what the 'right' answers were and game the test. And there was no proof that the personality type it purportedly measured actually supported fascism.[61]*

Fortunately for us, however,

> *in the early 1990s, a political scientist named Stanley Feldman changed everything. […] He realized that if authoritarianism was a personality profile rather than just a political preference, he could get respondents to reveal these tendencies by asking questions about a topic that seemed much less controversial: […] parenting goals.[62]*

Taub's characterizations here are not unusual; one finds very similar claims in a number a recent articles on authoritarianism and Trump. Unfortunately they reflect nothing more than current misconceptions about the Institute's sophisticated and substantial studies of authoritarianism. Many of the supposed shortcomings of their work mentioned by Taub and others were, in fact, integral parts of the methods they used. For example, the alleged discovery in more recent work of attitudes towards child rearing as a key indicator of authoritarianism was employed in many of the Institute's studies.[63] One need not refute the foolish claim that Institute viewed authoritarianism as a political preference that than a complex constellations of character traits, since this was the most basic working hypothesis of *The Authoritarian Personality*. Also, Adorno and other Institute members never made the mistake of assuming that authoritarianism coincided in any simple way with "left" and "right," or "liberal" and "conservative" political views, as the discussion above of pseudo-conservatism should have made clear. The Critical Theorists' discussion of "conformist rebellion," motivated by ego weakness, rather than critical insight, is another example – this time of a "pseudo-critical" stance. Finally, from very early on, they clearly recognized the need to obtain empirical information about authoritarianism indirectly, to avoid self-censorship among respondents. Their psychoanalytic expertise aided them greatly in developing increasingly refined techniques of gaining access not just to the openly professed, but also to the private or even unconscious attitudes of participants in their studies.[64]

The reemergence of a powerful right-wing populist movement in the U.S. in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008, and more recent expansion of that pseudo-conservative movement and the intensification of the authoritarian aspects of its rhetoric, should be the signal to recover the Critical Theorists' important insights into the roots of right-wing populism in modern capitalist societies, which can still contribute greatly to explaining its *persistence* from the twentieth into the twenty-first century. The most common reaction of contemporary, historically myopic social science to the Tea Party and, especially Donald Trump's success has been embarrassed surprise.

The reemergence of right-wing populism – first in Europe and now in the U.S. – during the

consolidation and, more recently, the crisis of global neo-liberal capitalism, will hardly come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the Critical Theorists' studies of authoritarianism. But, for a variety of reasons, the memory of these studies has weakened substantially in the present. The attempt by more recent theorists in Germany – who proudly place themselves in the "Frankfurt School" tradition, while at the same time often dismissing the ongoing relevance of its founders – to place Critical Theory on firm "normative" foundations, has diverted attention from real-existing catastrophic tendencies. Like the utopian socialists of old, the normative theorists can tell the way society *ought* to be developing, but they are at a loss to explain why it is actually moving in the opposition direction.

The reception of Critical Theory in the United States during the neo-liberal period has often focused more on aesthetics and cultural criticism, than on history and social theory. We have already discussed the abstract negation of Critical Theory in American academic sociology, and the situation in history departments is even worse. As we have seen, Horkheimer and his colleagues were convinced that the threat of authoritarianism was minimal in the immediate post-war period, and the economic prosperity and relative security of the 1950s and 1960s continued to dampen the threat. But rising levels of inequality, frustration and anxiety since the 1970s have created conditions much more favorable to right-wing populist movements. So even if the memory of the Critical Theorists' studies of authoritarianism and right-wing populism has become weak, we should seize hold of it as it flashes up in this moment of danger.

Notes

[1] "Fascism was not a coincidence." "Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik," November 30, 1967; cited in *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung*, vol. 2, ed. Wolfgang Kraushaar (Hamburg: Zweitausandeins, 1998), 328.

[2] Martin Jay, "Introduction to Horkheimer," *Telos*, no. 54 (December, 1982), 5.

[3] Max Horkheimer, *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G.F. Hunter, M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 61-62.

[4] Ibid., 97.

[5] Horkheimer's analysis here of the transformation of populism anticipates more recent historical scholarship on the relationship between fascism and populism by scholars such as Peter Fritzsche, Geoff Eley, Ernesto Laclau and Zeev Sternhell. For a discussion of this scholarship and its reconceptualization of the relationship between populism and fascism, see my essay "Transformations of Producerist Populism in Western Europe," *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies*, eds. J. Abromeit, B. Chesterton, Y. Norman and G. Marotta (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 231-64.

[6] Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, which was first published in 1895, is an excellent example of this larger tendency. Le Bon presents himself here as a modern-day Machiavelli, who has written a practical political handbook for conservative elites

in order to instruct them on how to manipulate the masses in order to maintain their own power. It is not a coincidence that Mussolini was an avid reader and admirer of Le Bon's work.

[7] Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 111.

[8] For a more detailed discussion of this scholarship, see the reference in footnote 5, above.

[9] Erich Fromm, *Arbeiter und Angestellte am Vorabend des Dritten Reiches: Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung*, ed. Wolfgang Bonss (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1983).

[10] For one classical account of this shift, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart, 1944).

[11] For a discussion of the shift in Horkheimer's Critical Theory that occurred around 1940 as a result of his adoption of Pollock's state capitalism thesis, see Moishe Postone and Barbara Brick, "Critical Theory and Political Economy," *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives*, eds. S. Benhabib, W. Bonss and J. McCole (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 215-56; see also, for a somewhat different interpretation of this shift my own study, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School*, op. cit., 394-424.

[12] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 257-88. Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 20-27, 271-303.

[13] As Eva-Maria Ziege points out in her *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie: Die Frankfurter Schule im amerikanischen Exil* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), 169-71.

[14] Max Horkheimer, "Introduction," to Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), xii (emphasis my own).

[15] Lowenthal and Guterman, "Preface," Ibid., xvi.

[16] Ibid., 135.

[17] Ibid., 106

[18] Ibid., 96.

[19] Ibid., 108.

[20] Ibid., 109.

[21] Cited by Lowenthal and Guterman, Ibid., 48.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 100.

[24] Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 676.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 685.

[27] For a more detailed discussion of the Institute's study of anti-Semitism among American workers, see Mark P. Worrell, *Dialectic of Solidarity: Labor, Antisemitism and the Frankfurt School* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008) and Eva-Maria Ziege, *Antisemitismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, op. cit., 180-228.

[28] Adorno referred to the United States as a "radically bourgeois country" in his essay "Über Tradition," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977), 310. For an examination of the much more significant role that racism played in the formation of "white" identities among the American working class in the United States – identities that also had decidedly bourgeois characteristics – see John Abromeit, "Whiteness as a Form of Bourgeois Anthropology? Historical Materialism and Psychoanalysis in the Work of David Roediger, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse," *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2013), 325–343.

[29] Worrel, *Dialectic of Solidarity*, 119-88.

[30] Cas Mudde, "Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Today," *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas*, op. cit., 295-307.

[31] For an overview of Fromm's writings in the 1930s on the social-psychological dimensions of authoritarianism, see Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of Frankfurt School*, op. cit., 201-11, 282-88.

[32] Cited in Theda Skocopl and Vanessa Williams, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

[33] Stanford political scientist Adam Bonica has argued that the House of Representatives experienced its most pronounced ideological shift to the right as a result of the elections of 2010 – more radical even than after the so-called "Republican Revolution" led by Newt Gingrich in 1994. See Skocpol and Williams discussions of Bonica's arguments, in *The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism*, op. cit., 168-70.

[34] As we shall see, what looked like a "revitalization" of the Republican Party has been transformed into a crisis, as the pseudo-conservative elements – urged on by Donald Trump –

have carried out a full-fledged rebellion against traditional conservative elites in the Party. We will discuss this shift below.

[35] Ibid., 81.

[36] On the Tea Party's very selective, and tendentially fundamentalist interpretation of the U.S. constitution, see Jill Lepore, *The White of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), especially 118-25.

[37] The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism, op. cit., 65-66. These beliefs can also be observed at Tea Party rallies, where participants carry placards saying "Redistribute my work ethic," or "Keep working; thousands on welfare are depending on you."

[38] On the importance of the "producers and parasites" ideology for the Tea Party, see also Ronald P. Formisano, *The Tea Party: A Brief History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 20.

[39] For an analysis of the ways in which this process was different in the U.S. from Europe, due to the presence of a large Black underclass, see my essay on "Whiteness as a Form of Bourgeois Anthropology?" cited above in footnote 28.

[40] For a more detailed analysis of the transformation of the populist ideology of "producers and parasites" from the left to the right in Europe in the period from the French Revolution to fascism, see my essay "Transformations of Producerist Populism," cited above in footnote 5.

[41] Donald Trump was one of the first to question Obama's citizenship and he actively participated in the so-called "birther" movement.

[42] On Trump's willingness to violate tabus maintained by traditional conservatives, see the following article by Rick Perlstein — a noted historian of contemporary conservative political movements in the United States: https://washingtonspectator.org/donald-trump-and-the-f-word/ . Perlstein argues that "Donald Trump is the first Republican presidential front-runner to venture a demagogy so pure."

[43] See, for example, the speech Trump delivered in Rochester, New York on April 10, 2016, which can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqRMaD3HWHo .

[44] Cited above, p. 8.

[45] Trump's speech can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-zN5k4Gu40.

[46] In the speech Trump gave in Rochester in April, 2016, cited in footnote 43.

[47] As reported in the online journal *Politico*, on May 26, 2016: https://www.politico.com/story/2016/05/trump-gop-workers-party-223598.

[48] For an argument that emphasizes Trump's economic populism, see Thomas Frank, "Millions of ordinary Americans support Donald Trump. Here's Why." *The Guardian*, (March 7, 2016): https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/donald-trump-why-americans-support

[49] Here, the right-wing populist echo of Bernie Sanders' left-wing populist criticisms of Hillary Clinton is unmistakable.

[50] Adorno argues, for example, that "The reason that the pseudo-conservative seems to be such a characteristically modern phenomenon is not that any new psychological element has been added to this particular syndrome, which was probably established during the last four centuries, but that objective social conditions make it easier for the character structure in question to express itself in its avowed opinions." *The Authoritarian Personality*, 676.

[51] Ibid., 675.

[52] Ibid., 677-78, 686.

[53] For one example of a critique of numerous articles that have analyzed Trump as an authoritarian, see Wendy Rahn and Eric Oliver, "Trump's voters aren't authoritarians, new research says. So what are they?" *Washington Post*, March 9, 2016.

[54] On Trump's support among the extreme right, white supremacists and neo-Nazis in the U.S., see Peter Holley and Sarah Larimer, "How America's dying white supremacist movement is seizing on Donald Trump's appeal," *Washington Post*, February 29, 2016.

[55] As Adorno famously put it in 1959, "I consider the survival of National Socialism *within* democracy to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies *against* democracy." Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working through the Past," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, ed. and trans. Henry Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 90.

[56] *Authoritarian Personality*, op. cit., 678.

[57] On the importance of the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ("people's community") to Nazi ideology, see Peter Fritzsche, Germans into Nazis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[58] As Trump stated in his April, 2016 speech in Rochester, cited in footnote 43 above.

[59] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 257.

[60] For a discussion of the concept of the "dialectic of bourgeois society," which I have coined

as a description of certain key historical and theoretical assumptions that guide Horkheimer's early work, see my study, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankurt School*, 4, 394-95, 425-32.

[61] Amanda Taub, "The rise of American Authoritarianism," Vox, March 1, 2016: https://www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Already in the Institute's first major empirical study – its study of the attitudes of blue and white collar workers in Weimar Germany – Horkheimer and Fromm included questions about child rearing as indirect indicators of manifest or latent authoritarianism. In their major empirical project, the *Studies on Authority and Family*, attitudes toward child rearing once again were central, as the title suggests. In later studies it played a role as well, but the Critical Theorists were far too sophisticated to believe that attitudes towards child rearing alone sufficed to provide reliable indications of authoritarian predispositions.

[64] For a discussion of these techniques, see my review of the first English translation of the "Group Experiment," the Institute's first major empirical study after reestablishing itself in Frankfurt after World War II: *Journal of Modern History,* vol. 85, no. 1 (March 2013), 161-168.

Deep Contradictions Facing the Global Movement for Human Emancipation: The Middle East, China, and Europe

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Prologue

We live in a time marked by the revolutionary upsurge that began in the Arab world in 2011, followed swiftly by Madison, Madrid, Occupy Wall Street, and then a bit later, by Gezi Park in Turkey, the defense of Kobane, Black Lives Matter, and the Sanders and Corbyn phenomena. During this whole period, tiny Greece has also fought on in the face of many contradictions.

A number of these struggles continue, and new ones are sure to emerge in a world marked by economic stagnation, deepening racism, and ecological danger. A new generation of radical youth has entered the scene, and unlike in the late twentieth century, Marxism is no longer a dirty word to them. The politics of identity may also be retreating somewhat, as the prospect of anti-capitalist unity across racial, gender, and geographic lines is asserting itself.

At the same time, huge defeats and setbacks have also occurred. This has certainly been the case in the Arab world. It is as important to learn from these defeats and setbacks, as it is to learn from the creativity of the mass movements of today. Most radicals ignore our defeats, moving on to the next big thing.

Marxist-Humanists have fought against this attitude. Facing defeat or retrogression can lead to advances in theory that can place the movement on a sounder basis when it revives. Marxist-Humanism in the US emerged from the writings of Raya Dunayevskaya, who, in the face of the great betrayal of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, worked out a new perspective for Marxism, the notion that we had entered a further stage of global capitalism, beyond the monopoly stage, which she and her then-colleague CLR James conceptualized as state-capitalism. This new stage emerged out of the transformation into opposite of the Russian revolution of 1917 under Stalin and the defeat of the German workers movement, which paved the way for the Nazi seizure of power. State-capitalism as a stage crystallized after the Spanish revolution was defeated by fascism, as the Western powers looked on and Stalin's Russia ultimately betrayed the revolution. Overall, the counter-revolutionary outcomes in Russia and Germany paved the way for the loss of tens of millions in World War 2.

As Hegel wrote in the founding text of modern dialectics, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we should not turn away from difficulty, but engage instead in the "seriousness, suffering,

patience, and labor of the negative" (1977, p. 10). Let us do some of that, first by examining the Middle East five years after the Arab revolutions of 2011.

Tunisia and Egypt Five Years Later

In Tunisia, where the Arab revolutions began, a new constitution supports women's rights, including legislative parity, and bans some forms of religious demagoguery. These hard-won gains were the fruit of several years of struggle by leftists, feminists, and liberals against the local Islamists, who initially seemed poised to assume power after the fall of the vicious but secular Ben Ali dictatorship. Additional gains are occasionally being made, as seen in the February 2016 court decision legalizing Shams, an organization campaigning openly for the decriminalization of homosexuality, a rarity in the Arab world. At the same time, the new democratic order is under attack from radical Tunisian Islamists tied to ISIS, who have launched a number of terrorist attacks on civilians. In response, the state has curtailed civil liberties, equally a danger for democracy.

Such democratic rights, even if maintained, cannot by themselves create a new human society. As the young Marx intoned concerning the difference between merely political and fully human emancipation: "Political emancipation is not the completed contradiction-free form of human emancipation" ("On the Jewish Question," in Marx, *Early Political Writings*, edited by Joseph O'Malley, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 34). Thus, in their street demonstrations, the Tunisian revolutionaries of 2011 called for "Bread, Water, and No Ben Ali," hardly limiting themselves to the political sphere alone.

In early 2016, youth unemployment in Tunisia stood at a shocking 30%. This oppressive situation led to protests, looting, and clashes with police in January 2016 in the very communities where the revolution broke out in 2010-11. The relatively small Marxist left has been involved with some of these protests, leading President Beji Caid Essebsi to call the Marxists as great a danger as Islamist terrorists (Carlotta Gall and Farah Samti, "Tunisian Government Sets Nationwide Curfew Amid Growing Unrest," *New York Times*, 1-23-16 https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/23/world/middleeast/tunisia-curfew-unemployment.html?_r=0).

The aging Essebsi has rehabilitated corrupt officials from the old regime, has created a split in his own party by grooming his son as his successor, and has tried to shore up his support by courting the moderate Islamist Ennahda Party. This has led not only to a split within the ruling Nida Tounes Party, but also to a horizontally organized campaign by revolutionary youth to put up "wanted" posters for old regime officials whom Essebsi has been allowing back into the corridors of power (Frédéric Bobin, "En Tunisie, un pastiche de western contre les caciques de l'ancien regime," *Le Monde,* 6-10-16 https://abonnes.lemonde.fr/international/article/2016/06/09/en-tunisie-un-pastiche-de-western-contre-les-caciques-de-l-ancien-regime_4943988_3210.html)

If the left still has some breathing room in Tunisia, the opposite is the case in Egypt, where, for

the past three years, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has carried out a crackdown that goes beyond that of even the harshest days of the Mubarak regime. With continuing military aid from the imperialist U.S. and lavish funding from the subimperialist power Saudi Arabia, Sisi has achieved solid support internationally, at least for now.

As in Tunisia, the 2011 Egypt uprising grounded itself in both economic and political demands, and did so by taking over a large public space, Tahrir Square, forming kind of an alternative society for a few weeks. After the popular uprising spurred the military to oust Mubarak with the promise of a democratic constitution to follow, two years of competition/cooperation ensued between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's second large conservative force. One of its leaders, Mohamed Morsi, was elected president with the support of leftists and nationalists. During this period, many of the young revolutionaries, women as well as men, kept demonstrating on the streets against Morsi, who immediately broke his promises to form an inclusive government once in power.

The Sisi regime is the product of a twin tragedy. First, a mass movement of millions came onto the streets in 2013 to call for Morsi's ouster, which the military carried out. As General Sisi repressed the Muslim Brotherhood and set up his dictatorship, some leftwing nationalists lent their support. In this sense, the Sisi dictatorship is the product not only of reactionary and retrogressive forces that wanted to turn the clock back, but also of the opportunism of a part of the revolutionary movement itself.

As Marxist scholar Gilbert Achcar put it on the fifth anniversary of the Egyptian revolution: "The problem is that even those forces that I regard as progressive have been oscillating between the old regime and its religious fundamentalist opposition. Ultimately, both the old regime and its religious opposition were deeply opposed to the revolutionary process, and yet the progressive left and liberal forces went switching from an alliance with the latter (the religious opposition) against the former (the old regime) to an alliance with the former against the latter. This oscillation is disastrous" ("Q&A: The terrible illusion of the Arab Spring," *Al Jazeera* interview with Achcar, 1-28-16).

If the first tragedy of the Egyptian revolution is a product of the failure of the left to create an independent alternative, and of the naiveté and opportunism of parts of it, Egypt's second tragedy was rooted in a problem that plagues almost all genuinely — as opposed to statist-authoritarian — revolutionary movements today, the lure of spontaneous forms of organization as a panacea. During the magnificent Tahrir Square occupation of 2011, leftist and independent forces applauded the spontaneous grassroots democracy of the Square, but did not succeed in thinking out the philosophical and organizational issues involved in creating a real revolutionary organization that could become a pole of attraction to challenge the twin forces of reaction, the military and the Islamists. Nor has much progress been made on that score since then.

The Egyptian writer Mahmoud Hussein goes so far as to argue that such occupations can express negativity and rejection, but not a real alternative to the given state of affairs:

A public space can express a rejection of the principle of autocracy. It can, in crystallizing a massive popular will, provoke the actual fall of an autocrat. It is very true that in two and a half years, Tahrir overthrew three successive autocrats, Mubarak, then [General] Tantawi, then Morsi. But it could not by itself offer the country a concrete alternative form of power…. No force emanating from Tahrir Square, and organizationally linked to it, was developing a utopia, a concept [*pensée*], a collective experience, or an organizational force that would allow it to strive to give direction to the country. ("Cinq ans après, n'oublions pas la révolte de la place Tahrir," *Le Monde*, 1-23-16 https://abonnes.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/22/cinq-ans-apres-n-oublions-pas-la-revolte-de-la-place-tahrir_4852006_3232.html)

This second tragedy, of course, is not Egypt's alone, but that of the rest of the revolutionary movement around the world today, from Occupy to Gezi Park, where spontaneous forms of organization have become an *idée fixe* that crowds out clear thinking about what a real alternative to capitalism entails. (I leave aside here all statist and hierarchical solutions put forth in the name of socialism, which are in fact retrogressive in the twenty-first century.)

The Sisi regime remains nervous about even the slightest dissent, as seen in the lockdown last January on the fifth anniversary of the uprising. Small rumblings of dissent can still be heard on occasion. The most recent example was the Sisi's ceding of two small Red Sea islands to his Saudi backers. In April 2016, after calls from secular leftists, several thousand took to the streets in protest under the slogan, "Freedom for the Brave." The regime cracked down hard, sentencing 150 people, most of them in their early twenties, to prison terms ranging from two to five years. All evidence suggests that public opinion was on the side of the demonstrators. This in turn suggests that the Sisi regime remains brittle despite all its armed strength.

China: Crackdown by a Jittery Regime

Turkey's Recip Tayyip Erdogan and Russia's Vladimir Putin have pushed deeper toward authoritarian strongman rule, and the new Trump-like president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, is doing so as well. Such rulers feed off national or economic anxiety and fear of chaos. To be sure, these kinds of regimes are ultimately brittle and fragile, but they can hang on for decades even as their social base narrows, as we saw in Iraq under Saddam and still see in Iran.

A similar trend is also seen in China, which in 2015 experienced its slowest economic growth, 6.9% of GDP, in 25 years. While this is way above growth rate of most other major economies, it has had profound effects in a country whose economic model has depended upon a much higher rate of growth. This has resulted in a wave of economic anxiety and in persistent labor strikes. In 2015, 2700 strikes and labor protests took place, double the number of the previous year (Javier Hernandez, "More Protests by Labor Vex China Rulers," *New York Times*, March 15, 2016).

Even more importantly, the past few years have seen the tenuous beginnings of links between

workers, on the one hand, and intellectuals and students on the other. In 2014-15, law firms that fought for workers' rights within the limits of Chinese law also helped to give a measure of coordination to these strikes, which gained on occasion the support of students as well. Moreover, this took place in the Pearl River delta, the country's economic powerhouse. This recalled how a small band of intellectuals formed the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland in the 1970s, forging links that sprouted on a mass scale during the Solidarnosc workers' movement of 1981.

The most prominent of these labor lawyers, Duan Yi, has spoken of "a savage capitalism that holds sway in China. First, the workers are exploited to the limit, then a few improvements are made before throwing them away like Kleenex," the latter referring to the mass layoffs amid robotization, which is occurring as workers have won some modest wage gains (Stéphane Pambrun, "Chine: tempête sur la rivière des Perles," *Jeune Afrique,* 5-20-14). For over a decade, Duan Yi advised workers during numerous struggles in which they gained wage increases, protected severance pay, and withstood threats of layoffs. Even some of his legal activist colleagues criticized him for being "half-lawyer, half social activist" (John Ruwitch, "Labor movement's 'concertmaster' tests Beijing's boundaries," Reuters, 12-6-14).

In the winter of 2015-16 the authorities staged a massive crackdown on activist lawyers, who have been put on trial, disbarred, and given severe warnings. Prison is certain to follow.

Amid these economic and social strains, the regime has engaged in a type of cult of personality around Xi not seen since the days of Mao's rule from 1949-76. As the *New York Times* reported recently, "*People's Daily* has become a publicity machine for Mr. Xi. On one day in December, his name appeared in 11 of the 12 headlines on the front page" (Edward Wong, "China Leader's News Flash: Journalists Must Serve Party," *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 2016).

Of course, Xi, who grew up in the pampered atmosphere of the ruling Communist Party compound in Beijing (although he did suffer briefly during Mao's Cultural Revolution), has neither the revolutionary nor the nationalist credentials of a Deng Xiaoping, let alone a Mao. Therefore his regime also exhibits a certain brittleness.

Syria and Turkey

Returning to the Middle East, we find the most violent contradictions coming to the fore in Syria and Turkey. With the massive deaths in the Syrian civil war, with the persistence of Islamism among the Syrian rebels, and with Erdogan riding high again in Turkey, one part of the global left has simply turned away in despair. A second group has started to back the Assad-Russia-Iran alliance in Syria in the name of anti- (U.S.) imperialism and anti-fundamentalism. It is important to avoid both of these simplistic, undialectical perspectives and instead view Syria and Turkey as imbued with both emancipatory and reactionary forces and ideas.

In Syria, contradictions of all sorts abound: between the murderous Assad regime and the democratic uprising; within the uprising among various factions, some but not all of them

religious fundamentalists; among the Assad regime, the uprising, and the Kurdish movement for self-liberation; and among imperialist and subimperialist powers in relationship to all of the above. As Marxist-Humanists, we need to look at the situation with both the harsh realism and the eye for emancipatory forces that one finds in both Hegel and Marx.

The violence of the Syrian civil war dwarfs any other conflict on the planet today, with the overwhelming majority of that violence emanating from the Assad regime and its allies Russia and Iran. According to the respected Syrian Center for Policy Research, the overall death toll has reached nearly 500,000, double the usual estimates, and another estimate has 60,000 perishing just in Assad's brutal prisons (Anne Barnard, "Death Toll in Syria War at 470,000, Report Says," *New York Times* 2-12-16; "En cinq ans, 60,000 personnes sont mortes dans les prisons du régime syrien," *Le Monde* 5-22-16).

The death toll's pace has increased in recent months due to the Russian air attacks on cities and neighborhoods opposed to the regime. Russia has in fact directed little of its fire at ISIS, the supposed target of its intervention. This, plus the tens of thousands of fighters sent by Iran has bolstered the Assad regime in the past year. But even Russia seemed a bit taken aback when Assad declared on June 7, 2016 that he was going to recover "every inch" of Syria's territory (David Sanger and Rick Gladstone, "Resisting Peace, Assad Pledges to Retake 'Every Inch' of Syria," *New York Times* 6-8-16). So much for the idea of some type of negotiated settlement, which the U.S, Russia, and other powers have been pushing!

In fact, though, both the U.S. and Russia have goals that are not that dissimilar. As Gilbert Achcar noted in 2015, after the results of the complete destruction of the old regimes of Libya and Iraq, both powers now agree on "preventing the collapse of the Assad regime," even if the U.S. would like Assad himself to step aside, or at least have some limitation placed upon his power (Ilya Budraitskis, "Interview: Gilbert Achcar on the Russian Military Operation in Syria," *Left East* 10-15-15). But these powers also fear the war's continuation, which is doing the same thing, plus sending a sea of refugees into Europe.

At the same time, two sets of emancipatory forces have persisted inside Syria, despite everything. In this regard the most surprising but little-noted event was the emergence on the streets on March 4, during a brief cessation of hostilities, of mass demonstrations by Syrian democratic forces. Thousands took to the streets of some 90 cities, chanting, "The revolution continues," as well as the old slogan from the 2011 uprisings across the Arab world, "The people want the fall of the regime." While this was a sign that the original demands of the revolution remain in the hearts of the people, these demonstrations did not approach the mass character of those five years ago (Benjamin Barthe, "En Syrie, le répit dans les combats relance les manifestations anti-Assad," *Le Monde* 3-6-16). But it was curious indeed that for one day at least, fundamentalist militias that dominate the armed resistance seemed to recede. There is also some evidence that the revolutionary committees formed back in 2011 maintain some influence, as against Islamists, in places like the Damascus suburb of Ghouta (Benjamin Barthe, "Syrie: dans l'univers fracassé de la Ghouta, la vie s'est organisée," *Le Monde* 2-3-16).

The Syrian Kurds constitute the second and better-known emancipatory force amid the carnage in Syria, one that stands openly for grassroots democracy, social justice, and women's liberation. The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) of the Syrian Democratic Union Party (KDP) battled ISIS successfully at two junctures in 2014. In Sinjar Mountain in Iraq, they rescued Yazidis from ISIS murder and sexual slavery when no one else, not even the U.S.-backed Iraqi Kurds, would step in. At Kobane in Syria some months later, these Kurdish Marxists dealt ISIS its first real military defeat, with women officers successfully leading some of the attacks on the most misogynist, retrogressive political force on the planet today.

Taking advantage of the weakness of the Assad regime and the disarray of the rebels, the YPG has taken over a whole swathe of territory it calls Rojava, in the northern area bordering Turkey. This has cut off much of ISIS's supply chain through Turkey. Over the past year, the Kurds have also helped form the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a tenuous alliance with some nearby Arab and Turkoman groups. The SDF has also begun to move toward Raqqa, the ISIS capital.

Kurdish relations with the overall Syrian democratic opposition are not good, however. The opposition accuses them with some justice of having on occasion leaned toward Russia and even Assad, while the Kurds point out that the opposition, like the Assad regime, vehemently opposes an autonomous region in the north (Michael Karadjis, "The Kurdish PYD's Alliance with Russia against Free Aleppo," *Syrian Revolutionary Commentary and Analysis* 2-18-16; Saleh Mohamed, "Democracy Left Out in the Cold, *New York Times* 4-11-16). At the same time, Russia openly supports Kurdish autonomy, and the U.S. does so implicitly. In such a situation, one should give the benefit of the doubt to those who are successfully fighting for autonomy, women's emancipation, and social justice, while also sounding a note of caution about unsavory alliances. One also has to ask why a revolutionary democratic movement, like the broader Syrian opposition, does not give more consideration to the rights to autonomy of a long-oppressed ethnic minority.

The Kurdish resistance in Syria has also set off a storm inside Turkey. The 2014 siege of Kobane, right on the border with Turkey, galvanized the global left, but it affected Turkish Kurds and leftists with particular force. This led to an alliance between Turkish youth from the 2013 Gezi Park uprising and the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), which now became a broad vehicle for the aspirations of both of these currents. The HDP is a legal party sympathetic to the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which for many years engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Turkish state. In recent years, however, the PKK has moved toward grassroots democracy and alliance with forces based in the Turkish population.

For a brief period in 2015, it seemed that the HDP, which, in addition to Kurdish aspirations, embraced labor, ecology, feminism, and LGBT rights, had seriously undercut the increasingly authoritarian Islamo-nationalist regime of Erdogan. In the May 2015 elections, the HDP scored 13%, denying Erdogan a parliamentary majority. (See my earlier analysis, "Four Years After the Arab Revolutions: Fighting on Amid Reactionary Retrenchment," *Logos* 14: 2-3, Summer 2015.) Erdogan responded with a harsh crackdown on the Kurdish areas of the southeast and

then called another election in November 2015, when he won a clear majority, as the repression kept many away from the polls. After that, Erdogan's repression became even more violent, and he moved to outlaw the HDP in 2016. He also struck out against even the slightest opposition from academics and intellectuals.

Since the summer of 2015, cities throughout the southeast have seen pitched battles on the streets between PKK youth and the Turkish military, for which they are no match. The Kurdish youth have been led by part of the PKK leadership to believe that they can win in the near term, just like the YPG did against ISIS in Kobane (Allan Kaval, "A Cizre, 'ville martyre' des Kurdes de Turquie," *Le Monde* 3-15-16). This policy has frayed Kurdish ties with Turkish youth and leftists. In addition, several terrorist attacks in Istanbul by a splinter of the PKK have served to harden Turkish nationalist support for Erdogan.

In the long run, Erdogan's rule faces dangers, however, whether from outside powers like Russia and the U.S., who see the Syrian Kurds as the only real force that can dislodge ISIS, or at home from the many sectors of society that he has irrevocably alienated. The abortive military coup of July 2016 will surely give the regime even more reasons to crack down, but also indicates some deep social fissures.

Europe, Immigration, and the Neo-Fascist Challenge

No country or region is immune to such trends toward authoritarianism, including the U.S., as shown by the Trump campaign. Thus, Austria, France, and several other European countries have also witnessed a sharp turn toward authoritarian politics in the wake of three major ISIS-inspired attacks in Paris and Brussels in 2015-16, and a heightened fear of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This fear was also a factor, among others, in Britain's vote to leave the European Union.

In the year 2015 alone, some one million migrants from Syria and other countries of the MENA region streamed into Western Europe, with the flow continuing into 2016. Shocking incidents in 2015, like the drowning death of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a Kurdish refugee from Kobane, gained public sympathy for the migrants. Initially, Germany and a few other countries adopted fairly liberal asylum and immigration policies. In March 2016, however, as racist, anti-immigrant sentiment grew, the European Union made a deal — in a gross violation of international human rights standards — that gave $6 billion to Turkey to block asylum seekers from reaching the rest of Europe.

Neofascist parties have played to this resentment with considerable success, especially in Austria and France. In Austria, Norbert Hofer, candidate of neofascist Austria Freedom Party (FPO), lost the presidential elections of spring 2016 by a hair's breadth, but these have now been rescheduled. In the first round of the spring elections, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats were shut out, with Hofer and a very moderate former Green Party leader, Otto Van der Bellen, taking first and second place.

Unconscionably, the major parties, including the Social Democrats, refused to support Van

Bellen against Hofer (Blaise Gauquelin, “L’absence de front républicain favorise Norbert Hofer,” *Le Monde* 5-18-16). No matter the eventual result of the elections for the largely symbolic presidency, the FPO is in very good position for next year’s crucial parliamentary elections.

Equally serious is the fact that, as the Austrian Social Democrats — like their counterparts in the U.S. Democratic Party — have moved to the right in recent decades, they have lost much of their working class base, creating an opening for the FPO to use anti-immigrant racism and Islamophobia to win over some of those same voters. The Austrian Social Democrats have also wavered, or worse, over immigrant rights, failing to offer a real alternative to the neofascists, and in fact paving the way for them.

This is exactly the problem facing France as well. Weak and unpopular President François Hollande, elected in 2012 on a platform that attacked finance capital, has turned sharply to the right on immigration and on “law and order.” First, he enacted harsh security measures, including a state of emergency, in the wake of two murderous ISIS-inspired attacks in 2015, going so far as to attempt to undermine citizenship laws. Moreover, Hollande made virtually no effort to combat Islamophobia, thus alienating further the country’s largely working class Muslim community, which is of mainly North African heritage. Second, France admitted only a handful of the 2015 refugees from Syria and other conflict zones, a tiny fraction of what Germany admitted. Third, during the December 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, French authorities outlawed street demonstrations and even accused ecologists of defiling Place de la République in the center of Paris, where people had placed flowers in memory of the ISIS victims.

As in Austria, the true beneficiary of this turn to the right in France over immigration has been the neofascist National Front, which has been polling ahead of all other parties for the 2018 presidential elections. Hollande’s policies have bolstered the neofascists in a second way, by an anti-labor law that he is trying to push through on the grounds that it would stimulate the economy. This law would dilute the 35-hour week, make layoffs easier, and would allow firms to divide workers by reaching labor agreements at the plant level, thus undermining six decades of uniform labor contracts that have protected more vulnerable workers. Such policies show the bankruptcy of the center left, which has made its pact with neoliberalism. It has thus lost most of its working class base, which has in turn opened the road for demagoguery from right wing populists like the National Front.

In spring 2016, another contradiction suddenly emerged in France, as a new youth movement that has been compared to Occupy, Nuit Debout [Standing Up at Night], has galvanized the left. Beginning on March 31, 2016, hundreds and then thousands of demonstrators occupied Place de la République, transforming it from a site of national unity against terrorism to one of resistance to capital.

The Nuit debout demonstrators sought to block the labor “reforms,” but pointedly refused to issue any specific demands. This carried the scent of a total rather than a partial opposition to

the system. As one participant wrote, “it is not a piece of the cake that is being demanded, but a change in the cake itself” (Nathalie Quintane, “Nuit Debout, ça existe encore?” *Le Monde* 5-29-16).

With “Banlieus Debout,” Nuit Debout also made some modest connections to the marginalized communities of suburban Paris, which include many people of North African heritage. One Black activist from the Paris suburbs, the singer Fik’s Niavo, stated: “I am a banlieusard to the core and I sometimes got the impression that the Parisians looked down on me. But finally I went down to the Place de la République, because it seemed important to me to build bridges” (Isaline Bernard and Emilie Massemin, “Peu à peu, le mouvement Banlieus debout se lève avec Nuit debout,” *Reporterre: Quotidien de l’écologie* 4-16-16). While this was not a great success in terms of numbers, it was at least a beginning of the kind of solidarity across ethnic lines that is absolutely necessary for the future.

Trade unions, especially the formerly Communist Party-dominated General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the smaller Solidarity Unity Democracy federation (SUD), have also organized protest demonstrations and militant strikes against the proposed labor law, which have periodically shut down transport, communications, and energy supplies. On June 14, 2016, the ninth day of national demonstrations by trade unions against the new labor law took place, drawing hundreds of thousands into the streets; a similar demonstration was held on June 23 as well.

It is heartening to see these developments in France, even though they did not succeed in turning back Hollande’s reactionary labor law. Equally important is the awareness that old forms of thinking and action on the left need to be called into question. Whether these new initiatives can withstand the conservative storm after the inhuman July 2016 Nice attack is something that remains to be seen.

Where to Now?

But, though committee-form and ‘party-to-lead’ are opposites, they are not absolute opposites… the challenge demands that we synthesize not only the new relations of theory to practice, and all the forces of revolution, but philosophy’s ‘suffering, patience, and labor of the negative,’ i.e., experiencing absolute negativity — Raya Dunayevskaya (1990, p. xxxvii)

But it also seems clear, and not only in France, that neither the old hierarchical trade union/vanguard party organizational model nor the somewhat newer spontaneous self-organization model of Nuit Debout and the like are offering a model of philosophy and organization that can really challenge, let alone demolish and replace with a positive, humanist alternative the world of stagnant capitalism, neoliberal and/or authoritarian politics, and nationalist or fundamentalist demagoguery.

Was that not the challenge in Egypt and Tunisia as well? Don’t our Chinese counterparts need not only waves of strikes, but also real organization involving intellectuals with workers, albeit not on the old Maoist model? Don’t the Kurdish fighters and the revolutionary movement in

Syria and Turkey face similar questions?

These questions have been at the core of Marxist-Humanism for decades. We need organizations that participate in emancipatory movements while projecting a philosophy of revolution, in the best of the revolutionary dialectical tradition, from Marx, through Lenin and Luxemburg, to Dunayevskaya, and to today. In short, we need a new generation of philosopher-activists.

As Antonio Gramsci, the great Marxist thinker who met his death in Mussolini's prisons, put it: "The philosopher… not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action" (1971, p. 405).

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Society against State: The Brazilian Crisis Beneath the Surface

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Crisis, Democracy and Reaction

The current Brazilian crisis is redefining the boundaries between law and politics for a second time in less than 30 years in a dramatic and radical fashion. For different reasons, when the music stops, Brazilian politics and law will never be the same again. It seems that the Brazilian justice system has revealed the corrupt core of our public life, which has been open for business since at least the late 1980's.[1]

In varying degrees, most representatives of power seem implicated in this plot: the political parties as a whole and almost all of the leading political and business figures as well. This process can either open up an opportunity to radicalize Brazilian democracy or become an excuse to dismantle it. Thus, the crisis is not only about corruption; it is also related to radical democracy, and particularly to the so-called second wave of radical democracy that was born within Brazilian civil society.

The first wave of democratization took place when the Brazilian people were still living under a dictatorship. It eventually led to the 1988 Constitution, which include a long chapter on social rights and was based on a struggle-for-rights strategy that produced a strong and influential judiciary and system of justice. In fact, this state branch has been crucial to meet Brazilian society's ever-growing demands. In the past twenty years, the judiciary – particularly the Supreme Court – has played a central role in Brazilian politics. It has finally started to rule on controversial cases that used to wait long on its shelves, such as traditional communities' land rights, the abortion of anencephalic fetuses and gay marriage.[2] Furthermore, the Supreme Court was endowed with exclusive jurisdiction in the "Mensalão" ("monthly pay-off"), a criminal trial about corruption scandals during President Lula's terms that involved federal authorities, including important members of his government. The justice system, the police, the Public Prosecutor Office and the judiciary, are all currently involved in the "Lava-jato (*car-wash*) Operation"[3], a joint and massive initiative to fight corruption in Brazil. One can interpret these transformations as a response to the corrupt political system, which seemed to have turned its back on the demands of civil society and dedicated itself to maintaining power for its own sake.

The implementation of the constitutional rights established in 1988 was partially sabotaged by a conservative political culture and structure called "pemedebismo,"[4] which was first put into practice during the Brazilian Constitutional Assembly (1987-1988) in order either to avoid the recognition of social rights within the constitution or to weaken its enforcement and

implementation. Also, both the deregulation and transnationalization of markets in the 1990´s have played a role in weakening/undermining the force of this struggle-for-rights impulse by diminishing the power of the State to control and tax capital in order to fund public social policies.

The ongoing social process triggered by the second wave of radical democracy is civil society's reaction to the aforementioned "pemedebismo" phenomenon, a political arrangement that has made the state largely indifferent to social demands. As far as this new wave of democratization is concerned, its specific form of institutionalization is yet to be determined. Nevertheless, both the autonomist inspiration and anti-hierarchical form of social action[5] of such a wave may well have given birth to a generation of activists who are not particularly interested in taking part in traditional politics or even occupying state power positions. Rather, these activists are mostly concerned with creating self-organized forms of action using art and culture as a tool.[6]

Today's wave of social activism might be absorbed by traditional politics and have its innovative potential frustrated, or it could have important long-term consequences that should be taken into account when analyzing the current crisis. There might be either a systematic disregard for the state, so as to develop anarchic and experimental autonomous zones, completely free from its influence; or perhaps the rise of a new form of state, which is deprived of (most of) its power to directly regulate society, but which in turn still plays a central role in stimulating and partially financing the various self-regulating social fields, as well as helping them cope with conflicts that occasionally appear.[7]

If the latter possibility should happen to occur, an all-mighty state will not exist any longer. Instead, a coordination entity would take over the country's affairs, sharing its sovereign power with society, giving back normative power to the latter –that is, a form of power presently concentrated in parliament –, and dedicating itself primarily to solving conflicts among the many partially autonomous zones. Even though it is not easy to imagine such a possibility taking place in reality – as our political imagination seems to be almost completely dominated by the State and civil society duality[8] – it is necessary to seriously consider this prospect in order not to prematurely subsume what could be innovative about this new wave of social activism in the traditional political grammar.

As a matter of fact, it is important to point out that the current political crisis is partially a positive result of the development of a strong justice system, designed to implement the Brazilian constitution and include an autonomous and very well-paid judiciary, as well as an equally powerful and well-paid federal and state prosecutor, that is, a public agency responsible for representing social interests in crime investigations and trials (corruption included), and proposing a Brazilian version of class actions to address environmental issues, among other collective or universal questions. Moreover, it is worth noting that the state and federal prosecutor have become so powerful and autonomous today that it makes sense to describe them as a new state power rather than a mere agency among others.

Over the last two years, almost every single week Brazilians have had to deal with shocking new revelations of a complicated, widespread and long-lasting corruption scheme, which has been uncovered in "Operação Lava-Jato" by the state prosecutor with the aid of the federal police and the federal Department of Justice. On the one hand, there has not yet been any conclusive proof that all of those involved in this scheme have use power for private gain. That is one of the reasons why a significant part of the country's population went to the streets to oppose the impeachment of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff from the PT (Workers' Party), and has systematically cast doubts about how the federal Justice has been treating the former President Lula. On the other hand, there seems to be no compelling reason to doubt that all political parties and a large number of leading political figures, including those from the PT, received a substantial sum of money from some of the main Brazilian contractors to finance their campaigns, personal expenses, and party expenses.

Bearing all that in mind, one may draw the conclusion that "Operação Lava-Jato" has unearthed a deep and fundamental structure of Brazilian politics. Of course, there is a chance that everything will remain the same, with business as usual prevailing over other areas after some scapegoats are sacrificed on the altars of our society of the spectacle. But this "tudo termina em pizza" ("everything ends up in pizza") scenario – to quote a well-known and widespread Brazilian euphemism for impunity – seems less likely to occur this time around if one examines the evolution of the rule of law in Brazil and the roots of the system put in place to prevent and investigate corruption. Since the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, Brazil has experienced a radical transformation of the rule of law, which has changed the way politics operates, and which will certainly change the country's self-image. When the power, duties and income of the police, judges and prosecutors do not depend only on political negotiations[9], but derive directly from the text of the Constitution, it become less likely that they will be manipulated by political interests.

The First Wave of Democratization: The 1988 Constitution and "pemedebismo"

Before 1988, left-wing thought and social activists had never taken law seriously in Brazil, and that was for a good reason. Brazilian politics has always functioned top to bottom and been used law mainly to legitimize autocratic decisions. During the twentieth century, the country alternated between short democratic periods followed by coup d'états and long periods of authoritarian government in which the democratic rule of law did not exist. It is only now that Brazil is experiencing its longest democratic period, almost 30 years.

Orthodox Marxist and Foucauldian approaches to law still tend to prevail among the Brazilian academic left as these theories provided a relatively accurate description of Brazil's reality, at least through 1988.[10] As far as a Brazilian left-wing intellectual's task, such a thinker has always been expected to denounce the oppression implemented by means of law and not to explore its potential double-edged properties, as Franz Neumann put it in the preface of *The Rule of Law*.[11] For law will acquire this double-edged character only if it becomes a matter of contestation between the classes in parliament and the judiciary.

Neumann states that when the lower classes start fighting for its rights, it exposes the inequality of bourgeois law, especially regarding contracts and property.[12] This fight makes it clear that contracts conceal an unfair exchange of work for wages, and that property rights disguise self-interest. To bring some balance to the "exchange" promoted by labor contracts, it is necessary to add several obligatory clauses to them, which limit exploitation by granting social rights to all workers.

Mandatory social rights both compensate and expose the inequality of work under capitalism, as well as and the inequality of the freedom of contract. During the Weimar years the concept of *social function of property* appeared to regulate goods in the name of social interest rather than the purely egoistic interests. To hold property then was no longer a matter of merely satisfying one´s own individual needs; on the contrary, it was related to using things economically in a way that takes the social interest into account.

Most importantly, those changes in the function of law, which were caused mainly by certain transformations in the structure and functioning of state powers due to the configuration of social conflict, started to limit bourgeois control over capital. That is why, as Neumann asserts, Nazism followed the democratic effervescence of the Weimar Republic. When the rule of law is put in the service of the oppressed classes and menaces the bourgeois power over capital – for example, by guaranteeing social rights and restraining the control over property – the bourgeoisie tends to try to *escape from law* [13]by providing support to irrational and autarchic forms of government or regulation, which neutralize demands from civil society. To illustrate that point, one may come up with regional and global examples from different times ans contexts, such as the Nazi regime or the Brazilian "pemedebismo" phenomenon[14], as well as the so-called transnational private regimes[15] respectively, which even traditional theorists like Gunther Teubner admit, it tends to become authoritarian.[16]

Neumann generalized his analysis to the USA during the 1950's by using the concept of false legality and political alienation.[17] Only if formal institutions do not respond to social demands appropriately will society tend to feel alienated from politics. Such a state of affairs, combined with some psychological factors and certain legal circumstances, facilitates the rise of authoritarian forms of rule. One of those alienated forms of the state is discriminatory legality. For example, during the McCarthy period, public servants were investigated and finally dismissed simply for being accused of communism. Although the state had the right to dismiss its servants during that period, Neumann argued that this right was exercised in a discriminatory manner. The state used the universal form of the law to disguise its discrimination against communists, thus disrespecting popular sovereignty by creating a zone in which law was used arbitrarily.

A democratic law should allow social conflicts to impact the performance and design of formal institutions, thereby upholding the sovereignty of individuals and keeping them legally free from state control. Neumann makes this point clear in the last pages of his introduction to Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*,[18] where he states that the classic view of the separation of powers (in his social context) should be abandoned, as it constitutes an obstacle to social

transformation. Contrary to ordinary interpreters, Neumann argued that Montesquieu's separation of powers consisted in the idea that no power should be allowed to make a decision without revision. That is all.

As far as state powers are concerned, they must not necessarily have a delimited number beforehand (two or three, for instance) nor a predetermined set of competences, because such a naturalized structure could be used to delegitimize social transformation. For example, during the Weimar Republic, Carl Schmitt and some other conservative jurists defended the view that the Parliament and statutes should not rule over property rights. As a result, all social rights granted by the Weimar constitution did not have the same binding force as did the other parts of the constitution. [19]

Since 1988, Brazilian law has lost much of its autocratic and top-down character. The 1988 constitution has more than 200 articles and was the result of a direct participation process that still needs to be properly studied. The Constitutional Assembly lasted almost two years and received 120 popular amendment proposals backed by twelve million signatures, as well as seventy thousand suggestions by individual citizens and organizations. 180 public hearings were also held to debate all parts of the constitution with those directly interested in it.[20]

Of course, all this participation did not come from nowhere. During the 1970´s and the 1980´s, even under a civil-military dictatorship, Brazilian civil society organized itself in several social movements, trade unions included. For example, Eder Sader's classic study, When *New Characters Entered the Scene* (*Quando Novos Personagens Entraram em Cena*),[21] tells the story of the struggle of the mothers' clubs, the metalworkers' union from Sao Bernardo, the metallurgical union's opposition from Sao Paulo, and the health committees of the East Side of Sao Paulo. Such a book helps to explain how Brazilian civil society could respond so quickly to the political opportunities opened up by the National Constitutional Assembly.[22] It also sheds light on why the reaction against this radical democratic impulse was so quickly and effectively organized.

The radical social movements increasing control of the state budget, by means of those various social rights guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution, did not go unopposed. Already during the elaboration of the constitution, a group of federal deputies and senators called "centrão" ("big center") formed to counter the incorporation of a progressive agenda into the constitutional text. So the Brazilian conservative political culture known as "pemedebismo" may be traced back to this group of representatives and, what is more, has dominated Brazilian politics since then.[23]

The political culture of "pemedebismo" generalized those practices performed by "centrão" and PMDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party) throughout the entire political system. The PMDB – then MDB – was created during the Brazilian dictatorship as an authorized oppositional party in an artificial bipartisan system that was institutionalized right after the coup. The MDB – later PMDB – was never a political party with a consistent ideology. Rather, it was created to gather all the oppositionist that Brazilian dictatorship was willing to tolerate

in a political system that provided very little room for popular participation.

Right after the democratization process, the PMDB became the biggest party in the country. It used its expertise to incorporate new members and supporters without developing a coherent ideology. From that moment on, the PMDB has managed to occupy a central position in all Brazilian national coalitions. Nowadays, it is virtually impossible to govern Brazil without support from PMDB, and its long-standing and well-established practices have left an indelible mark on Brazilian political culture.

The Brazilian political system is organized to form big coalitions that tend to dissolve social antagonisms. In fact, the system has perpetuated itself by ignoring social conflict and attracting ever increasing numbers of allies in exchange for desirable and influential positions in the government, which makes it possible to control part of the public spending. Therefore, the more the system is able to avoid influence from the public sphere, the more it perpetuates itself without incorporating new interests.[24]

As a result of these fierce conflicts, the 1988 constitution guarantees all sorts of rights in a complex and contradictory way, making it impossible at times to conclude, from its text, what is the content of this or that right. Besides that, the binding force of many social rights still depend upon further statutes which were never enacted by the parliament. Chapter by chapter, one can identify the social struggle that took place during its elaboration. One could say that the 1988 constitution does not have any winners.

So social conflicts continue, but are now carried out by other means. The implementation of rights by the Executive and its final interpretation by the judiciary – especially the Supreme Court – plays a central role in Brazil today. The indeterminacy of the Brazilian constitution, which expresses an uneasy political compromise between progressive and conservative forces, leaves opens a lot of space to interpretation. From 1988 until today, Brazilians have been doing nothing less than fighting for the meaning and the implementation of their constitution, inclusive through the judiciary.[25] Not surprisingly, the judiciary has been accused, mostly by reactionary forces and social scientists, of disrespecting “the” separation of powers and promoting a “judicialization of politics” which disrespects the “natural” limits between state powers.[26]

The advance of social rights and its counter-force, “pemedebismo”, both came to a head at the end of Lula’s two terms. As mentioned above, civil society organized itself to dispute the text of the constitution during its elaboration and has continued to do so by all means available since then. It was not necessary to change the constitution to implement Lula’s projects. He just implemented many of its progressive parts.

On the other hand, to implement a massive project of privatizations and conservative economic measures during Fernando Henrique Cardoso terms, it was necessary to change the constitutional text through amendments.[27] Conservatives still say today that the social rights guaranteed by the 1988 constitution weaken Brazilian international economic performance,

exert huge pressure on its budget, and threaten to produce unbearable public deficits and they demand a complete reform of the constitution[28].

At the end of Lula's second term it seemed that almost nobody in the country was in open opposition to the government. There was no significant political adversary of the governmental coalition, which had reached the height of its power. Even after accusations of corruption and the condemnation of several key PT figures during the "Mensalão" – an investigation which revealed a scheme to distribute money to deputies and senators in exchange of votes, and which triggered the current "Operação Lava-Jato" – Lula was still one of the most popular presidents in Brazilian history. His two terms benefited from an international boom of commodities, which generated massive new income for Brazil, enough to finance social programs without intensifying social conflicts and to create jobs as a result of economic growth.

Nonetheless, the radical impulse that raised its head during the elaboration of the 1988 constitution seemed to be finally exhausted and tamed. The implementation of redistributive programs which reduced inequality in Brazil to historically low levels was financed by an international boom of commodities, not through much needed reform of the regressive and unequal tax system and the state economic incentives to capital – the two most important sources of inequality. Since the head of the ruling coalition was a center-left party, some items of a progressive agenda were implemented, even though from within the traditional and corrupt political framework.

The Second Wave of Democratization: June, 2013 and the Autonomist Impulse

Then something completely different and unexpected happened in June 2013, even before the severe economic crises that have hit Brazil more recently. The country experienced the biggest wave of public protests in its entire history. They were triggered by a demonstration for free public transportation for all and against a twenty cent rise in the state of Sao Paulo's bus fee. This demonstration has been organized almost annually by an anarchist inspired group called "Movimento Passe Livre" (MPL-Free Fare Movement).

But during that year nothing happened as expected.[29]The impact of the twenty cent raise in the budget of the city workers, who had not been the focus of the PT's redistributive programs; the anger and disappointment of part of the population against PT's participation on "Mensalão", and the extreme brutality of the state police against peaceful demonstrations in the "Avenida Paulista" in the heart of Sao Paulo, caused a popular revolt. Subsequent protests organized by the MPL attracted a rapidly increasing number of participants and eventually culminated, a few weeks later, in massive spontaneous demonstrations in several large and medium cities, but now without any clear political direction. People seemed to be protesting against everyone and everything.

Everyone who was on the street during this time had the impression that something genuinely new was happening. Young workers and students, who had never been in a public

demonstration before, were on the streets fighting for free public transportation side by side with members of the middle and even the upper classes, railing against corruption and the government, and demonstrating for better public services. Depending on where one was in the demonstration, one could hear and read different and even contradictory slogans, from left to right. Also, for the first time since the Brazilian dictatorship, right-wing movements organized themselves to capture the street and to protest against corruption and against the PT's political hegemony.

The Brazilian people, either organized or not, have not left the streets since then. In 2014 and 2015 the country witnessed an increasing number of public demonstrations, making clear that June 2013 was not an isolated episode. There seems to be a new and radical democratic impulse manifesting itself in Brazilian civil society, born behind the back of a corrupt and deaf political system. New characters are still entering the scene. In 2015 in Sao Paulo, students occupied 200 public schools to protest against a Governor's plan to close supposedly under-utilized schools and to relocate its students.[30] The occupations lasted almost two months and managed to gain public support, despite the attacks of Sao Paulo's government and police. As a result, the relocation plan was officially postponed and the state's Secretary of Education was dismissed.

Between 2014 and 2016 hundreds of empty buildings were occupied by MTST (Homeless Workers Movement) to fight against real estate speculation and abusive increases in rent. Though these occupations have been taking place before, they seem to gain force after 2014. [31] Also in 2015, the so-called "feminist spring"[32] – a series of internet and public demonstrations in various cities of Brazil – occurred in response to the approval of a conservative bill by a specialized commission of the lower chamber of the Parliament (n. 5.069/2013) that was presented by the Deputy Eduardo Cunha (PMDB-RJ) and the lower chamber´s Constitutional Commission. The proposed bill made it more difficult for raped women to gain access to abortions, a right guaranteed by Brazilian federal legislation. Feminism has also been extremely active on the internet, promoting digital campaigns that have gained widespread attention, such as the ones propagated through the hashtags #PrimeiroAssedio (#FirstSexualHarassement) and #NãoPoetizeOMachismo (#DoNotPoeticizeMachismo).[33] Still in 2015, the Black Women's National March organized its biggest demonstration in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, with around twenty thousand women participating.[34]

For anyone who believes in the transformative force of law under democracy, it is impossible to write or to read about these recent developments in Brazilian civil society without being profoundly moved and without feeling a deep sense of resentment against a bureaucratized PT and the other left-wing parties who have not yet made any significant overtures to this remarkable new wave of activists. On the other hand, these new social movements do not seem interested in taking part in formal politics – at least not in the form of politics that have occurred during the last thirty years.

The 1988 wave of democratization deeply changed Brazilian politics and law by creating a

constitution based on the political grammar of the struggle for rights, but also by creating the PT, a party that elected the President of Brazil for four consecutive terms. The institutional consequences of the 2013 wave are still unclear. The PT still behaves as the leader of the left-wing parties and – against all evidence to the contrary – accuses the judicial system of punishing only politicians of the left, and turns its back on the gale storm of fresh air coming from civil society. As any bureaucratized party, it seems to insist on staying in the forefront of the same center-left coalition, by appealing to trade unions and peasant organizations who still support the party and the government.

But the new autonomist and anarchist inspired social movements do not show any signs of interest in the old political parties or in forming new ones. The new right-wing social movements seem not to be following the same path. They showed their discontent with political parties and offered their backing to only those involved in the "Lava-jato Operation", but recently decided to openly support candidates for city councilor[35]. Some radical left-wing parties, such as PSOL (Socialism and Liberty Party), also see the operation as an opportunity to transform Brazilian politics and to give voice to civil society, though none of them seemed to be able to give these new radical activists a voice in formal politics.

Some Final Remarks

Since no one saw June 2013 coming, no one knows what will happen in the near future. Will Brazilian politics go back to the way it was before 2013? Will the country experience a radical transformation of its politics, either moving towards the right or the left? Will the left-wing break into pieces as the PT loses its power and prestige, and wait years till someone like Bernie Sanders manages to take its voice back to the mainstream? Will these new social movements help to reinvent the state and the political parties? All I think it is safe to say for now is, to paraphrasing a well-known Mayakovski quote ("It is better to die from vodka than from boredom"): nobody will die from vodka in Brazil, at least for the next twenty years. But maybe someone will suffer a heart attack, considering the extremely high speed of the unfolding events.

Within civil society, a new wave of public school occupations is demanding better conditions in public education.[36] The streets keep sending signals to the political system that even a thorough reorganization will not be enough to realign the state with the demands of society. Perhaps it will be necessary to redesign Brazilian formal institutions, our representative system and parties, or perhaps to destroy and rebuild our separation of powers, to make society feel represented by the state again. Until these demands find a new institutional setting, civil society will remain in extreme tension with the law and the state.

Or maybe one will see the emergence of a new form of political organization which, as I suggested at the beginning of this text, has as its main objective to prevent the state from becoming the all-powerful ruler of life and society, but without falling into a radical libertarianism, that is, by maintaining the state's function of financing and judging conflicts between self-regulated spaces.[37] "Two axioms, indeed, seem to guide the march of Western

civilization since its dawn: the first establishes that the true society develops under the protective shadow of the State; the second sets out a categorical imperative: it is necessary to work “, recalls Pierre Clastres.[38] For such a political organization proves possible, it may be necessary to deal with the second imperative mentioned: work.

To give greater plausibility to this possible renewal in the forms of political organization, one would need to analyze this new wave of activism from this point of view, that is, with a view to its possible willingness to defend new ways of living and working apart from competition and life forms that seek to overcome the division between rich and poor. These divisions are closely related to the division between dominant and dominated which, in turn, are related to the state as the guarantor of private property. Unfortunately, this is a task to be carried out on another occasion as it is beyond the scope of this text.

Notes

[1] Of course I am not saying that there was no corruption in Brazil before. I am simply suggesting that its current features seem to have emerged during the 80s.

[2] Ferreira. S. L; Fernandes, E. B. D. (2013) “O STF nas “cortes” Victor Nunes, Moreira Alves e Gilmar Mendes”, *Revista Direito GV*, n. 9. Vol. 1, p. p. 23-46.

[3] It is relevant to note that the “Car-wash Operation” appears to distinguish Brazil from other countries in Latin America where the left is currently facing successive defeats.

[4] Nobre, M. (2013) *Imobilismo em Movimento*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras.

[5] Gohn. M. G. (2014). *Manifestações de Julho de 2013 no Brasil e nas Praças dos Indignados do Mundo*. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes.

[6] Despite that fact, many of these collectives are financed by the State culture incentives, see: Castilho, I. (2016). “Nas Periferias Nasce um Novo Feminismo”, *Outras Palavras*, https://outraspalavras.net/oca/2016/01/04/nas-periferias-nasce-um-novo-feminismo/.

[7] I am certainly moving on thin ice here, as these phenomena are recent and have not been systematically studied yet. Nevertheless, there are evidence that these new social movements do not demand new rights, they are mostly preoccupied in fighting against sexism, racism and violence without the intervention of State police and justice apparatus, for example, using culture of creating safe spaces to change the way women see themselves and to have an impact in their forms of life.

[8] Scott, J. C. (1998) *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Graeber, D. (2004) *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

[9] Of course there are political negotiations every time a branch of state bureaucracy demand

an increase on its budget and income. What I am saying here is that judges, public prosecutors are protected by the Constitution, that requires public tender to access the office, guarantees them stability in office and the highest salaries among public servants.

[10] For exemple: Kashiura Jr., C. N.; Akamine Jr., O.; Melo, T. (orgs.) (2015) *Para a Crítica do Direito*. São Paulo: Outras Expressões.

[11] Neumann, F. L. (1986) *The Rule of Law*. *Political Theory and the Legal System in Modern Society. Leamington.* Spa: Berg.

[12] For a complete analysis of these issues: Rodriguez, J. R. (2009) *Fuga do Direito. Um Estudo sobre o Direito Contemporâneo a partir de Franz Neumann*. São Paulo: Saraiva.

[13] For more detail see: Rodriguez, J. R., (2006) *Fuga do Direito*…

[14] There is no space here to analyze these different autarchy figures, but I want to make it very clear that as mentioning them side by side I do not intend to suggest that Brazil is following an authoritarian path similar to these political moments. I am just saying these completely different figures appear as a reaction against democratization processes.

[15] "Transnational legal regimes" are de facto legal orders that produce norms away from state control to regulate business transactions, soccer and the internet, among other social fields. About this, see: Teubner, G. (1996) "Global Bukowina: Legal Pluralism in the World-Society", In: *Global Law Without a State*, Gunther Teubner (ed.), London: Dartsmouth; Scheuermann, W. (2008) *Frankfurt School Perspectives on Globalization, Democracy and the Law* . New York & London: Routledge.

[16] Teubner, G., op. cit. ; Scheuermann, W., op. cit.

[17] Neumann, F. L., (1953) "The Concept of Political Freedom", 53 Columbia Law Review 901-935.

[18] Neumann, F. L., (1957) "Montesquieu", in: *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State*, ed. H. Marcuse, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, p. 96-148.

[19] Kahn-Freund, O. (1931) "The Social Ideal of the Reich Labour Court – A Critical Examination of the Practice of the Reich Labour Court", In: Kahn-Freund, O. (1978). *Selected Writings*. London: Stevens.

[20] Pilati, A. (2008) *A Constituinte de 1987-1988. Progressistas, conservadores, ordem econômica e regras do jogo*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora PUC-Rio.

[21] Sader, E. (1988) *Quando Novos Personagens Entraram em Cena*: *experiências, falas e lutas dos trabalhadores da Grande São Paulo (1970-80)*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

[22] Brandão, L. C., (2011) *Os movimentos sociais e a Assembleia Nacional Constituinte de*

1987-1988: entre a política institucional e a participação popular, São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, Dissertação de Mestrado, mimeo.

[23] Nobre. M. (2013). *Imobilismo*…

[24] Yet it is certainly true Brazil has a fragmented party system that makes it very difficult to conquer a majority in the parliament, from 1993 until 2013 Brazilian politics found a way to organize itself between two clear alternatives, PSDB and PT, that alternated themselves as leaders of big coalitions that were able to implement, respectively, center-right and center left programs, see: FIGUEIREDO, A. C. (2001), "Instituições e Política no Controle do Executivo". *Dados*, vol. 44, no 4, pp. 689-727; FIGUEIREDO, A. C. (2001); LIMONGI, F. (1999), *Executivo e Legislativo na Nova Ordem Constitucional*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora FGV; FIGUEIREDO, A. C. (2002), "Incentivos Eleitorais, Partidos e Política Orçamentária". *Dados*, vol. 45, n. 2, pp. 303-344.

[25] Rodriguez, J. R. (2015). "Luta por direitos, rebeliões e democracia no século XXI: algumas tarefas para a pesquisa em direito". Em: Streck, Lênio L., Rocha, Leonel. S.; Engelmann, Wilson (orgs.). *Constituição, sistemas sociais e hermenêutica*. Porto Alegre: Livraria do Advogado.

[26]Nobre M., Rodriguez, J.R. (2011) "Judicialização da política: déficits explicativos e bloqueios normativistas". 91 *Novos Estudos* 5-20. Seeing federal Judge Moro, who is heading "Lava-jato operation", as an individual hero is certainly a big mistake. His performance in several other processes had followed the exact same pattern: he defends criminal proceedings with fewer guarantees for the accused, like many of his fellow prosecutors who work in Lava-jato. His conservative vision of criminal law, which is object of dispute among lawyers, is aligned with the global debate on the subject, which is influenced by the same theoretical sources that influenced, for example, the creation of the American "patriotic act". His supporters say finally someone is enforcing the Brazilian law and his critics say he is disrespecting the constitution. Indeed, Brazilian corruption bureaucrats are in constant contact with the international debate on the subject and are influenced by it (about this, see: Schaffer, G. C. (2012). "Transnational Legal Process and State Change", *7 Law and Social Inquiry, pp. 229–264.).* Of course this is a big theme to be debated, but surely it is not a new one. What draws one's attention in this case is the high degree of efficiency and integration between Moro's, the public prosecutors' and the review courts' work. It seems clear they have been working together coordinately, something unheard of before. In previous corruption cases, even some judged by Moro himself, there were cancellations by procedural errors that do not seem to be happening this time. Moro is just a symbol, or the "concrete-absolute", as Hegel could have put it: Brazil is experiencing an institutional transformation that needs to be studied. This transformation is both a proof of the strength of our institutions and an opportunity for patriotic-act like public policies, especially considering the huge support "Lava-jato" has being having so far. Nevertheless, several measures taken by Moro, even though confirmed by review courts, have been violently criticized, including by ministers of the Brazilian Supreme Court, which shows how his positions are controversial, but not clearly

illegal. About this question, see: Rodriguez, J. R. (2016). “Contra o fanatismo textualista. Corrupção, jeitinho brasileiro e estado de direito”, *Novos Estudos Cebrap*, n. 104, Março, pp. 61-76.

[27] Melo, M. A. (2008) *Reformas Constitucionais no Brasil: Instituições Políticas e Processo Decisório*. Rio de Janeiro: Revan.

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On Thinking With and Against the State

By | 2016: vol. 15, nos. 2-3

> "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."[1]

For a long time, that concise declaration by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* formed the basis for how many radicals and revolutionaries thought about the nature of political power and the state. Today, in the second decade of the twenty first century, Communist regimes are an increasingly distant memory and the world is more economically and culturally intertwined than it was in 1848.

And yet recently we have seen developments such as the legitimation crisis of the European Union and the Brexit that followed, the massive displacement of persons fleeing violence in the Middle East, and, in the U.S. both growing outrage over economic and racial inequality, and what has so far been an unpredictable and volatile Presidential election. These events have challenged and strained currently existing liberal democratic regimes, perhaps to an extent not seen since the late-1960s. Rather than destined to become obsolete, as some thought during the heyday of discussions about "globalization" in the 1990s, today's key political issues also force us to confront questions about the purpose and significance of organized political power—in other words, of the modern state.

On the American left (broadly defined), the state is occasionally invoked in discussions of political analysis and strategy, as for example in Michael Parenti's suggestion that "to reform capitalism and or move beyond it, the left needs to place the state front and center in its strategic considerations."[2] In other critical contexts, terms such as the "carceral state" and the "deep state" have been used to describe the growing prominence of judicial, administrative, and penal institutions and their exercise of undemocratic powers.[3] Yet despite this general agreement on our need to theoretically grapple with the state's capacities and limitations, there is little consensus on how a new democratic movement in the U.S. would position itself in relation to it. Recently, the unexpected popularity of Senator Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign posed one such concrete dilemma, sparking debates between supporters of the Democratic Party seeking to push it to a more progressive agenda and those more enticed by the possibilities of a break with the dual party system.[4] These reinvigorated debates make it important for those in favor of progressive social change to once again

consider how to approach the state: as a bulwark against neoliberalism, a repressive apparatus to be smashed, an institution to be systematically democratized—or perhaps something else entirely?

The lack of a consensus on what the modern state actually is has not been for a lack of effort. Debates about the capacities and functions of the state can be found on the left since the nineteenth century origins of European socialism. During the years of the First International, the relationship of the workers' movement to the state became one of the points of controversy among anarchists, Lassallean state socialists, parliamentary reformers, and those who eventually became "Marxists." Since the older Marx never managed to conduct his analysis of the bourgeois state hinted at in the *Grundrisse*, later on it was up to subsequent Marxist movements in such different national contexts as Germany, the United States, and Russia to outline the stance that working class parties should take vis-à-vis existing political institutions. Was the state to be seized by force or infiltrated through the ballot? Should bourgeois institutions be dismantled or reoriented toward working class aims? Is the state a neutral instrument, equally capable of promoting the interests of any class that occupies the place of political power, or is it by nature a means of bourgeois class domination? By the first decade of the twentieth century, this internal struggle for an adequate definition of the capitalist state was directly tied to questions of concrete political practice. What one thought about the state had almost everything to do with where they situated themselves on the spectrum between revolution and reform.

In the postwar decades, especially during during the 1970s, the academization of Marxism in Europe and the United States led to a growing interest and proliferation of theories of the capitalist state, first in the field of sociology and not long after in political science. In those often-arcane debates, adjectives such as "instrumentalist," "functionalist," "derivationist," "dependent," and "relatively autonomous" were used to stake out competing positions in an elaborate theoretical enterprise.[5] But since the exhaustion of these discussions by the mid-1980s, aside from a few lone voices there has not been a concerted attempt to further develop state theory from the left. [pullquote]. . . aside from a few lone voices there has not been a concerted attempt to further develop state theory from the left.[/pullquote]

Rather than recovering any of those "isms" or attempting to bridge the significant differences between them, the remainder of this essay has a different focus. As an essentially contested political concept, what makes discussing the state difficult is its dual existence as 1) a set of particular, distinct institutions; and 2) as a discursive or ideological representation of their interactions. The mutual evolution of these two dimensions of organized political power is one of the defining qualities of modernity; the formation and emergence of modern administrative and organizational institutions would have been impossible without a corresponding political language of "the State" by means of which this new authority could be represented.[6] Therefore, the state is not simply a coercive or administrative power, but equally importantly, an ideological mediator that defines the scope and limits of political practices. And so, in order to get at the heart of the matter, we must also understand the way that discourses *about* the state have been formed and articulated, and the historical changes undergone by these

discourses in the modern era.

The disciplinary history of political science in the United States provides an especially useful vantage point for understanding this relationship between the discourse of the state and the emergence of state institutions. Over the course of the existence of American political science as a specialized field of knowledge, the state has been both a necessary and elusive concept. The production of knowledge about the state reveals a series of broader social tensions in the history of the United States from the post-Civil War years through the New Deal, the Cold War era, and into the present. Therefore, the history of the ways it was constructed and articulated contains potential insights and lessons for thinking about the state today.

When political science was first consolidated into a discipline in the 1880s, branching away from its sister fields sociology and political economy, the state was the central concept around which the study of politics was organized. The formation of political science as the study of the state was closely tied to the social conditions of that period. Industrialization, westward expansion, urbanization, and the rise of the labor movement put pressures on the diffuse nineteenth century American "state of courts and parties," encouraging the expansion of public power that began to take shape during the Progressive Era.[7] Coalescing in the midst of this social transformation from out of the intersection of moral philosophy, history, and jurisprudence, the leading scholars and departments of political science were directly involved in what they saw as the process of refining government institutions to meet these challenges, and through that, the fulfilling of the historical development of the American nation.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, large numbers of American students of law and history had trained at German universities. Upon returning to the US, they brought with them the juridical theories of the state formulated across the Atlantic. Of these German-educated scholars, the perhaps the most influential by the turn of the century was John Burgess, who founded the first school of political science at Columbia University in 1880. Burgess was a conservative Hegelian and used the state concept as a metaphor for the metaphysical bonds of community and popular sovereignty that had developed historically among various peoples. [pullquote]Given the multi-faceted character of the state, attempts to either smash or to theorize it out of existence will both be quixotic . . .[/pullquote]Not only were such conceptions of popular sovereignty largely circumscribed to white men, thus excluding women and minorities from the vote, but there was also an unmistakable class component in this new science of politics, in which the constitutional foundations of the Madisonian republic needed to be protected against agitation from those heretofore excluded from the political process.

Burgess's vision of a historical and juridical state existing above the particular institutions of government appealed to a perpetual political community to hold off the challenges posed by social conflicts arising from the changing socioeconomic landscape. While the Social Democratic Party of Germany was seeing mass electoral gains over the course of the 1890s, across the Atlantic the Germanophile Burgess fretted about he "vicious nonsense" of socialism, which "advocated the capture of the government by the masses, through an indiscriminate

suffrage, and its use for the distribution of the wealth of the classes, or for conducting or controlling business enterprises."[8] A majority of Burgess's fellow political scientists shared this sentiment, even if at the same time they encouraged the existence of a vigorous administrative state that could foster a strong national union. By the time the American Political Science Association was founded in 1903, political science in the United States had developed a link to the mission of Progressive reformism, for which a strong and active state was key. In this manner, the goals of political science and national policymaking dovetailed: the existence of the administrative state would provide a *raison d'etre* for a political science built around the study of the state, and the study of the state would, in turn, aid in the state's development and perpetuation.

Yet as American political science began to take an institutional life of its own with the appearance of numerous academic departments in the first decades of the twentieth century, the concept of the state also became increasingly fragmented and controversial. Considering the existing views of the state as too metaphysical and imprecise, students of politics began to turn away from the historical-evolutionary and juridical perspectives that preoccupied the first generation. Instead, a greater emphasis developed on deconstructing the state into its component parts, through the study of specific governmental institutions such as Congress and the bureaucracy. The years surrounding World War One saw these Progressive attitudes align with the presidency of Woodrow Wilson—a former Princeton political scientist and author of an 1889 textbook called *The State*, which despite its title was less a metaphysical treatise on political community than a comparative examination of existing governmental systems.[9] Concurrently, the ideological association of the state concept with its so-called "Teutonic" origins and its apparent foreignness in comparison to the Anglo-American tradition of government affected its declining popularity in the interwar years.

Indicative of this shift was that the concepts of state and government, which were consistently treated as distinct in previous decades, gradually became treated as synonyms. In a nation that still held a strong historical and ideological attachment to local government, and whose federal state developed in a peculiar way compared to other industrialized countries, appeals to a vague state concept obscured the real substance of politics—the functioning of government in its various branches and at various administrative levels, as well as the growing fields of research into public opinion and the group psychology. After World War One, liberal pluralist theories of politics in both England and the U.S. adopted radical positions in defense of the associational rights of groups in civil society against the principles of absolute sovereignty asserted by the state.[10] In a development reminiscent of Marx's metaphor of the *camera obscura* by which ideology inverted social reality, it was not long after the administrative scope of the national American state grew during the New Deal that academic political scientists began coming to a consensus that something called "the State" did not actually exist.

The real withering away of the state did not take place in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, but in the imaginary of American political science during the 1950s. Postwar American social science was dominated by the new paradigm of behavioralism, seeking to advance knowledge about the social order by developing a common set of standards and lines of inquiry across the

disciplines. Proponents of the behavioral revolution such as David Easton and Robert Dahl argued for a revival of political science by bracketing away normative considerations and focusing primarily on the empirically observable aspects of political and social interactions.[11] Not only did this approach have little use for the notion of the state, but it also provided a justification of the status quo of Cold War America. One of the central premises of the behavioral revolution was that instead of asserting the presence of a ruling class, or what C. Wright Mills called "the power elite," the liberal, pluralist, and federal character of the American polity could effectively incorporate the preferences of competing interest groups, producing sociopolitical stability and moderate policy outcomes.[12]

By the mid-1950s, leading figures like Easton were arguing that the state was at best, a misleading concept, declaring that "neither the state nor power is a concept that serves to bring together political research."[13] Instead, Easton proposed to speak of the "political system" and the "authoritative allocation of values," respectively, as analogous concepts. Influenced by the functionalist sociology of Talcott Parsons, he argued that the notion of a political system better captured the reality of social interaction, not only in advanced industrial societies but also in those of the developing world. Identifying the operation of the political system with the successful and authoritative allocation of values among groups and individuals, he painted the picture of an essentially consensus-based and self-correcting status quo that tended toward a social homeostasis. Within this academic culture, the voices of political radicals like Mills were few and far in between. From the postwar years up until the late 1960s, mainstream political science remained concerned with institutions, but attempted to theorize the state out of existence.

It was not until the political crises and the breakdown of the New Deal liberal consensus, exacerbated by the escalation of the Vietnam War, that the behavioral revolution faltered under the dual weight of its own ambitions and the increasingly apparent detachment from political reality. As antiwar protests, racial tensions, and urban blight began to garner the attention of policymakers and the public, it also appeared increasingly absurd to speak of the United States as a healthy and effectively functioning political system. Delivering the Presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1969, Easton conceded that "we as political scientists have proved so disappointingly ineffectual in anticipating the world of the 1960s."[14] As one piece of evidence, he produced the example that in the entire decade between 1958 and 1968, the *American Political Science Review* (the official journal of the APSA) had published only three articles on urban crises, four on racial conflict, one on poverty, two on civil disobedience, and two on violence in the U.S.

Behavioralism and structural-functionalism were clearly incapable of addressing the essential political issues of its time, including the broader wave of structural readjustments in the economies and societies of advanced industrialized democracies during the 1970s. A new generation of critical voices in the tradition of Mills, including those in the newly formed Caucus for a New Political Science, began to register their objections to the methodological obscurantism and political complacency (or worse, collaboration) by which academic political science had helped further the interests of the capitalist state.

The movement that took place during the late 1970s and 1980s to “bring the state back in” led to a renewal of interest in the uses of history and classical social theory for political science.[15] Drawing upon but also critiquing the neo-Marxist theories of the state developed concurrently by figures like Ralph Miliband, Nicos Poulantzas, Goran Therborn, and others, this scholarship sought to emphasize the autonomous character of the modern state in relation to society.[16] If both behavioralism and Marxism suffered from a methodological blind spot that reduced politics to underlying social processes (whether those originated at the level of class relations or individual motivation was irrelevant), this position emphasized instances where the interests of various agents of the state, such as policymakers, bureaucrats, and the military, predominated.

Although this movement too ultimately waned, by the 2000s a pluralistic consensus had been established among competing paradigms in political science Rather than fully dominating the mainstream research agenda or being marginalized, the study of the state became merely one out of many increasingly diverse and fragmented topics. Today, the state remains an important component for political science research, yet its diverse usage suggests less a consensus on meaning than a pragmatic approach less concerned with theoretical precision than with investigating the particular question at hand. Many have continued to define the state according to Max Weber’s ideal type of the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,” not least of all because of this definition’s parsimony.[17] Today these neo-Weberian postulates can be found alongside a variety of others, and it is possible to encounter widely different analyses of the state, depending on if one is looking at it through a neo-Marxist, discourse-analytic, interpretivist, institutionalist, constitutional, or rational choice lens.

Considering the history given above, it would be reasonable to conclude that how the state has been conceived of in the past is mostly irrelevant to understanding what it actually is and how it functions—two pressing political questions in our time. After all, who will deny the existence of states today or think that the concept’s complex history has any bearing on the operations of the entity itself? It is not as though a re-definition of what is meant by “the state” changes how states operate in the world today in such tasks as the management of national and international economies, the mediation of class conflict, and the setting and enforcement of legal systems.

This line of thinking is intuitively powerful. Yet it also misses something important about the significance of the state concept. The example of how the state became a focal point in American political science and subsequently declined in prominence only to reappear again in the span of a century illustrates how systematized knowledge can reproduce the specific pathologies and tensions of the larger society in which it is grounded. It also suggests that the language of the state itself is often expressed and perpetuated through specialized disciplines and institutions of knowledge production. This changing discourse provides a window into the way political institutions are not merely organized as centers of coercive and structural power, but also as the specific ideological representations of that power.

Since the modern state has been the inescapable ideological presupposition of politics, the revolutionary left long saw the eventual abolition of the state as the necessary condition for the emancipation of society. Per Engels, the overcoming of capitalist social relations would render the state largely unnecessary as a political apparatus, relegating it to the status of a museum antique.[18] Engels' thesis on the withering away of the state reflects the degree to which the state concept has been the political limit of the radical imagination since the nineteenth century. Whether it was to be captured or smashed, tamed or disassembled, since its historical origins in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the state has shaped and conditioned the meaning and content of politics in modernity, as the polis did during the classical period and the empire for the medieval.

As Phillip Abrams perceptively observed in his essay "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," what linked the diverse views on the state within the Marxist tradition was an implicit agreement that something akin to the state actually existed.[19] A philosophy of praxis such as Marxism had needed the state as an abstract object in order to explain the existence of class societies, but just as importantly, as a concrete object towards which political practice could be directed. And so, the ideological construction of the state as an entity thus becomes the precondition of a successful political struggle: the state must be established in theory so that it may then be transformed in practice. Yet in the process of this construction, the target recedes beyond the limits of political practice at any given point in time. Failed attempts by socialist and communist parties and movements to transform the state, either incrementally or at once, attest to this paradox, in which, rather than shrinking, the gap between the language and the practice of politics grows larger.

Given the multi-faceted character of the state, attempts to either smash or to theorize it out of existence will both be quixotic; while piecemeal reforms are complicated by the relational character of state institutions and their being located at the intersection of subnational and international levels. In the present and near future, a revived Left that orients itself towards state institutions and makes demands on them for a multitude of racial, gender, ecological, political, and economic equalities would face an uphill road. It must direct its politics to the space between the proximity of specific policies to be challenged and institutions to be democratized, and the distance of that elusive entity called "the state." It must negotiate between these two poles of a productive tension in a radically incremental (or incrementally radical) manner. Perhaps only then could it be possible to avoid both the short sightedness of neoliberalism with a social democratic face, and the monumental and self-defeating task of "capturing" the state that would be doomed to failure—or perhaps worse, to success.

Notes

[1] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader* (W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 475

[2] Michael Parenti “Why the State Matters,” Oct. 30, 2015 (https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/10/developmentalism-neoliberalism-climate-change-hamilton/)

[3] For examples, see the exchange on the carceral state between Marie Gottschalk, Naomi Murakawa, and Amy E. Lerman and Vesla M. Weaver in *Perspectives on Politics* 13:3 (Sep. 2015): 798-814; and Mike Lofgren, “Anatomy of the Deep State” February 21, 2014: https://billmoyers.com/2014/02/21/anatomy-of-the-deep-state/

[4] For example, see the two contrasting posts from February 2016 on *Public Seminar:* Jeffrey C. Isaac’s “The Sanders Campaign and ‘Political Revolution’”, February 16, 2016 (https://www.publicseminar.org/2016/02/the-sanders-campaign-and-political-revolution/#.V83wUZMrLNA) and Not An Alternative’s “Occupy the Party: The Sanders Campaign as a Site of Struggle”, February 18, 2016 (https://www.publicseminar.org/2016/02/occupy-the-party-the-sanders-campaign-as-a-site-of-struggle/#.V83vnpMrLNA)

[5] Insightful analyses of these various approaches can be found in Martin Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory* (Princeton University Press, 1984) and Clyde W. Barrow, *Critical Theories of the State* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

[6] This characterization especially draws upon Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting States in Their Place* (Penn State University Press, 1990), p. 338-369; and Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[7] Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State*: *The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge University Press, 1982)

[8] John Burgess, “The Ideal of the American Commonwealth,” *Political Science Quarterly* 10:3 (Sep. 1895): 404-425

[9] Woodrow Wilson, *The State: Elements of Historical and Practical Politics* (D.C. Heath, 1889)

[10] Marc Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of Reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

[11] See David Easton, *The Political System* (Knopf, 1953); Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1956)

[12] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 2000)

[13] David Easton, *The Political System* (Knopf, 1953)

[14] Easton, “The New Revolution in Political Science,” *American Political Science Review* 63:4 (Dec. 1969), p. 1051-1061

[15] Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press, 1985)

[16] Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (Basic Books, 1969); Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (New Left Books, 1973); Goran Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules?* (Verso, 1978)

[17] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 78

[18] Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Penguin, 1986), p. 212

[19] Phillip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1:1 (Mar. 1988): 58-89

Secrets of the Sexual Fetish: How Sin Became the New Normal

By | 2016: vol. 15, nos. 2-3

"Pleasure is, so to speak, nature's vengeance ..."

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno[1]

Fetish at Your Fingertips

Fans of *Sex and the City* may remember when "the Rabbit," a vibrator, made its guest appearance on HBO in 2011. One of the show's characters, Charlotte, got hooked on it, propelling the sex toy from the TV screen into the bedrooms of many hip, young women throughout the country.

Charlotte and her Rabbit helped legitimize sex toys and female masturbation. The product came from Vibratex, a company founded in 1983 that makes erotic products for women.[2] The appearance of the Rabbit on a very popular cable series was part of the rebranding of sex paraphernalia as "sexual wellness" products, a process that helped mainstream the sex toy. As the sex toy was assimilated into the marketplace, the fetish as an object of perverse erotic desire lost much of its traditionally illicit character and became an all-American erotic indulgence. Welcome to the new normal.

For decades, shoppers, mostly men often dubbed the "raincoat crowd," slinked into XXX-rated shops in a down-market part of town to purchase a sex-related product, whether a vibrator, dildo, porn magazine or flick. Those days are over. A handful of sex-affirming retailers like San Francisco's Good Vibration, Seattle's Babeland and New York's Pleasure Chest have, for decades, offered discriminating shoppers, mostly women and gay men, an opportunity to check out and buy something erotically special. Consumerism has caught up with these sex-paraphernalia pioneers and more mainstream outlets have entered the growing "sex-wellness" business. Retailers range from high-end specialty chains Nordstrom and Brookstone to mass-marketers Walgreens and Target, and even crusty down-market Wal-Mart. But the leading sex-products vendor is Amazon, offering an estimated 60,000 products for those with a credit card and a certain yen.[3]

One of the popular venues to acquire a favorite sex product is a "passion party," a women-only get-together often held at a suburban home. Toys, lubricants and costumes are sold; cocktails are often served, stories are told, secrets are shared and good-cheer is had by all. Like a Tupperware party, this multi-tier marketing scheme uses a local "host," "consultant" or "sales

rep" to organize the event who receives a commission (often 10%) from the night's sales. The host acquires products from a sex-toy provider like Athena's Home Novelties, Fantasia Home Parties, For Ladies Only, Party Gals, Temptations Parties and Pure Romance; the industry even has a trade association, Certified Adult Home Party Association. *BusinessWee*k reported that, in 2012, Pure Romance had 75,000 consultants and may have hit $120 million in sales. A surprise to many, some of the moralists waging today's faltering "culture war" against abortion and gay rights, including fundamentalist Christian women, attend such get-togethers.[4] For such moralists, sex toys can enhance a wholesome marriage.

No one knows the real size of the sex toy market, with estimates all over the place. Adam & Eve, a leading online sex-products retailer founded in 1970, pegs Americans annual spending on sex paraphernalia at $15 billion. Belus Capital Advisors estimate that from 2008 to 2013, while the nation grappled with a trying recession, sex paraphernalia sales rose by 12.5 percent. It projects annual industry sales will hit $52 billion by 2020. Dave Levine, the founder of CNV.com, a sex-products wholesaler, estimates total annual sales at between $750 million to $1 billion. And the *CBC* reports, "Market research company, IBIS World, estimates the adult store industry in America is now worth $634 million, more than doubling sales since 2007."[5]

In 2010, as Christian conservatives railed against illicit sex, Adam & Eve released a study claiming that 82 percent of adults used sex toys, that 44 percent of women 18 to 60 years have used a sex-enhancement product and 78 percent of those women were in a relationship when they used the product. In a 2015 survey, it found that two-fifths (41%) of women and one-third of men (32%) admitted owning one sex toy; just 4.5 percent of women and 3.8 percent of men owned six or more toys.[6]

Two factors contributed to the transformation of the fetish into the sex toy. One involved changes in the sex practices Americans engaged in, be they ordinary people or radicals, male or female, gay or straight. Many of the practices involved a fetish. The other involved changes in the medical diagnosis – as well as the social and legal definitions — of fetishism, of what was "normal"; the standard is formally codified in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) mental-health bible, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM*).

The transformation of the fetish into the sex toy signifies a new era of sexuality in America, one with a greater sense of sexual "freedom" than any period is U.S. history. In the early 21st century, anything goes as long as it's between "consenting" adults or age-appropriate young people. Immoral and criminal practices involve the violation of consent and include rape, pedophile, sex slavery, knowingly infecting someone with STD/AIDS and an activity that truly harms a participant.

Today's concept of the fetish grows out of the two very different modes of analyses — one originally formulated by Marx, the economic or social; the other by Freud, the psychological or personal. For more than a century, their works articulated — separately and distinctly if parallel and complementarily — the two primary modes of critical analyses of modern life. Both anchored their respective analyses in the notion of the fetish, a distinguishing feature of

capitalist society since the early-19th century.

In *Capital* (1867), Marx described the commodity as a fetish, a "mysterious thing" that serves as the object of capitalist exchange. He noted: "There is a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things." He added, "In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race." Fetishism was a quasi-religious experience, at once individual yet social; objects of human labor are shorn of their use value, the human aspects of production, and became mystified products of consumption, embodied exchange value.[7]

Half a century later, Freud offered a very different interpretation of the fetish, one equally religiously inspired but anchored in the deeper mysteries of self-identity, sexuality and its repression. In his essay, "The Sexual Aberrations" (1905), he stated: "No other variation of the sexual instinct that borders on the pathological can lay so much claim to our interest as [fetishism], such is the peculiarity of the phenomena to which it gives rise." He clarified: "What is substituted for the sexual object is some part of the body (such as the foot or hair) which is in general very much inappropriate for sexual purposes, or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relation to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person's sexuality (i.e., a piece of clothing or underlinen)."[8]

Efforts have been made to link Marx and Freud, most notably by theorists associated with the Frankfurt School. Their efforts reflected a common historical experience, the quarter-century-long crisis of modern capitalism slogging through WW-I, the Depression and WW-II; stabilization came with the prosperity of postwar reconversion and the relative stability of the Cold War. One unanticipated outcome of the rise of consumer capitalism was the eclipse of traditional patriarchal authority. To date, none of the efforts to link Marx and Freud have addressed the role of the fetish and how it's meaning changed along with capitalist society.* Nor has an analysis reflected the new world order, of post-Cold War, postmodern capitalism marked as an increasingly globalizing, financialized system. The fetish is an instrument of social praxis; its secrets reveal how sin became the new normal.

The Sexual Fetish

The fetish has long been understood as a mysterious object of human existence, an instrument of personal and social experience. During the 19th century, it was conceived as an object of mystical identity and a subject of rigorous study. William Pietz and Tomoko Masuzawa, among others, have shown that the fetish captivated much of European academic scholarship, notably anthropology and *Religionswissenschaft,* the science of religion. Charles de Brosses, August Comte, Emile Durkheim and innumerable now all-but-forgotten scholars saw the fetish as a material anchor, a talisman, to culturally-specific forms of spirituality. It was the primitive thing-in-itself, negating the transcendence of materiality yet, simultaneously, fulfilling its promise. As Masuzawa observes, "It is this special tie to materiality, or rather, this ineradicable

essence of the fetish as materiality, and the alleged absence of any symbolic (or supra-material) dimension, that distinguishes fetishism from idolatry, or 'polytheism,' as idolatry came to be more commonly called in the course of the nineteenth century."[9]

In 19th century England, while scholars like F. Max Müller, W. Robertson Smith and Edward B. Tylor searched for the secrets of the religious fetish in primitive totems and the Hebrew Bible, the sexual fetish flourished in London as an instrument of immoral pleasure. Some considered the half-century between 1780s and the start of the Queen Victoria's reign in 1837 as the "heyday" of English fetishism, especially flagellation.[10] Flagellation is a particular fetishism combining the rituals of punishment with the pleasures of pain and employing a wide variety of instruments of ritualized desire. It's a fetishistic indulgence that continues to be practiced today.

According to Iwan (Ivan) Block, a leading authority on early-modern sexual perversion, "it is possible to maintain that England was at one time the classic of flagellation." In the 1830s, Theresa Berkley, at 28 Charlotte Street (today's 84-94 Hallam Street), ran one of London's grand flagellation parlors. Bloch found that Mrs. Berkley "could be jovial and amusing; and used to find out every inclination, every whim, every mood, every wish of her clients, and satisfy them, as soon as ever she was suitably paid." Further, he stressed that "her arsenal of instruments were vastly more complete than that of any other governess."[11] A fellow mistress of the night, one Mrs. Wilson, described the tools of Mrs. Berkley's establishment with acute rigor:

Her supply of birch was extensive, and kept in water so that it was always green and pliant: she had a shaft with a dozen whip thongs on each of them; a dozen different sizes of cat-o-nine tails, some with needle points worked into them; various kinds of thin bending canes; leather straps like coach traces; battledores made of thick sole-leather, with inch nails run through to docket, and currycomb tough hides rendered callous by years flagellation. Holly brushes, furze brushes; a prickly evergreen, called butchers brush; and during summer, glass and China vases filled with a constant supply of green nettles, with which she often restored the dead to life.

The full array of indulgences afforded a visitor were considerable, as Mrs. Wilson noted: "Thus, at her shop, whoever went with plenty of money, could be birched, whipped, fustigated, scourged, needle-pricked, half-hung, holly-brushed, furze-brushed, butcher-brushed, stinging nettled, curry-combed, phlebotomized, and tortured till he had a belly full."[12]

During the *fin de siècle* era, a group of European medical scholars and sexual reformers (and sometimes they were the same) confronted what was widely perceived as a crisis of sexuality that threatened the promise of modernity. Sexual crimes appeared to be increasing; greater incidences of sexual dysfunction — involving impotence among men and "hysteria" among women — were reported; more "inverts" seemed to be visible throughout society; female prostitutes seemed to be on city streets in greater number; and more works of pornography — in word, image and live display – appeared and were being actively consumed. Something seemed to be profoundly disrupting the traditional moral order.

In response, these researchers began to systematically redefine the sexual practices of men and (to a lesser extent) women. Forsaking the age-old religious notion of sin, this new generation of trained medical doctors and specialists developed a more "scientific" and legalistic analyses to the age-old quandary about unacceptable sexual practices. This movement was led by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Alfred Binet, Havlock Ellis, Mangus Hirshfeld and, of course, Sigmund Freud. One practice rigorously considered was fetishism, the ritualized use of eroticized objects of desire.

Krafft-Ebing's was the first to link the fetish to immoral and illegal practices. His most famous work, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in 1886, has been described as an "encyclopedia of the perversions." It is a chronicle of 237 case studies of unacceptable sexual practices that he identified as "abnormality." He took particular interest in fetishism, defining it as that which "invests imaginary presentations of separate parts of the body or portions of raiment of the opposite sex, or even simply pieces of clothing-material, with voluptuous sensations." Going further, he observed: "The pathological aspect of this manifestation may be deduced from the fact that the fetish of parts of the body never stands in direct relation to sex; that it concentrates the whole sexual interest in the one part abstracted from the entire body."[13] Two years later, Binet, in his treatise, *Le Fetichisme dans l'amou*r, appears to have been the first to apply the more traditional anthropological or religious concept of the fetish to the object of sexual desire. He distinguished between normal love and something other than normal, often involving objects of desire: "Normal love appears as the result of a complicated fetishism."[14]

Ellis re-conceptualized the fetishistic object of desire into an expression of "individual taste in beauty." He defined such desire as "erotic symbolism" and noted that the fetish was so universal in application and mysterious in being that "even a mere shadow may become a fetish." He argued that "of all the manifestations of sexual psychology, normal and abnormal, [fetishes] are the most specifically human. More than any others they involve the potential plastic force of the imagination."[15] Today, Hirschfeld is recognized as a pioneering sexologist and gay-rights activist during the post-WW-I era. He established the well-respected Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin that was closed down by the Nazis and its remarkable library destroyed in an infamous bonfire in 1933. He noted in his 1916 work, *Sexual Pathology*: "the number of fetishes is unlimited. From head to foot there is no tiny spot on the body, and from head-covering to foot-wrapping there is no little fold of attire from a fetishistic attraction cannot arise."[16]

Freud argued that the fetish had two complementary functions. First, it serves as a ritualized articulation of repression, a powerful — and erotically gratifying! — defense against the terror of the castration complex (for males). Second, it is a highly personalized object or practice serving as an eroticized substitute for the true object of desire, the subject (the mother). He acknowledged that in some cases "… the normal sexual object is replaced by another which bears some relations to it but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim."[17]

The Oedipal or castration complex involved the imposition of patriarchal authority; the (male)

child unconsciously recognizes that the mother's lack of a penis signifies the power of male authority, patriarchy, the father, and, thus, his own weakness. Repression was imposed on children reared within a traditional family and this repression expresses the power of civilization, the successful effort to restrict libidinal gratification and curb destructive drives. For Freud, the underlying perversion was rooted in phantasy, which he conceived as the rebellion of the pleasure principle expressed as imagination and waged against the tyranny of the reality principle.[18]

In a 1927 piece, "Fetishism," Freud clarified this assertion, revealing certain analytic assumptions that were then commonly accepted: "… the horror of castration sets up a sort of permanent memorial to itself by creating this substitute. Aversion from the real female genitals, which is never lacking in any fetishist, also remains as an indelible stigma of the repression that has taken place. One can now see what the fetish achieves and how it is enabled to persist." Looking deeper, he noted, the fetish "remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it."[19] Almost as an after-thought, he cautioned: "I do not maintain that it is always possible to ascertain the determination of every fetish."[20]

Object of Desire

A quarter century after Freud and his fellow *fin de siècle* sexologists, the fetish – and perversion in general – were being re-conceptualized, normalized by the great post-WW-II consumer revolution. The pioneering empirical work of Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female* (1953), fundamentally changed American's understanding of sexuality. His studies were unprecedented because they were a "scientific" breakthrough; findings were based on approximately 18,000 interviews conducted between 1938 and 1953. The first volume on male sexuality is an 804-page scientific tome that to everyone's surprise, including Kinsey, became a national bestseller, quickly selling over 200,000 copies; it rose to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list in spite of the fact that the *Times* refused to carry advertisements for the book and failed to review it when it first appeared.

Kinsey scandalized readers with his un-ashamed, non-judgmental yet rigorously detailed consideration of the fetish, pornography and other "deviant" techniques of sexual pleasure:

The use of literature and erotic pictures for stimulation during masturbation is not really common, and is largely confined to better educated individuals. Urethral insertions and other masochistic techniques, and anal stimulation and anal insertions occur only very occasionally. Sometimes devices which simulate the female genitalia may be used for masturbation, but they are rarely employed.

He concluded acknowledging, "Most males restrict themselves to a limited series of particular techniques to which they have been erotically conditioned." With regard to female sexuality, Kinsey noted: "What is commonly identified as pornography is literature and drawing which

has the erotic arousal of the reader or observer as its deliberate and primary or sole objective."[21]

Other researchers extended Kinsey's findings, revealing the role of the fetish in the sex lives of Americans. One area given special consideration was commercial sex, particularly fetish play in heterosexual prostitution. Dr. Harry Benjamin, a noted endocrinologist who treated Christine Jorgensen, and R. E. L. Masters, found in their 1964 "definitive report," *Prostitution and Morality*, "many individual prostitutes and some brothels cater to almost the entire gamut of sexual deviations." They add:

Men who wish to be beaten by women, or to beat them; men who wish to be bound by women, or to bind them; fetishists who desire partners wearing garments of rubber, leather, or fur; other fetishists who want partners in boots, in high heels, in masks, or partners with large breasts or long hair; transvestites, who want to have intercourse while dressed as women – or, sometimes, simply to converse while dressed as women; exhibitionists and voyeurs; persons – coprophiles, urolagniacs, etc. – whose predilections involve urine and feces; necrophiles satisfied by a partner simulating a cadaver; these are by no means the only deviants among the prostitutes customers.

Never losing sight of the commercial exchange at the heart of this, the oldest profession, these commentators report, "In general, the more extreme the deviation, and the more dangerous or painful for the prostitute, the higher is the fee demanded of the customer."[22]

Two sociologists, Charles Winick and Paul M. Kinsie, followed up in a 1971 study, *The Lively Commerce,* and found that prostitutes of the day utilized a variety of fetishes to please their clients. They reported "an active prostitute may be exposed to a wide range of 'perversions,'" and enumerate some of them involving fetishism: "… Some customers like to cry and wear makeup. Others enjoy sexual intercourse with a prostitute while she is tied to a bed or a chair. Still others attach a collar and leash to a prostitute and have her walk around the floor on all fours. Some customers engage in sexual intercourse with a prostitute a tergo, while she is eating from a dish or lapping milk from the floor. …"

Some customers ask the woman to whip them, or want to whip her. They may wish to be tied up, or to tie her. Others bring specific items of clothing, often lingerie, for the woman to wear. Feathers, often ostrich feathers, and clothing made of red or black velvet are other items to adorn the woman. Some clients enjoy a woman nude except for furs, while others want her to wear nothing but long black gloves, or slippers. Biting, scratching, clawing, and punching are among the special requirements of some customers. In conclusion, the sociologists note, "The women who meet such specialized requirements are likely to get extra pay. Among the most enthusiastic clients are sadists and masochists, who are likely to be older than the general clientele."[23]

The fetish was the central metaphor of postwar pornography. It was articulated in Irving Klaw's photos and films, Samuel Roth's publications and Bill Gaines' comic books as well as the

more risqué s/m magazines like *Bizarre*, *Exotique* and the *Caprice Catalog*. The most iconic representation of the '50s fetish scene was Bettie Page, photographed and filmed by Klaw, among others. Page was a long-forgotten iconic representation wonderfully brought to 21st century life in Mary Herron's 2006 bio-pic, *The Notorious Bettie Page*. Richard Foster, author of *The Real Bettie Page*, claims that Klaw's initiation into fetish photography, many featuring Page, was driven by a desire to pose models "to meet specific customer demands." His photographs featured women — and occasionally transvestites — decked out in provocative outfits, including high-heel shoes, thigh-high boots, satin lingerie, leather costumes and even ropes, chains and whips. "For Irving Klaw," Foster insists, "no fetish was too weird as long as it didn't involve nudity, sexual acts, or physical harm to one of his models."[24] Nevertheless, such representations were considered obscene, illegal.

Returning WW-II veterans fostered the underground gay male s/m and leather community that emerged during the late-'40s. During the postwar era, male (and some female) fetishists found a home in three often-overlapping venues – private parties, fetish bars and motorcycle clubs. Anthropologist Gayle Rubin reports, "sex parties had been critical to the development of leather social life at least as far back as the late forties. Before there were leather bars, there were S/M parties."[25] She also notes, "The earliest gay leather bars and motorcycle clubs appears in the midfifties, in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago." Marlon Brando celebrated this new masculinity in two defining movies, *The Wild One* (1953) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955).

The fetish play offered by prostitutes and the gay leather s/m scenes were but two examples of the underground fetish culture. In the late-'50s, one of Kinsey's collaborators, Paul Gebhard, introduced the notion of four "degrees" or levels of fetishism to suggest "a continuum of intensities" in the erotic experience of fetish activity. Following Kinsey's diagnostic multi-staged model of male and female sexual identity, Gebhard's four fetish stages are:

- Level 1: A pre-fetish level in which a person shows slight preference exists for certain kinds of sex partners, sexual stimuli and activity.
- Level 2: A low-level fetish attraction in which a person shows a strong interest for certain kinds of sex partners, sexual stimuli and activity.
- Level 3: A moderate-level of fetish attraction in which a person requires specific stimuli are necessary for sexual arousal and sexual performance.
- Level 4: A high-level of fetish attraction in which specific stimuli *takes the place* of the sex partner.[26]

Gebhard's analysis suggests that fetishism need not be a mental disorder, pathology. More so, it could be an alternative to the conventional "phallocentric" model of sexuality and fetishism. Equally critical, Gebhard suggested that fetishism was not limited solely to males but could be engaged in by females as well.

John Money, founder of the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic in 1965, wrote in his 1986 study, *Lovemaps*, that a fetish was "an object or charm endowed with magical or supernatural

power; an object or part of the body charged, for a particular person, with special sexuoerotic power." He noted that this power could be experienced in more than visual or imaginary experiences, suggesting haptic (e.g., pressure, rubbing, touch) and olfactory (e.g., perfume, excrement) experiences as alternative forms of fetishistic indulgence.[27] With postwar prosperity, the sexual fetish was sensually enriched and extended to the whole body.

During the '70s, Michel Foucault lectured on philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley; he lived in San Francisco near Folsom Street in the South of Market (SoMa) district, the heart of the emerging s/m leather scene. In his study, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault wrote that "the psychiatrization of sexuality" rendered the fetish "the way in which instinct became fastened to an object in accordance with an individual's historical adherence and biological inadequacy." Personally, as James Miller reveals in his biography of Foucault, he "went shopping, stocking up on the leatherman's trade." Among the fetish items in Foucault's closet were a black leather jacket, chaps and cap as well as a "variety of 'toys': tit clamps, and handcuffs; hoods, gag, and blindfold; whips, paddles, and riding crops …."[28] He was a gay man who explored the limits of s/m fetish culture and died of AIDS in 1986.

While Foucault prowled San Francisco's leather bars, fetish phantasies were spreading to other aspects of society. The fashion historian Valerie Steele notes in her wonderfully illustrated study, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power*, how three leading fashion designers of the '70s and '80s, Helmut Newton, Jean Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mugler, incorporated the fetish into images of assertive femininity.[29] They fetishized "kinky" undergarments (e.g., corsets, bustieres), shoes (often with very high heels and ankle straps) and mid-thigh boots as cultural declarations of sexual freedom. They helped to glamorize not only the fetish but what Steele calls "second-skin materials" like leather, rubber and latex as an accouterment of the radical chic. The exaggerated s/m costumes that Bettie Page paraded for the 1950s underground fetishist set were going mainstream.

Reconceiving the Fetish

The APA's changing definition of fetishism is detailed in five editions of the *DSM* published between 1952 and 2013; the changing definition marks out the evolution of the fetish from sin to the new normal. The *DSM-I* was issued in 1952, the first medical-scientific "bible" of moral order and included fetishism within the broader category of "sexual deviation." It stated: "This diagnosis is reserved for deviant sexuality which is not symptomatic of more extensive syndromes, such as schizophrenic and obsessional reactions." It then elaborated: "The term includes most of the cases formerly classed as 'psychopathic personality with pathologic sexuality.' The diagnosis will specify the type of the pathologic behavior, such as homosexuality, transvestism, pedophilia, fetishism and sexual sadism (including rape, sexual assault, mutilation)."[30]

In 1959, Paul Friedman, writing in the *American Handbook of Psychiatry*, clarified the role of sexual deviation. "Broadly speaking," he reported, "we designate as sexual deviation or perversions any patterns of sexual behavior which differ from normal coitus and serve as major

sources of sexual gratification rather than as foreplay to coital activity." For the psychiatric community, a deviation was a sexual gratification that is an end in itself and not merely foreplay for procreative coitus. Fetishism was but one of the "special" psychopathological conditions of sexual deviation he identified. Other included coprophilia [feses fetish], exhibitionism, overt homosexuality, necrophilia, pedophilia, sadomasochism, transvestitism, voyeurism and zoophilia.[31]

Much has been written about the battle within psychiatry over homosexuality, one of the major sexual deviations. Ronald Bayer's 1986 study, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*, remains the best single source, with others adding detail and texture.[32] The *DSM-II* was published in 1968 and made a critical distinction with regard to sexual deviation: "This category is for individuals whose sexual interests are directed primarily toward objects other than people of the opposite sex, toward sexual acts not usually associated with coitus, or toward coitus performed under bizarre circumstances as in necrophilia, pedophilia, sexual sadism, and fetishism." It adds: "This diagnosis is not appropriate for individuals who perform deviant sexual acts because normal sexual objects are not available to them."[33] The release of the *DSM-II* coincided with the emergence of the modern gay rights movement that began inauspiciously with the leafleting of the 1968 American Medical Association (AMA) convention and, only a year later, culminated in the Stonewall riot.

Over a period of 18 years, Robert Spitzer, MD, led the battle within the APA to reclassify homosexuality. In 1973, the same year the Supreme Court legalized a woman's right to an abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, the APA's Board of Trustees voted to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. It formally revised the *DSM-III* in 1980 and released the *DSM-III-R* in 1986 that finally dropped homosexuality as a medical disorder. The *DSM-III-R* appeared in the midst of the AIDS crisis when homosexuality was synonymous with death. It reclassified homosexuality as a "sexual disorder not otherwise classified" if accompanied by serious distress. And what went for homosexuality applied equally to other previously identified perversions like fetishism.[34]

The *DSM-III* reconceived sexual deviation as a psychosexual disorder within one of three categories: (i) gender identity disorders (e.g., transvestism), (ii) psychosexual dysfunctions (e.g., ego-dystonic homosexuality) and (iii) paraphilias. The third category applied to atypical or abnormal behaviors that can potentially involve or lead to mental illness, but do not constitute an illness in and of itself. It included fetishism as well as zoophilia, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual masochism and sexual sadism.* Most noticeable, the *DSM-III* took an ambiguous stand with regard to people who engage in this class of sexualized behavior: "Frequently these individuals assert that the behavior causes them no distress and that their only problem is the reaction of others to their behavior. Others admit to guilt, shame, and depression at having to engage in an unusual sexual activity that is socially unacceptable." Turning to fetishism, it specified two diagnostic criteria:

1. The use of nonliving objects (fetishes) is a repeatedly preferred or exclusive method of achieving sexual excitement

2. The fetishes are not limited to articles of female clothing used in cross-dressing (Transvestism) or to objects designed to be used for the purpose of sexual stimulation (e.g., vibrator).

It noted, "The essential feature is the use of nonliving objects (fetishes) as a repeatedly preferred or exclusive method of achieving sexual excitement." It also identified a host of fetish objects ranging from female undergarments, shoes and boots to parts of the human body (e.g., hair or nails), but separated such objects from the female clothing associated with transvestism.

The APA's removal of homosexuality from its list of mental disorders led to resolutions opposing discrimination of homosexuals from the AMA, American Psychological Association and American Bar Association as well as the Society of Friends, Lutheran Church and National Council of Churches. Cities across the country passed laws explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. Perhaps most important, sodomy laws relating to homosexuality were dropped in more than a dozen states.*[35] The APA's revision contributed to the social acceptance of homosexuality, fetishism and other sexual deviations.

No change in the meaning of the fetish and other perversions, especially homosexuality, was more significant than that proposed by those seeking to treat such deviant conditions, most notably psychology, psychiatry and medical professions. Samantha Allen, in an invaluable "annotated bibliography" of the Kinsey Institute's holdings on sexual fetishism, found that between the 1950s and '70s, clinicians used a variety of techniques to treat fetishists. They included: relaxation procedures [Lazarus]; "multiple" therapies [Chambers]; "behavioral therapy" [Lambley]; "scathing verbal attacks pertaining to … fetishistic behavior" [Cooper]; "hypnotherapy" [McSweeney], "hypnotic suggestion" [Salfield] and "hypnotic suggestion to induce nausea" [Glick]; a variety of drugs, including antidepressants, sedatives, anticonvulsants [Ball], apomorphine (a dopamine that induced nausea and vomiting) "while listening to a tape he (the patient) had made the night before in which he "soliloquized on the special delights of his fetishism [Clark] and which produced "ringing sounds in the head, nausea, and sometimes vomiting" [Stryzewsky]; and electroshock, with shocks set "10 volts higher than the subject's reported upper threshold" [Bond] and another involving "41 shock sessions" over "14 weeks of treatment" [Kushner]. No lobotomies appear to have been performed and Allen found that some clinicians reported success in stopping a client's fetishist's behavior.[36]

The Sexual Commodity

Marx did not consider the sexual object in the chapter of *Capital*, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Therein." He – and Frederick Engels — devoted very little attention in their writings to sexuality. Very much men of the mid-19th century, they each had complex sex lives but devoted little attention to it as a critical subject in study. They recognized

that under capitalism, a woman's primary role was a biological "reproducer," not, like a male worker, as a commodity "producer"; therefore, women occupied subordinate positions within the nuclear family and bourgeois society.

However, the line separating wage and nonwage labor is porous. Without acknowledging the tyranny of patriarchy, Marx and Engels understood that female prostitution was one of the most egregious forms of wage labor. All wage labor involves selling one's labor power, as both body and mind, but none but prostitution involves selling a sexual engagement, perhaps the most intimate human experience. More so, they recognized that female prostitution was a metaphor of the tyranny of social relations under capitalism: All workers engage in prostitution. Marx, having read de Brosses' *On The Cult of Fetish Gods,* called the social fantasy of capitalist exchange, the "Fetishism of commodities." He wrote, "So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities." Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), provocatively asks: "[C]an prostitution disappear without dragging monogamy with it into the abyss?"[37]

In the wake of the Great War, the Bolshevik Revolution and the defeat of postwar worker uprisings throughout Europe, most notably in Germany, some Marxists began to raise questions about what had – and had not — taken place. Why had the proletariat backed an imperialist war? Why had a revolution succeeded in Russia, a non-industrial country, but failed in countries with a more advanced proletariat? Was the "scientific" distinction between the economic "base" and the socio-political "superstructure" adequate to address the crisis Europe faced? Was there something wrong, inadequate, with the dominant, positivistic form of orthodox Marxism victorious in the Soviet Union?

Two very different tendencies within the broad non-orthodox or reformist Marxist tradition emerged. One was exemplified by more traditional but non-economistic Marxists, notably Rosa Luxemburg, György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci. The other included theorists associated with the Frankfurt School, many deeply influenced by Freud; some had read him (e.g., Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse), others had been psychoanalyzed (e.g., Max Horkheimer) and still others were trained psychoanalysts (e.g., Wilhelm Reich and Eric Fromm). Collectively, these two very different tendencies added a new lexicon to traditional economistic Marxism, including concepts like consciousness, hegemony, character structure, daily life, alienation, repressive tolerance and erotic de-sexualization. Marxism has never been the same.

The concept of "consciousness" was not uncommon to late-19th century radicals. Engels invoked it in 1895, "The time of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses is past." Rosa Luxemburg considered it before she was killed by Social Democrats in 1919 to halt the post-WW-I German workers uprising. She wrote: "The unconscious comes before the conscious. The logic of the historical process comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the historical process." She also noted

that the “repression” of “ordinary natural desires” contributed to social tyranny.[38]

Lukács and Gramsci, independently, sought to reconceive the notion of consciousness. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), Lukács extended Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism to what he identified as “false consciousness.” He argued that the economic dimensions of exchange had spread to all aspect of personal and social relations, whether involving relations with oneself, with other people or, ultimately, between each individual and society as a whole, politics. He dubbed this process “reification,” turning everything human into a commodity, an object of exchange. Gramsci devoted a small section of *The Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935) to the “phantasm of the intellect, a fetish.” He identified “hegemony” as “a residue of Catholic transcendentalism and of the old paternalistic regimes. … [And] common to a series of organisms, from the state to the nation to political parties, etc.”[39] Capitalist hegemony falsified social relations, whether in terms of culture (i.e., religion) or politics (i.e., the state). Contemporary theorists, like Jack Amariglio and Antonio Callari, continue to revise Marxism in term of subjectivity and the commodity fetish.[40]

In *The Dialectical Imagination*, Martin Jay notes, “… it is difficult to appreciate the audacity of the first theorists who proposed the unnatural marriage of Freud and Marx.”[41] In the early 1920s, Frankfurt theorists began to integrate Freudian analysis and a Marxists critique into an evolving notion of “critical theory.” As Jay notes, “it [Freudian theory] was also a marker of the Institute’s desire to leave the traditional Marxist straitjacket behind.”[42] With the Nazi triumph, many associated with the Frankfurt School fled to the U.S., but some, like Benjamin, never made it. In Germany and the U.S., the survivors formulated a critique not merely of fascism and the authoritarian personality that fostered it, but of the tyranny of the emerging postwar consumer capitalism, including the new moral order based on repressive sexual tolerance.

In the 1920s, Freud and other early founders of the then-fledgling discipline of psychoanalysis saw Reich as a promising analyst. In 1933, as the Nazis were about to seize state power, Reich published *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, one of the earliest works seeking to integrate the insights of Freud and Marx. He argued, “By including the discoveries of [Freudian] psychoanalysis, [Marxist] sociology reaches a higher level and becomes better able to comprehend reality because, finally, it includes a knowledge of human [character] structure.” Fascism was the savagery attacked to traditional child-rearing practices; Reich argued it was an incubator of authoritarian tyranny, the fostering of patriarchy and class distinctions. He also assailed the inculcation of “libidinous” militarism reflected in “the mass-psychological effects of a uniform and of rhythmically perfect parades.” He pointed out that “*the swastika was originally a sexual symbo*l” (i.e., two intertwined human bodies) and, while it didn’t explain the rise of Nazism, it served as a “potent stimulant.” Perhaps most radical, after visiting post-revolutionary Russia, Reich questioned Lenin’s theories regarding the dictatorship of the proletariat and the withering away of the state.[43]

Benjamin extended Marx’s concept of the fetishism of commodities to the commodification of all aspects of daily life. In his famous article, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction," he recognized that the photography, and more so the moving picture that followed, served as the ideological glue that fostered the unconscious visual imagination of modern consumer capitalism.[44] In "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," he identified elements of the fetishistic character of the emerging commodity consumerism, including the arcades (precursors of department stores), world's fairs and exhibitions as well as fashion and advertising. He developed these themes in his great, unfinished work, *The Arcades Projec*t. As he noted, "Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectic image therefore a dream image." And he added, "Such an image is presented by pure commodity: as fetish."[45] In one section, "Prostitution, Gambling," he observes, "On the dialectical function of money in prostitution. It buys pleasure and, at the same time, becomes the expression of shame." He also noted, "Love for the prostitute is the apotheosis of empathy with the commodity."[46]

Fromm was trained as a psychoanalyst in Berlin and associated with the Institute for about a decade. As Jay notes, he introduced the "use of psychoanalytic mechanisms as the mediating concepts between individual and society … ."[47] He gradually broke with Institute and Freudianism to forge a more humanistic – "existential" – social psychology. Nevertheless, he long argued that Marx had a hidden theory of psychology, what he called "dynamic psychology," that was rooted in the concept of alienation. Fully informed of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and *Grundrisse*, Fromm wrote in 1970, "… Marx visualized the pathology of normalcy, the crippledness of the – statistically – normal man, the loss of himself, the loss of his human substance." He elaborated, "Thus Marx speaks of the possibility that man may 'become lost' in the object if the object has not become a human object." Fromm insisted that such alienation was the basis "for a new and original concept of neurosis."[48]

In 1955, Marcuse published the most utopian, visionary work of the postwar era, *Eros and Civilization*.[49] He combined Freud's psychoanalytic analysis and Marx's social critique with Heidegger's phenomenological method to fashion a work that celebrates Eros, the inherent radicality of free, consensual libido within each person and a humane society. "In a repressive order, which enforces the equation between normal, socially useful, and good," he argued, "the manifestations of pleasure for its own sake must appear as *fleurs du mal*." For those who rebelled against this tyranny, they bore a heavy burden: "The full force of civilized morality was mobilized against the use of the body as mere objects, means, instruments of pleasure; such reification was tabooed and remained the ill-reputed privilege of whores, degenerates and perverts. The tyranny of civilization is the triumph of a genitally-dominant sexuality, a sexuality that de-eroticizes a fully human experience of pleasure."[50] Marcuse argued that modern society harnessed sexuality, a primordial force of human nature, to further consumer capitalism.

In a 1963 essay, "Sexual Taboos and Law Today," Adorno picked up Marcuse's critique of repression tolerance inherent in advanced capitalism and warned, "… sexual liberation in contemporary society is mere illusion." He argued that capitalism was fostering "a desexualization of sexuality itself. Pleasure that is either kept cornered or accepted with smiling complaisance is no longer pleasure at all…." He added, "Whereas sexuality has been

integrated, that which cannot be integrated, the actual spiciness of sex, continues to be detested by society." He concludes most emphatically, "Unmutilated, unrepessed sex in itself does not do any harm to anyone."[51]

The New Normal

The psychiatrist Robert Stoller once famously observed, "A fetish is a story masquerading as an object."[52] This has never been truer than today. Reframing Stoller's assertion, one can ask whether the fetish's threat that so absorbed Freud and others sexologists over the last century was nothing but an object masquerading as a story, a social fiction they refused to be acknowledge? Did the fetish symbolize a personal rebellion, the acting out against the repression inflicted by the patriarchal family and the authoritarian society? Looking back, it seems that underlying yesteryear's analyses of the fetish — and the more general notion of perversion, sexual deviation — was an unstated prejudice, an unacknowledged fear. Many traditional sex researchers, along with others in authority, shared a perception that the fetish represented a threat to moral order. As capitalist society faced the crisis of modernization, those in authority invoked the fetish as part of an effort to regulate intimate private and social sexual-related behavior they found unacceptable.

Once-threatening sexual perversions of old persist in continuing incidences of pedophilia, rape, sex trafficking and inflicting severe personal harm like SDT/AIDS infections. But many of the once-threatening sexual perversions of old have lost their bite. They've been transformed into just another personal lifestyle indulgences, expressions of an "open," "healthy" sex culture. In this process, the range of acceptable sexual practices engaged in as "normal" has been considerably expanded, allowing sexual adventurers, let alone ordinary adults and age-appropriate youths, to enjoy a fuller pallet of sexual pleasures. This is most evident in the transformation of oral sex from a once shameful activity to, in the early-21st century, a commonly engaged in practice, including many young people who don't considered it as having sex.[53] The use of sexual paraphernalia among consenting adults is taking place with more acceptance and is less threatening, both personally and socially, than anytime in American history. This change illustrates the adoption of a new moral order, one based on postmodern notion of sexual tolerance.

Nevertheless, some people — mostly men, but in declining numbers — continue to be arrested for fetishistic misconduct. In Northridge, CA, a skating rink employee was arrested as a foot fetishist for kissing the feet of youthful customers; in Houston, TX, a woman was convicted of creating and distributing videos depicting the torture and killing of puppies, chickens and kittens; in New York, a former police officer, dubbed the "Cannibal Cop," was accused of plotting to kidnap, kill and eat young women, including his wife. In its annual crime reports, the FBI does not specify the number of people arrested for illegal fetishistic behavior. It does, however, note that sexually motivated murders are often due to "a number of unconventional sexual acts including fetish behaviors and paraphilias. These include fetishism, postmortem

mutilation, foreign object penetration, sexual sadism, necrophilia, cannibalism, and vampirism." It seems impossible to determine the number of people who visit a "professional" — i.e., psychiatrist, psychologist or therapist – seeking treatment for the torment of a very private fetish or other perversion.[54]

Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen, authors of *Female Fetishism*, argue that the secret of the fetish for both Marx and Freud lies not in the commodity, the object or its story, but in its mysterious power of "disavowal," the ability to deny the essential human relations at the heart of the fetishistic experience. For Marx, denial was rooted in exchange, the falsification of a social relation between a worker (i.e., the subject and his/her product) and the consumer (i.e., the object of purchase), between use value and exchange value. This falsification is institutionalized as a socially shared quasi-religious belief system, capitalism. For Freud, disavowal was rooted in a social relation of authority, between parent and child; it is the subject (i.e., boy) succumbing to patriarchal tyranny rooted in the falsification of a traumatic perception, the castration complex, his mother's lack of a penis. (Laura Mulvey argues that the fetish serves in disavowal like "a red flag, symptomatically signaling a site of psychic pain."[55] Denial involves the substitution of a sexualized object, the fetish, for patriarchal repression; this misperception is institutionalized as civilization.[56] These twin forms of denial – of economic exploitation and psychological tyranny — defined social and sexual life during capitalism's modern era.

The rise of the second-wave women's movement during capitalism's early-postmodern era was a critical factor in the commodification of adult sex and the transformation of the fetish. Susan Buck-Morss, a Benjamin scholar, argues, "Sexual liberation for women under capitalism has had the night-mare effect of 'freeing' all women to be sexual objects (not subjects). It must be admitted that women have collaborated actively in this process."[57] Gamman and Makinen note, "Arguing that women can and do practice fetishism thus becomes a way of challenging the psychoanalytic model of sexuality. It is also a way of showing how this existing model is in fact simply a way of reinforcing phalloentric value." Drawing on the works of radical feminist scholars like Luce Irigaray and Sara Kofman, they ask: "If women are allowed to fetishize, then the castration complex cannot be the only explanation – something else must be occurring as well, or instead. In trying to conceptualize this 'something else,' a new and positive construction of female sexuality comes into play."[58] Like all historical dialectics, sexual progress comes with its negation.

Post-WW-II consumer capitalism transformed the body and sexuality into commodities. The culture of consumer indulgence was promoted through the cultivation of what Freud called "phantasy," the creative, erotic imagination that is "subordinated to the pleasure principle alone" and configures sexual perversions.[59] It reverberates in the seductive lure of fashion and makeup, advertising, movies and television, newspapers and magazines, and an endless stream of online websites disseminate ever-increasing eroticized notions of postmodern life. Nothing more symbolizes this development than the sexualization of the female body and, especially, that of younger and younger girls. In this process, the self became a commodity, complicit in its own exploitation; it knows how to function in the marketplace, both as seller of

it's self as a product and a shrewd buyer, a self-regulating consumer.

A half-a-century ago, Marcuse glimpsed the coming transformation of capitalism and sought to apply a radical Marx-Freud analysis to this unstoppable development. In *One Dimensional Man* (1964), he warned: "The range of socially permissible and desirable satisfaction is greatly enlarged, but through this process, the Pleasure Principle is reduced — deprived of the claims which are irreconcilable with the established society." Going further, he foresaw the future of sexual morality as repressive tolerance: "Pleasure, thus adjusted, generates submission."[60] Although Marcuse never considered the fetish, the development he foresaw was most evident in its transformation from a pathological perversion, a once dreaded threat to self-hood and society, into a lifestyle indulgence.[61]

A half-century later, Marcuse's insight has become 21st century daily life. The three most recent eras of capitalist development — pre-modern, modern and postmodern — are that of Marx, then Freud, followed by Marcuse. During this evolution, capitalist society was transformed from a manufacturing to an industrial and to an increasingly globalized financial system. The three phases share one thing in common: they exploited two reinforcing means of growth: internationally, through globalized imperialism; domestically, through eroticized consumerism.

Many resisted the pull of the new moral order, a unique combination of marketplace capitalism and progressive secular values. Christian moralists and many Freudians feared sexual perversions as threats to the deeply held belief that the true, sole, purpose of sex was to fulfill the biological requirement of procreation. However, what happens when the requirements of procreation are contained through effective birth control? What happens when the quality of life improves and people live longer, healthier lives? Postmodern capitalism integrated sexuality as an active force of daily commercial and personal life; every purchase, every experience, has become a turn-on.

The fetish — a ritualized articulation of repression – bears witness to the transformation of America's moral order. In the 1690s, a dozen or so women in Salem, Mass., were executed with having sex with the most powerful fetish, the devil.[62] Adulterers and sodomites were also tried, convicted and hung; however, sex with the devil was considered the worst mortal offense. Three centuries later, few if any women report having sex with the devil and no one is hung for such an allegedly licentious act. The range of socially acceptable indulgences considered "normal" has greatly expanded: pre-marital sex is common; extra-marital affairs are not infrequent; the Supreme Court has legalized gay marriage, thus gay sex; and the devil has become an erotic spectacle, a popular Halloween character and performance-art costume. Google aggregates nearly 30 million websites listed under "sexual fetish."

Sex matters in the 21st century. Sex was once a private, discreet activity defined as much by a vast array of prohibitions as by the secret pleasures engaged in. Today, among consenting adults and age-appropriate young people, anything goes. The living, sexualized body has been artfully turned into a commodity; the fetish has been transformed into the sex toy. Once shameful perversions have been normalized, postmodern pleasures regulated by a culture of

sexual tolerance. Welcome to the new normal.

* Laura Mulvey outlines elements of such an approach as applied to movies in “Some Thoughts on Theories of Fetishism in the Context of Contemporary Culture,” *October*, vol. 65 (Summer, 1993), pp. 3-20.

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* The latest *DSM-V* (2013) includes “fetishistic disorder” within the category of “paraphilic disorders” that exhibitionistic disorder, frotteuristic disorder, pedophilic disorder, sexual masochism disorder, sexual sadism disorder, transvestic disorder, and voyeuristic disorder.

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Art, Immanence, and Critique: A Dialogue between Alain Badiou and Theodor Adorno

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Introduction

Alain Badiou and Theodor Adorno explore the critical power of art and its capacity to delegitimize existing restraints in society, economy, culture, and politics.

Of course, art can reinforce, perpetuate, or propagate these restraints as well. Therefore, perhaps the most affirmative exploration of art lies in its negative potential: that is, its capacity to explore its critical relationship with society and to illuminate what it is about art that can emancipate, reveal truth, and inspire new ways of being which previously appeared impossible.

Art, Theory, and Philosophy

In order to consider the role of new art in critiquing society and revealing truth, both social and artistic, it is particularly relevant to examine the frameworks that form the bases of the theoretical and philosophical approaches of Adorno and Badiou. Badiou's analysis of the Didactic, Romantic, and Classical schemata of art will be examined first, followed by Adorno's exploration of the dialectical relationship between the autonomy and heteronomy of artworks.

Badiou—Schemata of Art and Philosophy

Badiou opens his *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005) by outlining the historical relationship between art and philosophy. He examines the philosophical schemata of art as didactic and incapable of truth production, the romantic defense of art as the only producer of truth, and the classical scheme in which art mediates between the philosophical and romantic views.

In Plato, the didactic view of art holds that the truth of art is a false truth and that it is merely mimetic; that is, it provides only the semblance of truth (2005:2). Actual truth belongs to the philosopher alone, which leaves art to be judged according to its social or public effects and not according to aesthetic or other qualities of the art works as such (2005:3). It follows that art, with its propensity to mislead or tempt others into a false truth, must be managed carefully in order that only the desired public effect is achieved. Long after Plato, Rousseau commented that "'the spectacle is made for the people, and it is only by its effects upon the people that its absolute qualities can be determined'." In contrast, Badiou endorses Brecht's Marxist conception in which the epic "exhibits… the *courage* of truth" and art acts as "a therapy against cowardice" (2005:6).

Romanticism opposes didacticism in its claim that "art *alone* is capable of the truth" (2005:3). In contrast to the philosopher as the sole producer of truth, or for whom truth is external to art in the more general sense, romanticism holds that "it is art that educates, because it teaches of the power of infinity held within the tormented cohesion of a form," delivering "us from the subjective barrenness of the concept" (2005:3). Badiou sees Heidegger's hermeneutics as evoking romanticism in as much as "it exposes an indiscernible entanglement between the saying of the poet and the thought of the thinker. Nevertheless, the advantage is still with the poet, because the thinker is nothing but the announcement of a reversal" (2005:6). What is important here is the position of truth: while the philosopher and the artist are dealing in the same truth, it is only the artist who actualizes that truth in expression.

The classical schema, from Aristotle on, presupposes that there is only the appearance of conflict. In regard to this, Badiou agrees with the didactic view that truth is external to art, but he says "this is because the *purpose* of art is not in the least truth. Of course, art is not truth, but it also does not claim to be truth and is therefore innocent" (2005:4). This emasculation of art means that it is subject to a criterion of 'liking,' where "art must be liked because 'liking' signals the effectiveness of catharsis" (2005:4). In this sense, any resemblance to truth (or truth content, for that matter) is irrelevant as long as a work is liked (2005:4). Now far from the didactic schema in which "art is a public service" and from the romantic schema in which art need not contain even a trace of truth, we find a new schema easily adopted by the state; here you find the "'vassalization' of art and artists by absolutism, as well as in the modern vicissitudes of funding" (2005:5).

In Badiou's view all three of these schemata were exhausted by the end of the 20th century. For didacticism, art is "saturated by the state-bound and historical exercise of art in the service of the people" (2005:7). For Romanticism, it is "saturated by the element of pure promise—always brought back to the supposition of a return of the gods—in Heidegger's rhetorical equipment" (2005:7), and for Classicism, it is distorted by its aim, "by the self-consciousness conferred upon it by the complete deployment of a theory of desire" (2005:7).

Adorno—Autonomy and Heteronomy

Adorno's untangling of the dialectics of the autonomy and heteronomy of art in late capitalism, essentially holds that the emergence of capitalism and the dominance of bourgeois ideology emancipated art from previous structures of domination by the church, the aristocracy, and the feudal court (Hamilton 2009:254). In so far as it ever truly existed, the liberation of the subjective in art was short-lived as the imperatives of exchange-value and commodification presented new forms of domination resistant to previous emancipatory movements. What follows is an elaboration on those processes and analyses.

Early in the "Society" section of *Aesthetic Theory* (1997), Adorno claims that "art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art" (1997:225):

“What is social in art is its immanent movement against society, not its manifest opinions. Its historical gesture repels empirical reality, of which artworks are nevertheless part in that they are things. Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness”.

Here then is yet another challenge to explore the concept of “autonomous art” and the oppositional “heteronomous art.”

The notion of autonomous art implies the fetishization of a “pure, exclusively self-sufficient artwork” as witnessed in ‘*l’art pour l’art*’ [‘art for art’s sake’] following the French Revolution (1997:227), in which art is freed from the theological domination of earlier periods. This era of autonomy was not to last (if it ever truly existed, as bourgeois domination became increasingly realized through the commodification of art. Adorno tracks the “autonomy” of *Paradise Lost* by Milton: whereas Marx had criticized how little Milton was compensated for the work, Adorno takes as evidence that it was autonomous (as much as it could be) in that it was viewed as functionless by the market (1997:227). In this way, for Adorno, “the truth content of artworks, which is indeed their social truth, is predicated on their fetish character” (1997:227).

On the other hand, it is clear that the idea of autonomy was never tenable. For, even as Milton’s small payment for a now-canonical work is evidence of a degree of autonomy, the work was none-the-less rendered a commodity and continues to be an object of market exchange today. Bourgeois art, therefore, cannot escape domination and heteronomy any more than it could in previous eras dominated by political or theological authority. To the extent that it can be liberated from these restraints, at some point the artist still needs to earn a living, and if the market views the artwork as having absolutely no exchange value, then it is incumbent upon the artist to produce works which can be translated as commodities. In the event of a benefactor, it becomes difficult to discern whether the art produced is the artist’s alone or influenced by the demands or expectations of such a benefactor, so that even if autonomy is possible to some degree, it is inevitably compromised.

This exploration of autonomy and heteronomy reveals the dialectical character of artworks or, as Adorno often says, the “double character of art” (1997). The contradiction is that art’s truth lies in its autonomy, functionlessness, and fetish-character while its social reality lies in its heteronomy, commodification, and domination. As he writes in *Aesthetic Theory*, “The double character of art—something that severs itself from empirical reality and thereby from society’s functional context and yet is at the same time part of empirical reality and society’s functional context—is directly apparent in the aesthetic phenomena, which are both aesthetic and *faits sociaux*” (1997:252).

The New

Badiou—Event

When considering what in art is new or can be discovered, for Badiou, it is important first to explore his concept of an “event.” An event is a philosophical tool frequently utilized by Badiou

to conceptualize the dynamic nature of the world, as well as to render a truth into being (Hallward 2003). For a truth to be revealed in an event, a number of things are required. First, there must exist a *status quo* where all things and subjects can be understood as belonging in their setting (evental site). Then, a subject must move to a position previously denied by the *status quo* of the setting. Finally, the new position is indeed one to which the moved subject either belongs or can belong, thus revealing a new truth. The moving of the subject can then be identified as an event, while the new subject-position relationship becomes part of a status quo.

Hallward briefly utilizes the example of Charles Darwin aboard the HMS Beagle to exemplify the concept (2003). For an evental site belonging to natural science or biology, there was no credible conception of natural selection to explain the evolution and variation of species. As Darwin developed his thesis and then published it for extensive review, it eventually became clear that a new truth had been revealed and an event had taken place during the voyage.

In order to clarify how art relates to the event, Badiou offers another view of the event. In his philosophical examination of Beckett's *Worstward Ho*, Badiou refers to the "void" and the "dim" of an evental site (2005). The void is that which frames an evental site as a negation of existence (although it is still a condition of being, or "there is"), while the dim is a condition of unattained, yet explorable reality. In the *status quo* aspect of the situation of an evental site, the void and the dim may appear as one and the same; but the event appears is when there is a dissolving of the dim into the situation. While the void is infinite in its negation of the situation, it is none-the-less effectively diminished by the event having revealed the dim to exist as opposed to its being of the void.

As Badiou considered Beckett to have illustrated, perhaps even formulated this conception of the event, for him the event is the specific power or capacity of art. It can shine a lantern on the dim and reveal it to be part of the situation, which it truly always was, thus revealing a truth. However, it is important to consider the assumption that the art in question cannot be from the traditional, as the traditional exists within the already exposed situation. There is no truth revealed in traditional art, as it does not venture toward the void, into the dim. The example of Darwin's voyage and other events show that reality is not revealed solely by a movement towards the void. It must be shown to have breached the dim without entering the void (which is non-truth). In this way, the event does reveal an actuality during the event itself; only with examination after the fact can the situation be analyzed to have been an event where a truth has been revealed, and thus described as such. The challenge is how to identify, concretely, or theoretically, and to recognize, describe, and name a situation as a truth-yielding event. In this way, art (and the event) is to be taken in its wholeness as well as in its universality, for it is only the entirety of the situation, dim and void, that a truth can be revealed and become useful.

In a separate (though undoubtedly related) conception of new art, Badiou speaks of the immanence and singularity of art, and, in particular, how they relate to the three aforementioned artistic schemata. In essence, he feels that the three have fallen short of illuminating the imperatives in art of simultaneously manifesting immanence and singularity.

Unless these conditions are met, art cannot be conceived of as fulfilling its promise of truth production.

By immanence, Badiou means an "art that is rigorously coextensive with the truths that it generates" (2005:9; and cf. Brown, 2015:379). He expands this by three additional conditions of artistic validity: that "truth (is) really internal to the artistic effect of works of art," that "art itself is a truth procedure," and that "art is a thought in which artworks are the Real (and not the effect)" (2005:9). If these conditions are met, then the art and its truth can be said to be reciprocally immanent.

By singularity, Badiou means that "these truths are given nowhere else than in art" (2005:9). Singularity raises the question: "Does the truth testified by art belong to it absolutely?" Furthermore, "this thought, or rather the truths it activates, are irreducible to other truths – be they scientific, political, or amorous" (2005:9). If all these conditions are met, we can conclude that "art, as a singular regime of thought, is irreducible to philosophy" (2005:9).

For Badiou, immanence and singularity do not exist simultaneously in the three schemata: where romantic art is immanent, it is not singular; didactic art is singular, but not immanent; and classical art is neither immanent nor singular. As noted previously, the truth-content of art in the romantic schemata is the same truth-content of the thinker, and thus, not singular. Likewise, in the didactic schema, the quasi-truth of semblance is art's alone, giving it singularity, but as truth applies to the realm of the idea, art does not have immanence. And with classicism, art is granted neither truth-content nor a truth-procedure, merely a space in which catharsis can occur.

Badiou's call is for a new art that is simultaneously immanent and singular. For this, the truth-content of the art must not lie in a work or an artist, rather in a set of artworks which compose the event (2005:10). In this way, an artistic truth-procedure or event is like a social movement. As much as we may try to define it as such, a revolution or a movement is not a person or an act, but rather a multiple of at least one or the other, and more likely both. To this end Badiou states that "a truth is an infinite multiplicity" but "a work of art is essentially finite" (2005:10). Thus, if art's truth is seen as a multiple of works and artists, its truth will retain its singularity as it is not contingent upon *the thought*. Meanwhile, the task of the philosopher is not to produce or reveal truth, but rather to recognize and name truths. "Just as beauty is to be found in the woman encountered, but is in no way required of the procuress, so it is that truths are artistic, scientific, amorous, or political, and not philosophical" (2005:10).

Adorno—Autonomy and the Particular

New art in Adorno's writings should fundamentally maintain a stance against the heteronomous trappings of capitalism and tradition. To fail to do so will inevitably result in a failure to discover any of the truth content which is art's potential.

Capitalism has introduced new modes of domination in art forms that differ from those found in the king's courts or the demands of theologians. Previous forms of resistance and declarations

of autonomy have been rendered impotent by capitalism's commodification of art. Previously subjected to conventions of taste or programs of social order, art now must answer to the markets and the corresponding dominance of exchange value. Likewise, any art having any claim to autonomy which reaches a level of popularity has to come to terms with the demands of the culture industry in order to repeat its 'success.' One need look only to numerous examples of the 'sophomore slump' in music or literature to witness the effect of market expectations on the artist: change too little, and the artist is out of ideas; change too much, the calibrated audience is disinterested and sales plummet; become formulaic, and the artist is a sell-out; lean toward the avant-garde and the artist is trying too hard. To create one meaningful work of art is to be lost, as there are so many missed opportunities to – in the neoliberal jargon – 'monetize,' which requires at the least a repetition that diminishes art or displays the probability of repetition, say, in branding, collections, or, in music, albums of "greatest hits." Clearly part of monetization, bourgeoisification results in an ever-increasing concentration and monopolization at the top of the power hierarchies of communications, media, and commercial distributors of artworks.

It is against this absorbent morass of art-advertising-propaganda machinery that Adorno conceives frameworks of opposition to the domination of art under the conditions of late capitalism. Martin (2000) argues that Adorno's ideas fit within the concept of anti-art (and cf. Willener 1970). Despite his insistence that autonomy is the locus of art's truth content, Adorno nevertheless regularly qualifies this stance by doubting the possibility of such 'pure' autonomy. Martin's argument proceeds from this point, illustrating Adorno's views that the new offers "the promissory, even utopian impulse of something different irrupting out of the present" and provides "the site of the constitution of art's autonomy through the determinate negation of tradition" (2000:198).

While anti-art is typically considered oppositional to both heteronomy and autonomy, Martin argues that it is still at home within Adorno's concepts. Martin lists three basic principles of anti-art: the affirmation of non-art, anti-art as politics, and anti-art as anti-tradition (2000:199). With these, anti-art affirms life and the real, while adopting a political scheme aimed at maximizing its social project and rejecting co-optation into the fold of tradition (Martin 2000). While a move to the political appears to signal a loss of autonomy, it is not a politics of, or for, but rather politics *against* society, tradition, formal rationality, etc. As Hamilton explains, Adorno "holds that it is only through becoming socially autonomous, that art becomes self-conscious and socially critical" (2009:256).

Given Adorno's reluctance to affirm the existence of autonomous art in its pure form, along with other conceptions of art oppositional to capitalism's heteronomy, including mass production, standardization commodification, and reification, Martin's argument seems sound. In regard to its rejection of tradition, Adorno writes, "modern art is questionable not when it goes too far — as the cliché runs — but when it does not go far enough… Only works that expose themselves to every risk have the chance of living on, not those that out of fear of the ephemeral cast their lot with the past" (1997:34). In regard to its resistance to capitalist rationalization, he says that "The necessity of going to the extreme is the necessity for this

particular rationality in relation to the material, and not the result of a pseudoscientific competition with the rationalization of the de-mystified world" (1997:35). For Adorno, anti-art is integrated into the idea of autonomous art as a necessity and not merely a preference, once its mechanisms for negating traditionalism are threatened by capitalist domination (Martin 2000:203).

Yet, he finds another mode of resistance and another demand for autonomy in an emphasis, more or less successful, on particularity. Beyond just a declaration of autonomy, emphasis on the particular provides a locus of truth: "artworks are alive in that they speak in a fashion that is denied to natural objects and the subjects who make them. They speak by virtue of the communication of everything particular in them," while "they also communicate with the empirical experience that they reject and from which they draw their content" (1997:5).

Since Weber's classic argument, extended by the Frankfurt School, it has been clear that formal rationality is one of the key forms of domination in modern society. Speaking about the critical power of the particular in the context of Dada, I have argued that

To delegitimate the ideology of rationality, then, is to deny the fundamental opposition between that ideology: the distinction and the subordination of the particular to the universal. Thus the attack on rationality is to particularize, and the dialectic of the attack is to turn the tables. Particularizing is the negation of rationality (Halley 1991:234-235).

Particularization resists formal rationality via its ability to undermine taken-for-granted meaning, and is coupled with the delegitimation of conceptions of linear time, attacks on means-ends relationships through the use of chance artistic practices, and the undermining of fixed subject-object relationships (Halley 1991:233-240). Thus, some art can threaten and even shatter the standardization and rationalization of the modern world by accentuating the subject and the particular. Adorno illustrates this point by saying "every artwork is an instant; every successful work is a cessation, a suspended moment of the process, as which it reveals itself to the unwavering eye" (1997:6).

In a parallel fashion, the composer Pierre Boulez – who met Adorno at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music from the early 1950s to the early 1960s – writes of the use of the musical fragment by Webern, Berg, and even Stravinsky. He notes that Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* is a succession of twenty-one fragments, linked, but all independent from one another (Boulez 2005:676-677). Yet the immediacy might be short lived, of course, because there is a likelihood that the work(s) will be denied a societally critical function, become integrated into tradition, or end by standardizing itself. Adorno illustrates the latter:

…now that American hotels are decorated with abstract paintings… and aesthetic radicalism has shown itself to be socially affordable, radicalism itself must pay the price that is no longer radical. Among the dangers faced by new art, the worst is the absence of danger" (1997:29).

If adapted to tradition, art must itself be self-critical by challenging the very things it puts forth

against the *status quo*. Thus, the need for new art always exists and must be rigorously pursued.

The Avant-Garde

Badiou

For Badiou the avant-garde represents a search for a more satisfying answer to the didactic-romantic-classical problem. “The avant-gardes were above all anticlassical” (2005:8). At the same time, they were “didactic in their desire to put an end to art, in their condemnation of its alienated and inauthentic character” and “romantic in their conviction that art must be reborn immediately as absolute—as the undivided awareness of its operations or as its own immediately legible truth” (2005:8). The problem is to decide whether they incorporate both attitudes in a unity that preserves the contradiction as a motivating tension, or are destined to intensify and expand upon the negative aspect of their anti-classicism. Badiou identifies their project with the first possibility, but only as a moment of a dialectic in which there are no guarantees.

In this regard, Badiou writes in *The Century* that the avant-gardes were a “spark in search of a powder keg,” a phrase borrowed from surrealist writer Andre Breton (2007:138). Here, Badiou means that they sought to explode all that had come to represent art by violating, in the name of what they intended to demolish, prevailing standards of “beauty” and the sedimented norms of “taste” (2007:132-133).

Like the spark, the avant-gardes were of the present (2007:135), and therefore could only know themselves as a concretization of a moment of rupture (2007:135-136). To gesture toward the past would be to affirm tradition, a primary target of their project, and to invoke a future would be false in principle since nothing can be anticipated beyond rupture. Yet, it remains puzzling that they published manifestos as if declaring the possibility of *some* future if not a particular one – as if that would be a sufficient testament to *the* truth particular to *a* rupture (2007:139-140).

Despite all their efforts, “the avant-gardes did not achieve their conscious objective: to lead a united front against classicism,” as didactics condemned their romantic elements, romanticism condemned their didactic elements, and much of their program was largely adopted into classicism (2005:8).

Adorno

Adorno, and others through Adorno’s conceptual lens, identified avant-garde art as empirical crystallizations of his concepts of autonomy and the particular, both of which sustain the originality and critical disposition of the avant-garde. From this point of view, the aim of the avant-garde was to emancipate art from its domination by the incessant rationalization characteristic of modern society. One of the main weapons deployed against rationalization to combat this domination was a focus on the particular, the moment of an encounter without the

pretension of didacticism, the regressive nostalgia of classicism, and the reification of art by romanticism. As autonomy and the particular are intertwined in the history of avant-garde art, they will be treated together in what follows.

Hamilton argues that the avant-garde displays its autonomy while retaining social meaning in that "modernist art, though presented to an audience, is uninterested in their reaction—which is discomforting for them" (2009:258). Elsewhere I have presented the Dada movement as a primary example of the exploration of the particular in resistance to modern forms of rationalization (Halley 1991). Adorno explicates this aspect of the avant-garde: "Art is thrown back on the dimensionless point of pure subjectivity, strictly on its particular and thus abstract subjectivity. This tendency was passionately anticipated by the radical wing of expressionism up to and including dada" (1997:29).

As for autonomy, according to Adorno, "The more art expels the pre-established, the more it is thrown back on what purports to get by, as it were, without borrowing from what has become distant and foreign" (1997:29). In turn, the drive toward autonomy provided the avant-garde with a space for critical expression aimed at the reification of art and society and the impulse to commodify every aspect of life. The negative aspect of this critique nevertheless links the avant-garde to its overarching object, society. In this respect, Martin argues that the avant-garde is both anti-art and political. But since, as I have shown, Dada sprang from the critical resistance to formal rationality in general, and World War I more specifically (Halley 1991:228), the politics in the Dada program – in artworks, soirees, and manifestos – was always mediated. This appears to contradict Badiou's account of the avant-garde, in which he interprets the manifestos as political declarations, unmediated by what is presupposed in their artful or anti-artful forms of expression.

Martin's claim that the autonomy of art includes a type of anti-art discloses something of a paradox. In so far as the avant-garde was autonomous, many in the art establishment, including critics, tastemakers, curators, and patrons, rejected a role for the avant-garde role in art. In other words, so long as avant-garde art was generally viewed as 'not art,' it retained its measure of autonomy and, therefore, its critical stance. However, as they and their exhibitions became more celebrated, the avant-garde artists and their art were increasingly adopted into the tradition, and even, occasionally, the canon, thereby reducing the emancipatory impact their autonomy once promised. Today, remnants of late 19th and early 20th century modern art, including what had been rejected as anti-art, can be seen permeating the otherwise conventional realms of popular culture, including advertisements, mainstream films, and the halls of office buildings. However, this is not entirely true; elsewhere I have argued that the specificity of shock means that what is shocking can never be completely coopted to or absorbed by convention (Halley 2003), suggesting that no matter how what once shocked is re-presented, there is always a trace of that originally subversive tension, perhaps felt as vague discomfort at the moment of its being encountered again.

Contemporary Art and Society

Badiou—Fifteen Theses on Art

In 2003, Badiou delivered a talk in which he posited fifteen theses that can stand as a guide for the analysis of contemporary artworks. At stake in the theses are the relationship of art to truth, the problem posed by the opposition of the particular the universal, the specificity of art and art forms, and art's relationship to Empire (2003). While utilizing the theses as a guide for production seems at least somewhat antithetical to Badiou's project, he points toward a direction in which art should go and the project it should pursue. Perhaps the theses can be read can be read as a manifesto, something previously discussed within the avant-gardes and which Badiou refers to repeatedly in his own works. I will discuss a few of the theses as they pertain to the issues raised above and in order to consider and clarify, on Badiou's own terms, the imperatives of art moving forward.

In his first thesis, Badiou again claims, against Romanticism, that art is an infinite multiple, and that truth is not to be found in an artwork, but in a series of art production (104). In the second and third theses (105-107), he maintains that art must not focus on the particular at the expense of the universal, but that to reach any truth it must expose new universalities. Insofar as truth is universal, art should express universal truths. However, this need not reject expressions of particularity in an artwork, or from the artist, since universals are realized in particulars. Moreover, since art's truth does not originate from a particular artwork or from the artist, Badiou's formulation amounts to saying that since the truth of art is not found in the particular artwork or its subject matter, it is not established and contained merely in thought.

Badiou's ideas concerning forms develop these notions further (107-112). Consider again his conception of the event: in a situation, there is an illumination of something new, a novel perspective on the status quo, or a sudden emancipatory possibility. He posits that a new art form is an artistic event in this respect, but that this illumination should not be the sole focus of artists. While new forms are always necessary, much more of art's history lies in the working in and through existing forms than the creation of new forms. In fact, he argues that "in art there is not exactly pure creation of forms… but there is something like progressive purification, and complexification of forms in sequence" (108): what seem to be new forms come from the working out of existing forms, or by chance, circumstance, or momentary necessity. Furthermore, as an event is at least partially chance or impossible to plan, it would be impossible for an artist actively to seek new forms, for one cannot plan to create the impossible.

And yet, the event implies another of art's imperatives. Against Empire, with the limitations imposed by and the domination inherent in the imperial project, art must illuminate that which Empire claims does not exist (109-112). With this in mind, Badiou relates art to markets where there are "not really laws which are about what is possible, what is not possible, so everything is possible. Yet… "everything is impossible, because there is nothing else to have, the Empire is the only possible existence" (110). In this statement Badiou echoes the pessimism of Adorno. Therefore, the move for art, insofar as it opposes Empire, is to expose the possibilities in the impossible, which can be taken as a shorthand definition for the concept of the event. In his

final theses, Badiou considers what this means for art production. Art is to be abstract, so as to illuminate universal truths and as such it can resist imperial domination, which always abstracts its universals from concrete particulars (112-119). Resistance, then, does not come from the prospect of absolute emancipation, but rather, from self-censorship, as the Empire (capitalist markets) accepts all and rejects none; it is totalizing in the interest of its own fantasy of totality. Similarly, there should not be a move to totalize forms into multimedia in an effort to maximize effect, reach, and content. Given this, art must be as formal as a mathematical demonstration, surprising, as anything impossible is, as an ambush, and "marvelous… like a new light" (a new star, planet, world for our knowledge) – if art is to be properly situated in truth and against Empire (112).

How can we move from the specificity of an artwork to universal truth? Heidegger and Sartre, respectively, address this question. Heidegger, speaking of Holderlin's elegy "Bread and Wine" asks ". . . and what are poets for in a destitute time?" (1971:88). He raises the question of how can we recover from our present bad situation in the context in which, after the de-Nazification trials, he was banned from teaching for his involvement with the Nazi regime. For him, the poet's writing is universal, since it responds to the world, concretizes it, and finally, makes language problematic (1971). Sartre, by contrast, speaks of totalization as a process in which subjectivity, or lived experience, comes up against the constraint of institutions, what he calls the practico-inert (1968; 1991; 2016).

Badiou's own concept of universal truth is not clear here. If, as Badiou says (above), the artist cannot succeed in intentionally seeking new forms, the truth of art cannot lie in particular works. If, however, the artist is enjoined to favor the sort of formality that offers the prospect of illumination or discovery, the prospect of an event, the truth can only appear after a work has been done and it cannot otherwise make its appearance (insofar as it is the truth of art), but to *know* that truth, is, then, not a possibility for the artist while at work, and so it seems that the truth of art lies in a universal that is actualized, made "concrete" and therefore reflexive in a work that is only true inasmuch it is distinctly art, subject to "art" as a certain ideal among the realm of ideals. Perhaps Badiou means that the truth of art is the collective product, the collectivity of all artwork, and that truth can only be known by the collective consciousness – and in that respect through a lived dialectic of universal and particular as that appears in a totalizing dialectic of, as Sartre says, praxis and the inert (1968; 1991; 2016). In other words, the truth of art is *society* conceived of as what the Enlightenment called an "association" in which each allows us to conclude, with Foucault, that in art, society indicts itself as an active totalization of self-critical awareness (Foucault 1965; cf. Brown 2014).

Adorno and Pessimism – from The Culture Industry to Beckett's Endgame

There is in Badiou's theses an undeniable sense of optimism; for him, new art is admittedly impossible, yet inevitable. In contrast, for Horkheimer and Adorno's account of the culture industry (1989; 2003), written in a context of Fascism and war, the situation seems to imply the opposite. One encounters, all around, a semblance of the new, outside of rational, calculable, standardized, commodified culture. However, upon further scrutiny, one finds that it is either

already the product of the culture industry or the possibility it provides for an authentic experience, or feeling, will soon be bought, distributed, and sold. 'New and improved' is by now the leading device in advertising since Adorno studied radio for Paul Lazersfeld in the late 1930s with the Princeton Radio Project (Adorno 1941). The conformism and trivialization evident in the uses of music is also reflexively found in the design of the mainstream study of culture – reduced to how broadcasters can target listeners. As he notes in his commentary on this kind of administrative research, where listeners are asked to press a button to register if they liked or disliked the music played, "I reflected that culture was simply the condition that precluded a mentality that tried to measure it." (Adorno 1998:219) Later, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer and Adorno 1989), this becomes our daily encounter with 'culture,' now even more magnified in today's globalized neo-liberal world and with the accelerating and monetized uses of social media.

The relationship of art to bourgeois society, was, at first, emancipatory for art. In the decline of religious domination, and prior to the industrial revolution and the subsequent emphasis on mass production, art enjoyed new levels of autonomy. On one hand, this autonomy permitted art the freedom of non-rational and individualized expression. On the other hand, under late capitalism, totalizing mass markets and technologies ushered in the means to align cultural production with mass consumption. Radio, television, film, and now the internet have at one point faced the same opportunities and limitations that other large industries had to confront and who found their answers in economies of scale. Each was capable of delivering cultural material to millions, provided the millions were able to access the content. Since the 1990's neoliberalism has accelerated and intensified this trend.

The artistic content available via broadcast, digital, or analog mediums and the hardware necessary to access this content became inseparable. In other words, art, artist, technological device, and the mass production of each were essentially identical, operating under the same imperatives of standardization, calculation, repetition, and efficiency that were the hallmarks of all other industries. Thus, the Culture Industry represents a final state in the transformation of culture under modern forms of domination where culture is reduced to rationalization and consumption, subject to the same principles as modern industrial production, modern warfare, and modern politics. To wit:

The basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest. A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself. It is the coercive nature of society alienated from itself. Automobiles, bombs, and movies keep the whole thing together until their leveling element shows its strength in the very wrong which it furthered" (121).

It was indeed more than a bit prophetic that Adorno and Horkheimer linked, in 1944, no less, the destructive capabilities of automobiles, advertising, and film to those of propaganda and bombs.

The propaganda at stake is fascist, which, from this point of view, is not hyperbole but a matter

of fact. We have access to art, primarily, via powerful organizations (political, economic, or military) dedicated first and foremost to the modern imperatives of rationalization. This is more a matter of power than influence, and it aims to control the intersection of all values to quantifiable options and the sort of mass society in which individuals and groups are defined by their functions. This is the context in which the autonomy of art is either an illusion or a disguise that makes obscure its contribution to the master's dream of a one-dimensional society based on fidelity rather than social justice and progress. For the vision that authorizes this authoritarian project, the very idea of the autonomy of art is subversive, and its emancipatory power is, at most, a lost cause. Very little hope was conveyed by their writings on the culture industry, regarding how or where art, culture, or society might break free of this corporate state and the mechanical solidarity it encouraged in the epoch of Stalinist, Fascist, and Western capitalist domination.

Adorno's writing on Beckett's *Endgame* dramatizes this rejection of critique in his endorsement of Beckett for refusing to take a position of simple opposition:

"Beckett shrugs his shoulders at the possibility of philosophy today, at the very possibility of theory. The irrationality of bourgeois society in its late phase rebels at letting itself be understood; those were the good old days, when a critique of the political economy of this society could be written that judged it in terms of its own *ratio*. For since then the society has thrown its *ratio* on the scrap heap and replaced it with virtually unmediated control. Hence interpretation inevitably lags behind Beckett." (Adorno 1992:244)

For Adorno the absence of hope in Beckett makes it a more vital contemporary play, in contrast with the plays of Brecht or Hochhuth who take "a stand with an intent to expose" (Adorno 1992:249). Beckett embodies the specificity of art, versus philosophy, as critique; in our age, philosophy can no longer understand or interpret. Rather, it now seems that the role of art is to diagnose our time. As Marx criticized Eugène Sue for tendentiousness in literature, Adorno in "Commitment" criticizes Sartre and Brecht for their didacticism: "Sartre's theatre of ideas sabotages the aim of his categories… It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads" (Adorno 1977:180). Against this, Adorno contrasts the starkness of *Endgame*, a play about the demise of the subject. Like the Dada artwork, Beckett dramatizes the absence of sense or meaning by the examples of living within incomprehensibility. The play itself expresses meaninglessness rather than having the actors espouse a philosophy of meaninglessness.

To critique Horkheimer and Adorno for an absence of positive, testable, or hypothetical answers to what should be done would misunderstand the very project of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, from which the concept of the Culture Industry is laid out in the chapter, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception." It is also to misunderstand their consistent use, following Hegel and Marx, of immanent criticism, determinate negation (cf. Hegel 1977:3; Adorno 2008: 25-27). In this sense it appears that, not only will they not tell us what to do or what will happen, but will instead tell us who we are, that is, what is our culture,

what is our art, what is our society, and leave the *how* of approaching that to us. Art can only foreshadow a possible non-repressive future. Its contribution to society "is not communication with it but rather something extremely mediated: It is resistance… radical modernity preserves art's immanence by admitting society only in an obscured form, as in the dreams in which artworks have been compared" (Adorno 1997:226).

In this case, Breton's "spark in search of a powder keg" appears to apply to Adorno, as well as Badiou. Horkheimer and Adorno call for artists to be sparks (in whatever sense that means to an artist), but they say nothing about how to predict the explosion.

Conclusion

When one considers the philosophical and sociological implications of art, truth, and production in society outlined here, certain programs are evident. First, drawing from the historical and philosophical dimensions of art, that of autonomy versus heteronomy in Adorno and Badiou's three schemata of art, it seems inevitable that art cannot find its truth-content in stances external or transcendent to society (autonomous or romantic art) or from society itself (heteronomous or didactic art). The former is impossible in its 'purity' and the latter reinforces the status quo. Therefore, it is imperative that art work against the existing social condition. In this way, it can operate with as much autonomy, and therefore purity, as is possible while rejecting and possibly undermining the institutions implicit in the economic, political, or cultural imperatives of domination. Working immanently against the social condition, or status quo, gives artworks space to reveal truths, the possibilities immanent to impossibility. Like politics, the way forward is not from tradition or theory, but rather from revolutionary actions toward emancipation. [Like politics, the way forward is not from tradition or theory, but rather from critical engagement toward emancipation. Like politics, the way forward is not from tradition or theory, but rather from critical engagement toward emancipatory forms and conditions. With every yoke thrown off a new one is donned which requires a new stance, a new approach, a new act, and a new art.

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Hollywood’s African-American Films Since 2012

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It seems such a long time ago since the “Beer Summit,” of 2009. When President Obama sat down with Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates and Cambridge Police sergeant James Crowley. The Summit occurred after Crowley, had arrested Gates for breaking and entering his own home.

Although it was a minor though toxic incident, it appeared at a time when we had begun to fantasize that our racial divide might be simply resolved with some rational discourse and good will on each side.

However, in 2012 came the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, when even the President, who had long avoided calling attention to his own racial identity and issues, stated that Martin could have been his own son.

In many ways it was Martin’s death that first inspired a new generation of activists to take to the streets and protest against a system they felt held the lives of African Americans in small regard. In swift succession Martin’s killing was followed by the police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri of Eric Garner in New York City, and the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore in 2014. It led to a number of riots, and the rise of the “Black Lives Matter” movement, which demonstrated against the deaths of numerous other African Americans by police actions or while in police custody. In the summer of 2015, Black Lives Matter began to publicly challenge politicians to state their positions on BLM issues.

So it seemed that after all the complacent boasting of a post-racial society, that developed after the election of Barack Obama in 2008, America’s original sin and prime domestic problem was back in the forefront of our consciousness. It even included a proposed boycott of the 2016 Academy Awards by Black actors and directors, who were upset, because no African-Americans had been nominated for the leading awards.

There is an ironic aspect to this last incident, because awards aside, if one looks back on the period between 2012 and 2015, one sees a succession of films about the African –American experience that would certainly hold their own against mort of the best films produced in American cinema. The films include some that dealt historically with the African-American experience as well as others exploring issues of contemporary African–American life, including events that predated and might even have inspired the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

The first of these, and the most historically resonant, was the Academy Award winning *12 Years a Slave* (2013), directed by Steve McQueen (*Hunger, 2008, Shame, 2011). 12 Years a Slave* was adapted from the 1853 memoir of the same title by Solomon Northup, a relatively prosperous freeman and violinist living in Saratoga Springs NY, who was kidnapped by slavers in Washington D.C and then sold South.

Through all the horrors he goes through, Northup (Chiwetel Ejiofor in a low-keyed, subtle performance), renamed Platt, survives. In a telling moment that is illustrative of what horrors slaves were confronted with, he and a couple of other slaves debate whether to resist or to acquiesce to their condition. Northrup chooses what he thinks will be temporary acquiescence. He would rather survive than fall into despair. For a fellow slave dying is better than being in servitude.

Platt is sold to William Ford (Benedict Cumberbatch). The ineffectually kind but hypocritical Ford believes he is good to his slaves because he reads scripture to them. However, he allows his vicious overseer Tibeats (Paul Dano) to torment them, chanting “run nigger run” while they work. Platt driven to the brink by Tibeats’ resentment and bullying strikes the overseer, and for this offense is hung from a tree with his toes barely touching the ground to prevent him from choking to death.

No scene evokes the historical powerlessness of the slaves in the face of absolute white power as this moment in the film. As Platt hangs from the tree, McQueen captures the other slaves on the plantation, fearing for their own lives, going about their business as usual, none of them, except one, even acknowledging Platt’s horrific predicament.

Finally, released Platt is sold to the volatile, alcoholic, God-invoking slave breaker Edwin Epps (Michael Fassbender). The brutal Epps works his slaves mercilessly, imposes crushing quotas of cotton, whips them for the slightest infraction, has them dance after a day’s labor for his own pleasure, and curses them out as ‘black dogs.” He even flaunts his sexual relationship with the beautiful slave Patsey (Lupita Nyong’o)–his “queen”– in front of his unhappy, enraged termagant of a wife (a powerful high-pitched performance from Sarah Paulson), who goads him to punish her. Patsey is so profoundly tormented by her fate as a sexual possession that she asks Platt to kill her—she sees it as a “merciful” act. Instead Platt is later coerced to lash her mercilessly turning her back into a bleeding sore when she defies Epps, forcing Platt to become a collaborator in the victimization of his own people.

After a number of futile attempts at contacting someone who might help him, Northrup, with the help of a sympathetic, anti-slavery contractor Bass (Brad Pitt), makes contact with people in Saratoga and is finally freed. Pitt, one of the film’s producers, gives himself that sympathetic role, and though he speechifies a bit about justice and righteousness, the film never loses its way, and becomes a polemic.The film’s stirring conclusion depicts Northup’s tear-filled reunion with his wife and by now fully grown children. In the aftermath of this, and what is not shown in the film, is Northrup’s later career as an abolitionist spokesman both in the United States and abroad.

Despite McQueen's, who came out of the London gallery-and-museum world of short films and videos, tendency to compose stunning images in long shot, and shoot some scenes using striking chiaroscuro, *12 Years a Slave* never seems too aestheticized. It neither romanticizes American slavery as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) in its creation of an ante-bellum plantation idyll does, or turns it into a source of eroticism as in *Mandingo* (1975). Instead we see the terror and savagery of a world where slaves are never seen as human beings, but as property to be used and abused by their masters according to their every whim and desire. Slavery in the film means men and women being sold like cattle, children, torn from their mothers, and men, women, and children laboring ceaselessly whose only reward was not being whipped. It is a world of white power and privilege built on the backs of slaves.

By centering the film on a respectable, caring, well-spoken freeman like Northup, a man who must hide both his personal history and the rage he feels towards an institution that dehumanizes him, the film forcefully conveys how there wasn't anybody that was black, however advantaged (Northup had been ostensibly accepted in Saratoga, and knew whites who were willing to rescue him), that did not suffer the consequence of America's horrendous racism. It permeated every aspect of the society. In long takes and penetrating tight close ups McQueen's camera focuses on a despairing Northup, whose sorrow is overwhelming, but no more so than the millions of slaves that could not read and write, and would never taste freedom in their lives.

In a sense Lee Daniel's (2013) begins where *12 Years a Slave* ends. Cecil Gaines (Forest Whitaker) witnesses the rape of his mother (Mariah Carey) and the murder of his father (David Banner) by a drunken white plantation owner (Alex Pettyer). Touched with guilt the plantation owner's mother (Vanessa Redgrave), who is a racist, takes in Cecil to work as a servant, initiating what would eventually become a three-decade career as a butler in the White House.

Cecil's story was a adapted by Lee Daniels (*Precious, 2009)* and his scriptwriter Danny Strong from a 2008 *Washington Post* article by Will Hapgood about Eugene Allen, who worked for 30 years as a butler in the White House. Cecil is a stoical but perceptive observer of history as he alternately serves Presidents Dwight Eisenhower (Robin Williams), John F. Kennedy (James Marsden), Lyndon B. Johnson (Liev Schreiber), Richard Nixon (a profoundly uneasy and politically calculating John Cusack), and Ronald Reagan (Alan Rickman), a star-studded cast all performing generally on target cameos. It's a breezy run through of the Presidents' diverse personas and their relationship to the civil rights movement.

Cecil's submissiveness—he almost never raises his voice– and commitment to playing it safe (he adheres to the dictum that a butler should be invisible) is vividly contrasted with the political activism of his estranged son Louis (David Oyelowo), by Daniels' fluid crosscutting. Louis is alternately a participant in sit-ins, Freedom Rides, and even for a brief time becomes is a member of the Black Panthers–talking radical cant. Though he is turned off by their emphasis on guns and violence and leaves. While Cecil and the other black butlers mutely serve at formal, all-white dinners at the White House. Cecil's chain-smoking, heavy-drinking wife Gloria, played with verve by Oprah Winfrey, also has a very different personality than Cecil's. She is as

expressive, and aggressive as Cecil is emotionally controlled and passive. Still, he is the apotheosis of decency. (He is even sufficiently affected by the civil rights movement that he drops being submissive for a moment, and asks his contemptuous white boss for equal pay and greater opportunities for the black staff.) When Nancy Reagan (Jane Fonda) invites Gloria and Cecil to a White House state dinner, Gloria is exhilarated, but the invitation, which Cecil sees as mainly "for show," doesn't have any effect on Ronald Reagan's right wing policies. (Reagan still refused to vote sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa.)

The Butler is most incisive as a cinematic evocation of W.E.B Dubois' seminal insight that African-Americans wore "two faces." It also clearly illustrates the black poet Paul Dunbar's lines that African-Americans of generations before the civil rights movement, "wear the mask that grins and lies."

Otherwise, it's a film that explicitly spells out its point of view, wearing its message on its sleeve. It never stops manipulating our emotions, even using a melancholy tinkling piano to underlie the scenes depicting Cecil and Gloria aging. Close to the film's conclusion, Cecil has an epiphany, and begins to share his son's political vision. He now sees him as a "hero" committed to saving the "soul of the country." Daniels ends the film on a triumphant note, with Obama winning the Presidency–a result of the actions of Louis, and all the courageous, risk-taking activists that preceded him. *The Butler* can't fail to move us–offering the audience an abridged and flattened historical pageant, with characters that can't help elicit our sympathy. This is a shallow, obvious, conventional film that one can't stop watching.

The masks that Cecil and the other butlers wore are non-existent in Ava Duvernay's (*I Will Follow, 2010)* 2014 film *Selma,* which chronicles the struggle of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (David Oyelowo) to gain voting rights for African-Americans. Duvernay and her scriptwriter Paul Webb portray King as a visionary who is totally focused on gaining equality for his people. At the same time it portrays in much less detail his conflicts with his wife Coretta (Carmen Ejogo), who suspects him of infidelity, and his conflicts over political tactics with young radicals of SNCC such as James Foreman (Trai Byers) and John Lewis (Stephan James).

Duvernay avoids portraying King as a man free of self-doubt. One sees this most poignantly when late one evening King calls the singer Mahalia Jackson (Ledisi Young) and asks her to let him hear the voice of the Lord, and she sings him the gospel classic "Precious Lord Take My Hand."

Nonetheless, King is also shown to be an astute political tactician, who has learned from previous defeats of the movement's efforts that only white intransigence and violence can gain the movement the kind of media coverage (i.e. the brutal response of Alabama's racist and demagogic governor, George Wallace) that will produce action on the part of the federal government. And he is also no slouch in standing toe to toe with President Lyndon B. Johnson (Tom Wilkerson), himself no stranger to shrewd political maneuver, to attain his goals. Ultimately, the terrible violence of "Bloody Sunday," (March 7, 1965), when Alabama State Troopers attacked the marchers, and the sympathy it generated throughout the country,

resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

In her commitment to the heroism of King and the black protest movement, Duvernay seemed to go overboard by diminishing the political significance of LBJ's commitment to civil rights. He is shown as initially hostile to the efforts of King. However, many historians1 of the period have denied this. Indeed some of Johnson's former aides2 have even argued that he encouraged King and they worked together to pass the Civil Rights Act.

Nevertheless, what the film most reminds us of is how charismatic and eloquent King could be. For legal reasons, DuVernay had to reimagine King's oratory, but the soaring words still have King's cadence and moral resonance. If they lose something in authenticity, their authority remains.

There is no denying the power of these historical recreations. What were equally potent and compelling were the films depicting aspects of contemporary African-American life–their problems, victories, and tragedies. Benh Zeitlin and Lucy Alibers indie *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) carries a hint of the anthropological, but is also clearly influenced by the romanticism of Terence Malick. It is set in a fictional place in Louisiana called "the Bathtub." The Bathtub is a swamp-ridden, barren-looking bayou neighborhood of black and white families living in ramshackle homes and beached wrecked boats, whose lives seemed to revolve mainly around heavy drinking and fishing. Their homes are squalid, and the neighborhood is filled with rubbish and dogs, chickens and pigs freely wandering about. The people live lives far removed from middle class norms and behavior. Still, they may be dirty, and living on the margins, but they adhere to a serious code of their own: "You don't let anyone down who's in trouble." One also feels the sense of true community among them where race plays no role.

The film focuses on the lives of the too cutely named Hushpuppy (the precocious six year old non-professional, Quvenzhane Wallis, whose point of view and voice dominates the film) and her angry father Wink (the non-professional Dwight Henry). Wink is an irresponsible father. He feeds Hushpuppy a steady diet of chicken, leaves her alone to fend for herself for long stretches of time, hits and shouts at her, but despite it all one can see that there is a fierce love and attachment between them.

Hushpuppy who narrates some of the film is an almost magical child—a bit too self-consciously and pretentiously so. She mourns and fantasizes about the mother who deserted her, communes with the animals, talks about the universe, and has a rich imagination. The film includes magic realist scenes of ferocious primordial beasts called Aurochs who are dislodged from polar icecaps and drift down to wreck havoc on the Gulf Coast. The images may be too literal, but Hushpuppy conjures them up at times to make some sense of the darker aspects of her life.

The community is destroyed by a storm, and, despite protests, everyone is evacuated to a medical center where they are given clean clothes. After the death of Wink, who has heart problems, some of the inhabitants of the Bathtub including Hushpuppy throw off the new

clothes given to them by aid workers and march over water proudly back home in a scene reminiscent of Soviet filmmakers choreographing Chekhov's *Three Sisters* striding off to Moscow. In its final image, this quasi-fable embraces the indomitability of an impoverished, mixed race community; a lovely, utopian fantasy.

Equally fierce in their attachment to their culture and to their origins in South Central L.A. are the young Black men who became one of the first gangsta' rap groups N.W.A (Niggaz Wit Attitude) in *Straight Outta Compton* (2015) a film directed by F. Gary Gray (*The Italian Job, 2003)*. Dr. Dre (Corey Hawkins), Ice Cube (O'Shea Jackson, Jr. , son of the real Ice Cube), D.J. Yella (Neil Bron Jr.) M.C. Ren (Aldis Hodge), Eazy-E (Jason Mitchell) make up the group after Easy E, tired of the constant danger of dealing drugs, decides to finance their venture into rap.

On one level the film is a rags to riches tale as the group burst onto the music scene from nowhere and is catapulted to fame and fortune including grand houses with pools where bikini-clad young women party with the rappers and their entourage. But it is also a cautionary tale of what big money can do, as the group begins to break apart as a result of squabbles with their shrewd, duplicitous manager, Jerry Heller (Paul Giamatti) around cash and contracts. For N.W.A. whose limited knowledge of the world is tied to the street ethos, and their obsession with money and fame, their absence of any business sense (they are easily preyed upon by anybody who can read a contract) begins to undermine their success.

But more importantly the film is about the social world–the street culture– out of which the group emerged. Or as Ice Cube put it, "Our art is a reflection of our reality." And that reality is conveyed in the unfiltered rage and obscenity laced lyrics about volatile inner city life–guns, weed, cars, intimidating, vicious cops and toxic violence– that became the hallmark of West Coast Rap. (Much of that same self-destructive rage, but without the shaping of an artistic sensibility, determines some of their personal encounters.) Perhaps the moment in the film where that is most clear is when, after being warned not to, the group does its most famous rap "Fuck the Police," and it causes, given the lyrics, a riot: "They have the authority to kill a minority

Fuck that shit, cause I ain't the one

For a punk motherfucker with a badge and a gun"

As we write–police have killed more black men–and we can see how little has changed in that dynamic.

The film also depicts some of the seamier sides of the rap world. For example, hovering around the group, and doing his best to turn them against one another, is the thuggish, violent record producer Suge Knight (R. Marcus Taylor), who is surrounded by heavyweight enforcers. There is nothing redeeming about Suge. The group, and the film's final moments coincide with the death of Easy E from AIDS–a result of his bad life choices, but also a genuinely forlorn and moving conclusion.

Nor does the film follow the lives and careers of the N.W.A. rappers after the group dissolved. So nothing is said about the most successful of the rappers, Ice Cube, who parlayed the group's success into a career as an actor (*Boyz in the Hood*, 1991) and film producer (*Barber Shop, 2004*, and *Ride Along, 2014*). In addition there is no mention of Dr. Dre, who became a rap album producer, but was more noted for his brushes with the law, which resulted in a prison sentence in 1995. And while the other members of the group did not disappear into total obscurity their careers were hardly equivalent to their success with N.W.A. as D.J. Yella became a pornographer, and M.C. Ren turned from rap to the Sunni Moslem faith.

The reality of Black life that N.W.A. rapped about could have been a chorus's comments on the life of Oscar Grant III (Michael Jordan). Grant was killed by a police officer January 1, 2009, and it was turned into a quietly powerful, realistic film closely based on the real story, *Fruitvale Station (2013*) directed by Ryan Coogler. The film begins with actual cell phone video from that fateful night.

Oscar is an ordinary man who at times can be sweet and kind, and is trying to be faithful to his often disappointed girlfriend (Melonie Diaz), dotes on their lively, smart little daughter (Ariana Neal), and attempts to be a good son to his strong, nurturing mother (Octavia Spencer). The director adds gratuitously to his virtues by having him sensitively comfort a dog after an accident. But try as he might Oscar has a hot-tempered, self-destructive and feckless side (he know he is a "fuck-up"). He is fired from his job working in a supermarket for constant lateness, and in order to pay his bills he deals drugs–an offense that he has already done some hard jail time for. But he suddenly decides to give up dealing drugs, and transform his life.

But on that fateful night Oscar is dissuaded from driving into downtown to celebrate New Years Eve, and instead ventures with friends and girl friend out on BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit). The trip, depicted by Coogler, is initially a festival of diversity, as white, black, and Hispanic, gay and straight, drinks, dance, sing, and celebrate on board the subway car. But when a fight breaks out, the police are called—they are viewed in the film as either brutal or dangerously inexperienced– which leads to Oscar's angry and deadly confrontation with them.

In a hint of countless demonstrations to come, there were large-scale protests in Oakland over Oscar's death. And eerily prefiguring the future: the police officer that shot Oscar was convicted of involuntary manslaughter because he claimed he thought he was shooting Oscar with a taser instead of a gun. Of course, he received a sentence of a little over a year, and was released in 11 months, typical of the minimal or non-existent punishments that were meted out to police in the killings that followed.

More than just a memorial to Oscar Grant III, *Fruitvale Station* is a stirring reminder of how often these kinds of scenes have been re-enacted in this country even before Ferguson, New York City, Baltimore, St. Paul, Baton Rouge and into the future. The film makes no explicit critique of the nature of American society. But the film strongly suggests that there are too many young black men with potential like Oscar's adrift, and that there will be a long wait until we achieve a post-racial society. A modicum of economic and social justice and police restraint

is all we can hope for.

These films one knows are just the first step of the many works that will follow focusing on both African-American history, and on the social and psychological reality of black life in present day America. Though there can be no expectation that films can in any way cure the ills of our society, they can dramatize the texture of black life–its strengths, imperfections, and clear, justifiable grievances. So, if we ever begin to believe we can make the kind of progress that makes race and racial issues a peripheral rather than primary problem (a color-blind society?); these films may make a difference. More importantly for African-Americans, the films may help them achieve what Professor Henry Louis Gates spoke of after the Beer Summit that, "If we take control of our own stories, we can take control of the narrative."

Notes

1. David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,* Morrow, 1986.

2." 'Selma' Controversy Grows Over LBJ Clash with Martin Luther King on Civil Rights," *The Wrap,* Alicia Brooks, January 2, 2015.

Postmodern Spirituality and its Discontents: Chris Hedges, The Wages of Rebellion

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Chris Hedges is nothing if not a prolific and thoughtful writer. His latest book presents what he sees as the best method for achieving the goal of a more prosperous future for the American working class, and anticipates what kind of response those who rebel against the current order might expect from the corporate state. The book also is intended to serve as a sort of handbook outlining what the author sees as the "proper" philosophy of revolt. While his analysis is sufficiently critical of status quo beliefs and values, in the final analysis it is disappointing for advocating a single-minded and self-limiting means toward that end.

Hedges is astute in his observations regarding what ails U.S. society: the overreach of government surveillance, extreme inequality of wealth and power, a sense of despair on the part of citizens, use of fear to control citizens, the evisceration of human and civil rights, the militarization of police, and the complicity of the intellectual class with the power elite in defense of institutional mores that are depriving citizens of their democratic due.

But *Wages of Rebellion* is not concerned merely with complaining about the current affairs. Quite the contrary, he presents what he sees as the only solution: revolution. Although he never clearly defines what he means by "revolution," the author drops clues along the way, such as the notions that rebellion is based on a moral imperative, not a pragmatic or utilitarian one focused on achieving success; that authentic revolutions are driven by a recognition that the old order is dead and must be overturned, not just course-corrected; and that revolutions must present a coherent vision of a better future: "Social upheaval without clear definition and direction, without ideas behind it, swiftly descends into nihilism, terrorism, and chaos."

Hedges employs literature, especially *Moby Dick*, to both lay the methodological foundation of his analysis of the political situation, and to prepare the reader to what is coming in later in the volume, and that is a direct attack on rationalistic thinking, and what he calls "the cult of rationality." Chapter Two begins the argument in earnest. He outlines the shift that political elites have made to a "Post-Constitutional Era." Using the examples of Omar Abdel-Rahman, known as "the Blind Sheikh," and his lawyer Lynne Stewart as case studies, he pinpoints the main foundation of our ever more totalitarian state: the surveillance system that infiltrates every aspect of our public or private lives. The goal of such surveillance is not information for information's sake, but rather to have evidence on hand should the state decide to prosecute any of us for any reason. By definition, "any state that has the capacity to monitor all its citizenry [and] to snuff out factual public debate through the control of information, any state

that has the tools to instantly shut down all dissent, is totalitarian."

The partner of surveillance is the inculcation of fear. This is stoked by incarcerating, marginalizing, and harassing those whom the state deems a threat, while keeping threats to and from the state constantly in citizen consciousness, thus creating "a climate in which people to do not think of rebelling." The state meanwhile continues to erase human and civil rights, especially those guaranteed by the First and Fourth Amendments. He singles out for special praise those who have revolted: Julian Assange, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden, among others. These heroic figures have paid the price, but regardless of the price, revolt we must if we intend to have a future that is not one of state-corporate totalitarianism.

If Chapter Two zeroes in on the correct target, it is in Chapter Three that the book begins a wrong turn. The problem is that, though Hedges does not advocate irrationalism anywhere, his method ends up unwittingly supporting it by advocating a turn to language content over rational thought. He fails to bother to make a critical distinction between "rational" and "pragmatic," embraces spirituality and its link to emotion as foundations for a proper revolutionary philosophy, and all this is in response to what he sees as "the failure of rationality."

Instead of calling for citizens to be more rational and deliberative in a rational-normative) way, Hedges makes two dubious moves. First, he capitulates to empirical linguistic analyses and draws the standard postmodern conclusion about "rationality" in general. Second, he eschews the primacy of rationality in favor of a "spiritual visionary" approach. Let's look at the empirical analysis. The linguists Edward Sapir and Steven Pinker are invoked by Hedges to defend the postmodern position that language determines thought: if you change the language, you change the thought. The conclusion is that if all we do is change our language about the contemporary situation, we will change our ideas, and thus our understanding of what is wrong, and thus, our philosophy changes. This is where the problems begin.

Aside from the fact that Pinker would reject the thesis of the primacy of language, the anti-rationalist argument advocates that we escape the "cult of rationality" and "the use of Enlightenment idioms" by "first learning to speak differently and abandoning the vocabulary of the 'rational' technocrats who rule." While Hedges uses the primacy of language argument to dislodge rationality and to advocate spirituality instead, he misses the point that the same premises that he advocates are the ones cited by cognitive and ethical relativists to deflate rationality and objective ethical principles and to reduce human thought to language alone. No spiritualists need apply.

Richard Rorty, a pragmatic relativist, in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, argues almost verbatim the way Hedges does. But deflating rationality on the basis of an argument for the primacy of language content is a non sequitur argument and leads its adherents willy-nilly into anti-rationalism and anti-intellectualism. Such arguments conveniently ignore the rational norms and structure embedded in language. In short, language content doesn't determine

language form or structure and therefore cannot be the primary driver of cognitive meaning. It takes a *rational* being to both structure language and to understand its meaning. This book uses the same premises that postmodernists use in advocating relativism, to conclude that the premises lead instead to the need for an objective spiritual truth. It seems that the premise of "change the language, change the thought" indeed allows for quite a number of conclusions to be drawn from it.

Hedges uses postmodern empiricism to assert that what he terms, without defining it, that "the cult of rationality," is a failure. Such a "cult" reduces followers to "slaves of dogma" and "technocratic thinking." The consequences of rationalistic thinking, according to his argument, are at least twofold: first, it must embrace "rational choice theory, which is a just-world theory which posits that the world is just. People get what they deserve." Second, it "uses Enlightenment idioms" to "embrace the idea that an individual has no responsibility towards anyone except himself or herself. A responsibility to anyone else is optional." The problem is that both conclusions are unsound without a definition of what kind of rationality the author means. When applied in such a sweeping way, they are both false: Rationalism implies nothing of the sort, and Enlightenment thinking held to the opposite position regarding responsibilities toward others. Immanuel Kant is the definitive example.

Perhaps the author really means that the "cult of rationality" is a "watered-down" rationality that in a worst case scenario reduces itself to language content or rational choice theory, and uses "Enlightenment idioms" without full understanding of the subtle cognitive depth and the normative dimensions of Enlightenment rationality. That would be the best option to take in defining the "cult," and if one is focused only on criticizing degraded versions of rationality. That Hedges has this latter critique in mind is unclear and seems to me unlikely, given his advocating the spiritual-emotional replacement as the foundation of a 21st-century philosophy. The second key problem is that the argument fails to distinguish between "being rational" and "being technocratic in one's thinking." There is an important difference. The first is normative reasoning; the second is pragmatic, means-to-end reasoning. If we abandon the foundational nature of rationality in the first sense and replace it with spirituality and emotions as foundational to a good philosophy, as the book argues, the possibility of reasoned discourse shrinks, with the danger that we will fail to communicate or live together at all, and thus descend into the Hobbesian state of nature, in which those with the most power win. Of course, this is the very condition that Hedges sees as devastating to democracy now (see Michael P. Lynch, *In Praise of Reason* regarding this point).

Yet Hedges spiritual alternative vision ironically can usher in this irrational tyrannical end even faster, given the amorphous and unmoored nature of various spiritualities. Because the distinction between "rational" and "technocratically' rational" is not made, both become eggs in one basket. Hedges argues that rationality, reduced to "rational choice" and seemingly embedded in all academic disciplines, encouraged the view "that the individual has no responsibility towards anyone except himself or herself." But Kant would never have known what rational choice theory was. Kant, to the contrary, was convinced that it was *universal* rationality that guaranteed the legitimacy of one's ethical principles, and that making oneself

the exception to those universal principles by shunting aside one's responsibility to others was the height of immorality. Note the concepts of "universality of rationality" and the "dignity of persons" entailing our responsibility to one another are two "Enlightenment idioms" that get smeared here.

It is possible that Hedges is referring to a very constricted definition of "rationality" – an instrumental view that defines reason as a strictly pragmatic relation of means to ends. This definition indeed invites reduction of rationality to an anti-Enlightenment force. However, he broadly attacks rationality as "a cult" that is "too intellectual" to be any good in a revolt against the system. If he does have a narrower definition in mind, he owed it to us to give it. He doesn't.

The bottom line is that "rationality" cultivates what he calls "technocratic human beings," who are "spiritually dead. They are capable of anything, no matter how heinous." Again, this is not true of rationality in general. Contrary to Hedges, by exercising rationality (e.g. consistency, clarity, etc.), one becomes more reasonable, not less so! Even assuming that the book's premises are true, they still do not imply that spirituality and emotion are the only legitimate alternatives for a 21st century philosophy.

The author argues that "ruling elites ensure that the established intellectual class is subservient to an ideology–in this case, neoliberalism and globalization–that conveniently justifies their greed." But such assertions are misplaced when used to criticize rationality, since it is not rationalism nor philosophy, nor necessarily academic intellectuals who argue in this subservient way. Rather, the justifiable targets are bourgeois figures who claim to be liberal, but who have given up all pretence to being so by embracing a capitalist philosophy, as Hedges argued earlier in *Death of the Liberal Class*. And while many college professors unquestionably fit this description, nearly as many do not, but are maintaining their *rational* spirit. So the book ends up as a broad-brush rejection of rational philosophy and of an academic tradition that, when done in alignment with its traditional (read "*Enlightenment*") values of human dignity and equality, challenges the elitist pretensions of Randian libertarians and narcissistic hedonists who now control the mechanisms of American economics, politics, and higher education.

Thus, to the degree that elites succumb to and propagate the ideology of neoliberalism, the real reason is not that those in power positions are *too* rational, but that they have rejected *all* rationality and succumbed to baser passions. They are only "too rational" if rationality is limited to an instrumental meaning. But if "rational" means what philosophers in the Enlightenment tradition take it to mean, it concerns the use of the norms of consistency, universality, and necessity, along with their moral counterparts, human dignity and equity, and it is these rational norms that elites have rejected. Hence, the proper diagnosis is rationality *lost*, not rationality *overused*.

So what should the revolution look like? We need, Hedges argues, to embrace (quoting Reinhold Niebuhr) "the sublime madness" of spirituality, which he asserts to be the source of

morality. While he does not limit this “madness” to religiously-based spirituality, it is no accident that his primary examples were religious: Wiebo Ludwig (fundamentalist Christian leader of the anti-fracking movement), Jacques Ellul (Christian philosopher), Reinhold Niebuhr (Christian theologian), the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, James H. Cone (Christian theologian) and even Socrates and Kant. This thesis is premised by arguing that “Rebels share much in common with religious mystics.” They are “propelled forward by a vision” that apparently agnostic or atheistic human rational creatures are incapable of having. Had this been a simple analogy, it would have been fine. The problem is that the rebel and the religious/spiritual are equated and identified.

The author inserts the idea that revolutions are rooted in “emotion,” and that spirituality is connected to emotion. While perhaps partially true, that is not a good reason to go wholesale in this direction and tie spirituality and emotion together as the engine of revolt. But here spiritual-emotional ideology, and Christianity specifically, are the source of change. He eschews rational *philosophy* as having little to offer true revolutionaries. What he misses here is that, while emotion is an easy way to rally people, it must equally be the case that they have the conviction of their morals, and that is something that requires rational analysis. When rationality is put into service of utopian, idealistic, and spiritually-based ends—all embedded in the passions—then the result is that reason is reduced to the type of pragmatism that he equates with “technocratic” rationality. However, rationality now becomes *spiritual* pragmatism—and more importantly, reason is reduced, as the Scottish philosopher David Hume put it, to a slave to the passions.

Revolutions require leaders. So who has these spiritual-emotional virtues? The book lists a number, including Cornell West. Relatedly, in a presentation Hedges gave recently, he said (paraphrasing): “he’s the real deal. When I meet with him, every time I soon give up all pretense, take out a notebook, and just take notes while he talks.” That the author sees West as one of the best *philosophers* of our day says something about how he defines “proper” philosophy, and it is not in the traditional sense, but rather is mixed in with his understanding of spiritualism, particularly Christianity. This bear-hug of West fits right in with the argument of the book devaluing rationality. It is not that Cornell West does not mount rational arguments, but that it is the non-rational aspects of his arguments that most appeal to Hedges.

Hedges is probably right that a revolution of some kind will be necessary to overturn the current order. But a retreat into spirituality is a non-starter for a secular society. Even worse, to advocate spirituality over “the Enlightenment idioms” diminishes our valuable intellectual heritage. A radical break with our rationalist tradition cannot be sustained without lapsing into irrationality. Language change alone won’t ground a good philosophy. Rather, a change in the proper role of reason in philosophy is needed, to correct the misguided notion that it serves as an emergent function from and thus is dependent upon language, and/or that it simply serves the passions (pragmatic/technocratic reason), and, make no mistake “rational choice” is a passion. A “new and better” 21st-century philosophy is one that requires the proper use of reason. There are philosophers who would be a bit more sympathetic to this book. Jacques Ellul, Soren Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth, among others, come to mind. But all these

philosophers fall prey to the same fallacy that *Wages* does, and this is to decenter rationality so that it must give way to religiosity. That is what makes the argument a disappointing, if not just a dangerous, one.

Hedges seems to have a large following among youthful liberals. It is interesting how many bourgeois liberals, who in their younger rebellious years want to shake off dogma, have come full circle to be ensnared by religious dogma of a different, "spiritual" sort, which the author praises. But Hedges vigorously attacks the same bourgeois liberals' values that allow so many of them whole-heartedly to embrace institutional codes, whether they be academic institutions, socio-political arrangements, or Hillary Clinton's Democratic party. *The Wages of Rebellion* is worth reading for those concerned with how the future should be crafted. However, one must take much of what is said with the proverbial grain of salt, which can be summed up in the author's own approving assessment of his version of revolutionaries: "the rebel" who is possessed by this Divine madness "is deaf to" criticisms that are contradictory to his spiritualist solution. A better definition of "dogmatism" could not have been written.

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Kevin M. Kruse, One Nation Under God- How Corporate America Invented Christian America. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

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How did conservative evangelical Christianity become the default religion of the US government, despite the legal separation of church and state? Kevin M. Kruse sees this as a Twentieth Century development, a process that started with the Eisenhower administration, continued through several others, and eventually solidified with the Reagan administration. The book offers impressive detail about the people, places, and events that united government with organized religion in general and conservative evangelicalism in particular. I don't take issue with the evidence or with Kruse's interpretation as far as it goes. However, he does leave the central thesis from the subtitle unresolved: how did corporate America invent Christian America? Indeed, I don't think he addresses this question at all, either in the narrative or in the running discussion. Nevertheless, the book offers significant historical context and details about the activity of notable players, despite the imperceptible critical deliberation of their activities.

The historical narrative begins with the New Deal and moves quickly to post-war America, when the religious onslaught really begins. We see many leaders, all of them religious, fiercely patriotic, and often both. Among them, James Fifield and Abraham Verheide invoked the old-time religion of the previous century, but Billy Graham rose above the rest in religious ferocity, patriotism, right-wing politics, and with considerable political savvy, became a recurring character in the drama of American politics. Strangely absent, however, were corporate executives. While corporate leaders no doubt played a major role as well, they were apparently not directly involved with the religious side. In the absence of direct evidence, let's consider the logic of such an alliance, if it did exist. Mentioned here and there, Kruse depicts 'the corporation' as a kind of malevolent Great Oz behind the curtain.

How would severe religious moralism and pro-war patriotism benefit this nebulous and fiendishly clever entity, the corporation? With the only intact industrial base in the post-war era (except for the Soviet Union), US capitalism embraced mass production consumerism in order to sustain the over-production of the war years. Instead of tanks, planes, and guns, industry cranked out ever new and improved cars, appliances, and all manner of objects to satisfy any desire both subtle and gross, and roads to connect the meccas of consumer indulgence and consumption—shopping malls and immersive simulations like Disney World. Consumerism only intensified over the next several decades. How does conservative evangelicalism support such indulgence? What would the nature of their alleged political alliance be?

The best that Kruse offers is speculative, that "Hollywood and Madison Avenue…helped promote this understanding of America as a religious nation and Americans as an inherently religious people" (p. 293). If Hollywood and Madison Avenue played such a decisive role, he doesn't show this. If the corporate world deployed religion as some kind of market encouragement, how would this increase profits? Overwhelmingly, the book focuses on the cultural battles and political maneuvering of religious leaders and conservative politicians. The book offers no discussion or even awareness of class or capitalism. These mighty and mysterious things, the corporations, remain shadowy phantoms in Kruse's mid-Twentieth century America.

A major figure throughout the book, Billy Graham's hard-edged condemnation of sin, organized labor, and quest for a moral awakening embodies a particularly conservative evangelicalism that makes it compatible with conservative political agendas in some ways, but Graham and his ilk did not speak for all of the devout, especially those who later condemned American imperialism in Korea and Vietnam. Let's also remember that the Civil Rights movement (which Graham strongly opposed) started in Black churches. Graham's uniquely conservative and highly moralistic agenda brought him and his Washington Crusade to the capital in January 1952 in the closing months of the Truman administration.

The overt outcome of the rallies and lobbying led to Congress passing the National Day of Prayer, which bound Truman and all subsequent Presidents by law to call the nation to prayer. Less than enthusiastic, Truman spent the day watching a baseball double-header. Nevertheless, Kruse sees this as a decisive turning point. Although Graham insisted that he was non-partisan and would never reveal his political leanings, "he spent much of the 1952 campaign dropping what seemed to be considerable hints" (p. 61). He railed against communism and left-wingers, political corruption, and leftist religious leaders such as Reinhold Niebuhr who organized political opposition to Graham's fusion of patriotism with the Gospel.

Based on the material that Kruse presents, conservative evangelicalism won many symbolic—rather than policy—victories in conjunction with President Eisenhower, who for example signed the Statement of Seven Divine Freedoms meant to demonstrate that "the United States of America had been founded on the principles of the Holy Bible" (p. 91). While this remained mostly a political touchstone for candidates claiming a "Christian" allegiance, the national pledge of allegiance became a much more public victory by officially inserting "under God" between "One nation" and "indivisible." Eisenhower also approved the new one dollar bill which added the phrase "In God We Trust."

In all of these symbolic outcomes, where is the corporate presence? How did the industrial capitalism of the period promote or benefit from conservative evangelicalism? Although Kruse mentions popular public figures (p. 160-161) such as Walt Disney and Cecile B. DeMille who used film to hint at (Disney) or openly promote (DeMille) Christianity, they behave more like Graham and other pastors—as religious entrepreneurs—not as corporate capitalists. DeMille's big budget film *The Bible* and Disney's simulations, like the pledge of allegiance and the innumerable campaigns of the period against sin and communism, like the Gideon's placing

Bibles in motel rooms (to which Catholics, among others, objected, because it was the King James version), are far more in the cultural realm than the economic.

The closest we get to actual capitalists with some direct public involvement with politics arrives years later with the Nixon administration, when the Mormons J. Willard Marriott (Hotel entrepreneur) and George Romney (CEO of American Motors) attended the inauguration ball (p. 247). Kruse is correct that decades of religious mobilizations and public displays of tacit political support made evangelicalism into a political force, but Marriott and Romney attended as individuals, not as representatives of their respective corporations. Halfway through the book, Kruse still has not shown that the 'One Nation Under God' colludes in some way with corporate America.

Far from a unified movement towards domination, Kruse's narrative shows how the success of the early 1950s produced a backlash by the late Fifties that locked the two sides in battle throughout the Sixties and Seventies. Far from a decisive conservative triumph, Kruse shows instead how conservative religious activism divided the nation on many major issues, including race, gender, and sexuality. By the late 1960s, the broad fusion of patriotism and piety "had become an important touchstone in an aggressive new conservatism" (p. 241). Billy Graham had fallen from favor under successive democratic administrations, but when Richard Nixon became President in 1968, he reinstated Billy Graham as the religious voice of America.

Although Nixon at least symbolically included Jewish, Catholic, and non-evangelical leaders in his religious celebrations (p. 245), the more conservative leaders held the greatest influence, and this reveals something of which Kruse seems unaware. While correct that conservative religious figures support(ed) the Republican party, Nixon, like his predecessors, restricted their influence to the symbolic realm and thus used their support for votes, but made only feeble if any attempts to enact any of their moral agenda. Just as he did in the early 1950s, and would again in the early 1980s when Reagan became President, Graham pontificated at the Nixon inauguration that "the religious pillars of our society have eroded in an increasingly materialistic and permissive society" (p. 246). Moral attacks on permissive indulgence, or indeed, anything that might reduce consumer spending is not what most corporate leaders want to hear. Moral entrepreneurs may bring in the votes, but Kruse can't show that they ever really get a seat at the policy table.

For his part, Nixon added some more symbolic religious celebrations, including the National Prayer Breakfast and regular Sunday services. He let Billy Graham rave on about sin and the need for American redemption. He gave tacit support to Graham's pro-America rallies and acknowledged the "Silent Majority" who allegedly supported the Vietnam war and prayer in public schools, opposed civil rights, inter-racial marriage, women's rights, and environmental protection. Kruse notes donations from General Motors, Caterpillar, and Union Carbide among others, which seem in line with opposition to things like environmental regulation, but Kruse does not show that they supported the religious agenda in any way beyond their own economic interests.

For example, GM was one of the first major corporations to racially integrate its fabrication and assembly plants in the late 1950s, and the first industrial business of any kind to hire women engineers when Joan Klatil joined the Cadillac design studio in 1967. Granted, profit rather than social integration motivated GM, but as Marxists have realized since Marx, the inherent primacy of profit tends to minimize value systems grounded in religion or other traditions that inhibit the acquisition of profit. Class, not culture, eventually becomes the primary battleground. Kruse is clearly no Marxist. Neither is he a materialist or a social thinker; his narrative documents only the efforts and battles of individuals and their ideas in the transcendent realm of politics from where mandates flow once the deal-makers have concluded their business.

As a historical narrative, Kruse remains dedicated to the facts and offers only a bare-minimum running commentary. Consequently, we can interpret his extensive evidence ourselves, or simply file it away and bring out his book as a useful reference for something more critical and especially, for something more committed to class analysis. Kruse does not venture into conceptual discussions, much less any sort of theory, so we find very little basis of disagreement, but likewise very little basis of insight.

If corporate capitalism played any role in the rise of conservative evangelicalism or vise-versa, this book doesn't show that. At all. Despite the legacy of overt piety and political affiliation that Kruse documents in great detail, the religious right has been remarkably unsuccessful in terms of actual policy. Today for example, we have national gay marriage, increasing legalization of marijuana, and very few young people make any attempt to avoid sexual activity until marriage.

The "Madison Avenue" advertising machine and the "Hollywood" cultural industry, the very champions of religious piety according to Kruse, in fact have and still market sensuality (revisit the steamy scenes back in 1945 between Bogey and Bacall—'you know how to whistle dontcha Steve? You just put your lips together and blow'). Advertising has always tried to connect happiness with consumer consumption, not abstinence. Porn sites are the most popular on the internet, and they cater to every possible preference and fetish. If corporate America built and elevated conservative Christianity to political preeminence, where was (and is) the religious moral legislation? Kruse conflates symbolic displays of piety, of which there were and are many, with actual policy and legislation. Corporate America has invented ways to make profit from nearly everything, and if Kruse has shown anything, it would be that the political-economic system assimilated organized religion and turned it into another commodity, and in the process negated its power as an independent political force (but the reader must infer this as well).

Have the more secular democrats ever been any less beholden to corporate power? Were FDR and Truman less committed to big business than Eisenhower or Nixon? While some particular corporate owners and CEOs may at times express personal religious beliefs, this book does not show that a corporate-religious nexus has ever existed, nor that conservative religion ever wielded more than symbolic power. It gets out the votes, but the money is in secular profit, not in religious renewal or moral imposition. A better subtitle would be: How the religious right

created and ultimately lost the culture wars.

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John Matisonn, God, Spies and Lies: Finding South Africa's Future Through its Past. Vlaeberg: Missing Ink, 2015.

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South Africa seldom reaches news headlines nor are its politics a topic of much public concern elsewhere anymore. It has, in a certain sense, fallen into benign neglect. Internationally, the anti-apartheid sympathy for the Mandela administration extended itself right up to the current political regime, giving current president Jacob Zuma an unearned reprieve from scrutiny. John Matisson, a veteran South African journalist, here sifts expertly through the last 40 years of local journalism. What he turns up is a dismaying story of a long struggle to expose the inequities of racial segregation and apartheid, first basking in the enlightened free press during a short period after the democratization in 1994 and then a sorrier tale of relinquishing those same gains to Zuma's more authoritarian style of regime.

The author, a well-known National Public Radio contributor and former Washington correspondent for a South African newspaper, draws on considerable personal experience, especially his long contacts with many major players. In addition, he provides evidence from confidential documents and more obscure published sources. The book covers far more than the decade preceding democratization and the decades after. The title itself, "Gods, Spies and Lies", suggests his explanatory intertwining of religion, secrecy and intrigue.

The first section deals with the long early period from 1800 to 1966 where Matisonn sets the stage here for the rest of the critical narrative. From the early 19th century onward a crucial divide split the white population of the Cape. The conservative sections rejected racial equality and eventually rejected British rule too to found their own republics to the North. This rift only widened and hardened after the British colonizers defeated the republics in the Boer War. The humiliation and suffering of war fueled an intense national consciousness among the Dutch-descended Afrikaners, which eventually led to their victory at the polls where they unseated the United Party, a coalition of Afrikaans and English speakers. This dominant new National Party would remain in power until the democratic turnaround in 1994.

Afrikaner Calvinism based itself on the narrow interpretations of the Dutch theologian, and later statesman, Abraham Kuyper. He advanced the notion of the pillarization in society, meaning that separate religious and cultural orientations in a society are justified and sanctified to rule as sovereign entities. This extremely convenient form of self-legitimation underlay the apartheid system and the political mobilization of Afrikaners. The *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Pact of Brothers), comprising male elites, took on the self-imposed mission of building the solidarity of the Afrikaner people while at the same time countering any opposition

by liberals and integrationists. Newspapers and media were important instruments for this suppressive purpose. English language newspapers were clearly on the other side of the divide and Matisonn gives us an insider view of how the liberal press dealt with the twisted arguments of their opponents as well as providing a voice for the excluded majority of Africans.

In the 1960's nationalism triumphed across many African states. Other states were involved in struggles, with rebels often supported by the Soviet Union. This caused great consternation among Afrikaners who now, by way of their media mouthpieces, denounced African nationalism as entirely inspired and controlled by foreign Communism. The English language press came under the most intimidating suspicion. This was South Africa's own little McCarthyism episode. Matisonn discloses how *The Daily Mail* and *The Sunday Times* struggled to exercise whatever freedom of expression they could manage under the energetic censorship of a paranoid, racist system. Mattisonn cites Charles Bloomberg's contributions to unraveling the historical and ideological underpinnings of Apartheid. Bloomberg got hold of crucial *Broederbond* documents, which were then published in *The Sunday Times*. The "treachery" of the Afrikaner theologian, Geyser, who handed over the documents, was indicative of fault lines in the Afrikaner fold. Similarly, among English speakers there were turncoats like Craig Williamson, who spied on his colleagues.

In the second section, "Slugging it Out", Matisonn covers the period during which the country's *cordon sanitaire*, comprising Mozambique, Angola, South West Africa (now Namibia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) came under attack by nationalist forces and, with their transformation into independent states, ultimately crumbled. The South African government believed the country was under both external and internal attack. Internally, these attacks happened not only by way of sabotage but also ideologically through a hostile and disloyal press. The governing forces therefore clandestinely funded startup of an English language newspaper, *The Citizen*, to counter what it deemed to be anti-government propaganda by the mainstream English press. Matisonn relates, tongue in the cheek, how this maneuver backfired and let to the downfall of major political figures, including the president J.B. Vorster.

Revealing also are personal encounters with actors such as the editor Percy Qoboza and the photographer Peter Magubane who played crucial roles in the development of media in the African population during the awakening of political consciousness among the youth. This was the era of Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement, the Soweto student uprising and its bloody suppression. The political turmoil and violence of the aftermath of the Soweto received wide international attention – and Matisonn's own contribution was substantial to consciousness-raising in America. Public outrage put the U.S. policies of constructive engagement with South Africa under such pressure that they had to be abandoned. The writing was on the wall for apartheid. The ongoing war in neighboring territories became too expensive and fruitless, international support evaporated, sanctions were biting hard and the economy was declining. President P.W. Botha started to drop certain apartheid laws and delegations of liberal whites including the author, business people and academics started meeting with the *African National Congress* (ANC), the leading liberation movement, outside the country in order to discuss the return of the exiled political movements and to plan the

road ahead.

The third part of the book discusses the years of transformation between 1994 and 1996. This was the period preceded by the hammering out of a new constitution by the new body, the *Convention of a Democratic South Africa* (Codesa). The ANC's insistence on 'one person, one vote' triumphed over the whites' demand for the enshrinement of group rights. Codesa paved the way for the first democratic election in April 1994. Matisonn soon was asked to direct the *South African Broadcasting Corporation's* (SABC) election coverage for 23 radio stations. The SABC was, up to now, the official mouthpiece of the government and was set for an uneasy transformation in the new democratic age. The election put the ANC under Mandela solidly in power. The economic transformation and redistribution plans were formulated in the *Reconstruction and Development Plan*. This document was deemed to be "unrealistic" in IMF terms and was superseded by the *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR) program under Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki. In the meantime Archbishop Desmond Tutu launched the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC).

The last section is perhaps the most interesting one to readers concerned with what happened since democratization. It is the period of both raised hopes and many frustrations as Matisonn himself experienced. It is a very detailed section that examines the euphoria of the first years as it gradually curdled into a sense of chaotic decline among the public. One trajectory Matisonn was closely involved with was the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) created in 1993 "to promote greater diversity and historically disadvantaged ownership and content on radio and TV." (p. 316) At first the IBA jealously guarded its independence. Gradually it eroded as councilors started accepting gifts in return of favors. Matisonn made himself very unpopular among councilors due to his opposition to corruption and he ultimately left.

One major scandal followed the other. There was a huge arms deal, the collapse of the educational system and more. A noteworthy chapter is devoted to foreign relations revealing South Africa's pre-invasion relationship Iraq. South Africa had expertise in its own disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and chemical. At the beginning of 2003 it played an active role in confirming Iraq's disarmament. However, the USA planned its Iraq invasion against all evidence to the contrary. Mbeki and Mandela repeatedly notified the Bush administration of the non-existence of WMDs in Iraq. Mandela tried to reach Bush personally but was fobbed off. He remarked in front of cameras: "President Bush doesn't know how to *think*." (p. 360)

Jacob Zuma ascended to the presidency in 2007, inheriting a host of intrigues, corruption and monopolizations and turning them all to serve his personal agenda. The SABC degenerated into a pure government medium, suppressing opposition again. In the past it turned a small profit, now it had a thirteen-figure debt. Since publication of this book a Broadcasting Amendment Bill was placed before parliament. Its intent was to reduce a public broadcaster to a state broadcaster. This year the Chief operating Officer of the SABC Hlaudi Motsoeneng introduced pro-government censorship that spurred the resignation of a number of board members. The wheel seems to have made a complete spin, backwards to the apartheid era. However, there is

still fierce opposition to these tendencies. Matisonn concludes: “For a brief, shining moment, we thought we had harnessed history, and perhaps we had. But history is an unruly mount. …..A new generation must embrace its challenge. They inherited a constitution that makes it possible. It’s up to them to find the will.” (p. 329) The new generation are the “born-free”, born after 1994. The challenge of facing up to despotic forces bent on destroying the constitution is indeed formidable.

From an analytical point of view he documents the struggles for control of the public sphere. In the early years the English language press made a valiant effort to pry open the closed system of information of the religiously legitimated establishment. In the 1960’s the hermetically sealed Afrikaner establishment showed cracks. A refreshing, inclusive liberal dialogue across racial borders ensued. It then became eclipsed by the anti-Communist, ‘black peril’ discourse and virtually froze during the violence of the 1980’s. Yet the foundations for an inclusive public sphere were laid in this period and blossomed in the early years of the new democracy. The interest of the emerging class of privileged cadre politicians soon darkened the transparency and accountability of political power. The extension and preservation of the public sphere is one key to deter the country from sliding towards a failed state.

In conclusion, this is a thoroughly readable and worthwhile work from the perspective of an engaged journalist. The writer of this review is a contemporary of Matisonn who grew up at the same time and the same area, though on the other side of the political divide as an Afrikaans speaker. My advantage in reading the book was a substantial prior knowledge and first hand exposure to events. For the not so initiated the narrative is sometimes jumpy and the chronology may be difficult to follow.

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Mary Wisniewski, Algren: A Life. Chicago Review Press, 2016

By | 2016: vol. 15, nos. 2-3

Mary Wisniewski is a seasoned pro with a long career as an ace reporter for the Chicago dailies and for Reuters, and it shows in her superb biography of Nelson Algren, the writer who made Chicago "his trade." Like James Joyce and Dublin, Franz Kafka and Prague, and Alfred Doeblin and Berlin, Algren's knowledge of Chicago, and his long tenure there, which ended with a dejected move to the East Coast just before he died, has sealed his status as the street level poet-laureate of the Second City.

Wisniewski draws on her expert knowledge of the city – with its tortured past and blighted present – to set Algren's melancholic fate in the grim context that created it, especially the backstreets and alleys that he tramped in search of stories. Algren, like so many peers (Studs Terkel, Dave Pelz, James T. Farrell, Richard Wright et. al.) was a child of the Depression. He graduates from the University of Illinois in 1931, buoyed by a beloved sister who helped him through college and died young. He is thrown into a world mired in a catastrophe and he sets out on a road peopled by the memorable characters he would draw upon for his work. Algren almost immediately lands in a jail cell in Texas where he nearly wound up doing serious time but for a lawyer who luckily got him off. The indigent writer had stolen a typewriter, and proved to be as hopeless a thief as he was a poker player.

Algren is born to parents to whom a life in literature is a bewilderingly daft choice amidst the growing chaos and the scramble for existence where all must submit to the iron order of a job market looking for strong backs and muscled arms, not honest intellects bent on Truth and Progress. Wisniewski is deft in depicting the eminently captalizable forces of Capital, Greed, and the Merchant Princes that made Chicago for a time the fastest growing city in the world – and a "Hell for the workingman."

Chicago chose to carefully forget its Haymarket Trial and the judicial murder of four working class leaders who came into conflict with the ruthless Capitalism that was to make the city infamous. Algren, product of a radical 30s culture, was determined never to forget or let anyone else do so. Memory, for the American working class, is the only revenge they would ever know, and Algren achieves part of that vengeance with *Chicago: City on the Make,* his homage to the rough and tumble forces that shaped the city and his own life.

Wisniewski is skillful in showing just how bleak the Depression was for the jobless Algren, and she's even better on Roosevelt's WPA (with its literary and theatrical arms) which tossed a lifeline to participants, preserved livelihoods, and gave hope to the thousands of artists who, like Algren, joined, got a living wage, and forged meaningful lives for themselves.

Algren was the product of a once flourishing magazine culture, long since disappeared, which paid writers like Scott Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson, and Richard Wright good money for their contributions. It is almost impossible now to imagine a universe for fledgling writers that, unlike the Internet, actually paid real money for poetry and prose. The Liberty magazine, Harpers, the Saturday Evening Post, The New Masses, and The American Mercury were but a few of the major names, further leavened by countless small magazines dedicated to ferreting out new talent and bringing it into public view.

Algren: A Life rekindles a now forgotten time when writing was the chief aspiration for many bright youngsters, and long before the art was reduced to sound bite banality by a modern media bent on "info-attainment" and advertised "filler." Yet Algren's personal liabilities, as Wisniewski makes clear, were formidable ones. He could never forgive a favor. He breaks bitterly with his first wife (who he marries twice), with De Beauvoir, his great love, and with Richard Wright, who supported and furthered Algren's work before Wright himself is driven into his final exile in Paris. Wright is another victim of the Cold War hysteria, which is now conveniently lumped as McCarthyism, as if one Senatorial loudmouth drove it, when in fact it was an orchestrated campaign by the government, business, and the media.

Algren throughout his life couples his need for friends with an undefined but potent desire to denounce and alienate all those who help him. He proves himself incapable of sustaining a relationship with a woman, nowhere more completely than with his first wife who, despite her unstinting devotion, ends embittered and angry at what cannot be denied: Algren's bedrock misogyny. Wisniewski passes over an awful episode, which Algren himself documents, involving a relationship with a Vietnamese woman in Saigon who he belittles and exploits while attempting to sell PX goods on the Black Market. The incident is evidence of the problem Algren poses for sympathetic feminist thinkers intrigued by his long affair with De Beauvoir.

The book holds fast to Chicago as the central character in Algren's work: the "feel" of the city is always present, and its stories could only come from those ragged survivors who populate and suffer the place. Wisniewski has an impeccable ear, as did Algren, for the language of the migrants and Eastern Europeans who once populated Wicker Park and Bucktown and the Division Street bars and bordellos Algren haunted. It's a world that has since disappeared, supplanted by trendy cafes and up market restaurants where once Roman Orlov, "the biggest drunk on Division Street," made his dubious reputation amid many another martyrdom.

Algren's blasted career, bitterness, and death in exile from the city that both nurtured and helped to isolate him is sad testimony to how we got where we are as a nation. We are now far removed from the world that Algren's generation had fought to bring into being. American politics having undergone a sea change since the Depression years which, despite their trials and foibles, produced a generation of writers and artists like Algren, who looked to a Progressive America. It was an America reflected in the failed political agenda of the Roosevelt Democrats and recently echoed in the media defined "radical" agenda of Bernie Sanders whose programs were simply an attempt to revive Roosevelt's vision.

Algren paid a terrible price for the progressive dreams he shared with millions of Americans: his passport pulled, his career left in ruins. Redbaited and marginalized, he died a bitter example of what America did to its visionaries. Algren is in that long line of American writers: Dreiser, Steinbeck, Sherwood Anderson, Richard Wright, which culminate in Kerouac who rekindles an American realism that was attacked by Cold Warriors who resented its proletarian core but could not kill off its days of beatnik glory.

Wisniewski maintains a fine compassion and balance in her view of Algren and Algren's world, which is not always easy with a subject whose almost whimsical desire to offend was ever in play. This splendid biography ends with the writer's lonely death in Sag Harbor, New York. Algren's gravestone is marked with the words of Willa Cather: "The End is Nothing, the Road is All." Algren's final days were as bitter as the road he traveled was varied and vivid: it's the road Wisniewski has illuminated for us in this brave book.

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Benedict Anderson. A Life Beyond Boundaries. London: Verso, 2016

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In 1965 a *coup d'état* took place in Indonesia. The left-leaning government of President Soekarno (*var.* Sukarno) was replaced by a military regime headed by General Suharto. Soekarno's presidency had balanced itself on the so-called *Nasakom*, the attempted harmonisation of three major forces in Indonesian life: *Nasionalisme* (Nationalism), *Agama* (Religion) and *Komunisme* (Communism). The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), with its some three million members, was said to be the largest non-ruling Communist Party in the world and had an increasing influence on Soekarno. When Soekarno fell so too did *Nasakom*. In violence that continued into 1966, at least 500,000 Indonesians (and possibly upwards of one million) were killed, communists mainly as well as ethnic Chinese and an ideological array of leftists. Tortures and mass-imprisonments were also common. As the Suharto rule solidified, the new dictatorship blamed the violence on communists, with the claim that the PKI had fomented all this. Western governments, the United States foremost among them, pushed a similar line.

Quietly, though, three young academics at Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program began to use their university's enviable array of up-to-date Indonesian source material to analyse what was taking place. The result was a meticulously researched paper drily entitled *Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup in Indonesia*. The main conclusion was that Suharto and his supporters were behind the mass killings. Recognizing the scope of their findings, the paper's authors did not initially seek to publish their work fearing it would endanger their Indonesian colleagues at Cornell. Instead, the paper was quietly circulated in *samizdat*. But by early 1966 it had been leaked to the *Washington Post* "and both Suharto's men and the US State Department (who were actively supporting Suharto and delighted by the destruction of the communists) were furious." The *Preliminary Analysis* was the work of Ruth McVey (who had recently completed her studies at Cornell and would go on to teach at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London), Fred Bunnell (who would later teach at Vasser College), and Benedict Anderson. Anderson was a polyglot Political Science PhD student recently returned from an extended research trip to Indonesia. He would go on to become one of the most influential academics of the later twentieth-century. *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, a mix of autobiography, intellectual reflections, and good-old fashioned academic gossip, is his posthumously published memoirs.

Anderson is primarily known for his much-cited (perhaps over cited?) 1983 work *Imagined Communities*, twice republished in expanded form since then. Ironically, for a work that sought to intervene in a series of British debates about nationalism, its roots go back to Indonesia and to the fallout from the *Preliminary Analysis*. Exposing Suharto's hand in the massacres made

Anderson *persona non-grata* in Jakarta. He did manage to acquire a visa through the embassy in London and spent two weeks in Indonesia before the government realised; he was promptly expelled from the country and banned for the next 27 years. A scholar of Indonesia who could no longer visit the country, he began to cast his net across South East Asia, in time producing work on Thailand and the Philippines and adding Thai and Tagalog to an already impressive résumé of languages. It is as if his exile shoehorned him into a comparative approach to studying the modern world. But as he shows in *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, his multi-nationalism had deeper roots.

Anderson was born in 1936 in China to an Irish father (an official with the Chinese Maritime Customs Service) and English mother and, like any good Victorian novelist, he gives valuable details about his heritage; Irish nationalists and old Gaelic nobility on the paternal side and imperial administrators on the maternal. His nanny in China was Vietnamese and "My mother once told me that the first words I spoke were Vietnamese, not English." In 1941, fleeing the Japanese invasion, the Andersons moved to California. A wave of anti-Asian nativism prevented their nanny from joining them. When the war ended, the family moved again, this time to the Ireland of which Seamus O'Gorman Anderson was still a citizen; the ailing father died soon after, though, leaving Benedict, his brother Rory (better known as the intellectual historian Perry Anderson) and his sister (the anthropologist Melanie Anderson – she goes unnamed in the memoirs) to be raised by their mother, Veronica. Fortuitously, the widowed mother decided to channel her sons away from the Irish educational system (with its focus on the Irish language) and toward the Latin of elite British schools. Both Benedict and Perry won scholarships to Eton and Benedict would go on to take a Classics degree at Cambridge. While it is hard not to suspect a certain anti-Irish snobbery on the part of Veronica Anderson, as Benedict Anderson recounts it:

> *Geographically, I was being prepared (without realizing it) for a cosmopolitan and comparative outlook on life. On the brink of puberty I had already lived in Yunnan, California, Colorado, independent Ireland, and England. I had been raised by an Irish father, an English mother and a Vietnamese nurse. French was a (secret) family language; I had fallen in love with Latin; and my parents' library contained books by Chinese, Japanese, French, Russian, Italian, American and German authors. There was also a useful feeling of being marginal. In California, I was laughed at for my English accent, in Waterford for my American idioms, and in England for my Irishisms.*

Indeed, there is something markedly novelistic in how Anderson reads his own future in the lineaments of his peripatetic childhood. It makes for an enjoyably readable end product, albeit with a certain amount of elision. And much of the book progresses like this; his trips as a young student around Jakarta on his Vespa scooter, unsatisfying experiments with marijuana at student parties in Ithaca, boyish scraps and fraternal rivalries with a pre-pubescent Perry Anderson. At the very outset, we are told that "Professors in the West rarely have interesting

lives", yet there is much here that is just genuinely fun, a rarity in academic writing.

And then he comes to the writing of *Imagined Communities.* The focus moves over to the more conventionally academic. For reasons never elaborated, the Anderson brothers fell out of contact some time after their undergrad years. But they were reunited by the *New Left Review*. By the 1970s, Perry Anderson was the *NLR*'s editor, and Benedict took to reading it closely. "During this process, my brother and I became close again, as we have remained till this day." Through this reading, Benedict Anderson came into contact with a number of scholars, both living and dead. Walter Benjamin brought his attention to questions of "homogenous, empty time." And Tom Nairn, a non-traditional Marxist with Scottish separatist sympathies, introduced Anderson to an on-going debate about nationalism in Britain. Nairn had just released his analysis of *The Break-up of Britain* (1977), advancing the then-blasphemous, now quite tame thesis that the United Kingdom was "a fossilized, conservative and imperialistic relic of the past, doomed to break up into its four constituent underlying nations, with Scotland leading the way."

This had put Nairn at serious odds with the leading British scholars of nationalism: Eric Hobsbawm, Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner, Anthony D. Smith, all of whom were of Jewish backgrounds and, despite their vastly differing politics, all had a certain affinity for a United Kingdom that they saw as fascist- and antisemitic-free. Anderson, as he retells it in his memoirs, was clearly on the side of Nairn, both for his combative tone and because, "as an Irishman", he felt the broadsides against British patriotism held serious water. *Imagined Communities* was his own intervention into this field. But it was also a work that tackled the eurocentrism of the scholarship of nationalism. The result was a relatively short text that mixed a very British polemic with a diversity of material drawn from his work on South East Asia. The eclecticism surely goes a long way to explaining its appeal; his understanding of nationalism is a noticeably versatile one.

Imagined Communities now has an iconic status in Anglophone academia, a *de rigueur* text for any graduate student in the humanities and social sciences. In later chapters of his memoirs, Anderson surveys the current state of academia from this high status. The crisp autobiographical narrative is replaced by a series of interlocking reflections on university life. In one acidic passage, he castigates the fad for *Theory* (with a capital "T"), that rules in American academia and that has tended to revere Anderson himself as a reluctant Theorist. In addition to this disdain for faddish theories – which he compares to the built-in obsolescence of high-end commodities under late capitalism – he has few kind words to say for contemporary graduate students' turgid prose or over-reliance on digital technology. These are valid points but with more than a hint of unfair caricature to them.

Anderson died just before his memoirs were published and it is impossible not to read them in that light, as if this was almost a self-penned obituary. Indeed, the late-in-life text ranges across his life and work with rapidity, highlighting intriguing episodes and perspectives even as it skips quickly past it all. The autobiographical portions act as a genial portal to his personal life, but clearly much has been left out of his re-telling. The reflections on academia

are at odds with this, and are equal parts fair-minded and crabby. The result is a richly packed book but also an at times unsatisfying one.

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Hugh Gusterson, Drone: Remote Control Warfare. MIT Press 2016

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Inside a foreign policy seminar, as a sour sort of luck would have it, I actually heard an Army officer, who was on leave to pick up an advanced degree, blurt just a bit too blithely that drone strikes in Pakistan were perfectly fine because the national government quietly approved. Why? Remote control warfare was reckoned to be the least worst of Pakistan's paltry options, given all the scorch marks that the US was determined to inflict across the tribal wilderness bordering Afghanistan. Ninety percent of Pakistanis nonetheless oppose drones and three quarters accordingly regard the US as an enemy. No intervention at all, was not among the options. Apparatchiks really believe this stuff and do so because they want to believe it. How this self-serving stance differs from deception is not so easy to figure out.

Among a blizzard of new books probing drone warfare, Hugh Gusterson's slim volume is among the most careful, concise and insightful, scrupulously giving all due credit along the way to other sharp investigators such as Patrick Cockburn, Medea Benjamin and Grigoire Chamayou. Gusterson, among many revealing themes, examines why so many well-trained and otherwise decent participants in the Drone 'kill chain' are either suckers for blatant rationalizations or else resort to them for the sake of careerist expedience. Readers may not be terribly comforted to learn that drone operators turn for guidance to an oracular computer program, sort of like a Jiminy Cricket on their shoulder, which forecasts collateral damage from any proposed air strike. The software is dubbed bugsplat.

Pilotless planes were armed as early as 2001 but only seemed to gain major media attention a decade later. Drone warfare has been a story mostly 'told from the point of view of executioners" who are giddy about this magic wand means of rubbing out faraway foes. Drones, the author emphasizes, can only slither around the skies in decidedly asymmetric situations such as counter-insurgency campaigns. Any adequately armed State can blast the impertinent snoops out of the air in minutes flat. Indeed, seventy-six nations have drone capability themselves. So Drones are "an inherently colonialist technology," somewhat advanced over flimsy biplanes that Britain dispatched over Iraq in the 1920s to strafe any impudent natives.

A key theme is how unmanned aerial gadgets offer operators both extremely remote and intimate experiences at the same time, reducing all normal human senses to a single menacing voyeuristic vision. Did Nazi camp guards not view the *untermenschen* in much the same clinical manner? Merely press a trigger and down hurtles a Hellfire rocket to whack the designated nuisance, a termination, as the saying goes, with extreme prejudice. So far there has been precious little urgency for authorities to consider the wider picture – beyond a screen

fixation – because, as that arch old bit of imperial doggerel goes, ‘Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim gun, and they have not.’ The more things change . . .

For all the Konrad Lorenzian cant about men as killer apes, the Pentagon long has been distressed as to how few natural born killers there are. S.L.A. Marshall’s controversial World War II study *Men Against Fire* found that only about a third of GIs in combat fired their weapons. An urgent aim since then has been to boost the firing rate, and distance remains the surest palliative for outbreaks of conscience. Pilots, for example, glimpse little of what they slaughter and therefore are fairly reliable trigger-pullers. Recall the Wikileaks footage of a scornful helicopter crew splattering Iraqi civilians on a street corner. Yet, as drone whistleblowers like Cian Westmoreland attest, emotions still interfere. Even drone operators seven thousand miles from the fray suffer stress tantamount to PTSD, if they lack the proper sociopathic nerve for their duties. The author, in passing, makes a telling plea for understanding PTSD as a “moral injury” rather than as a neurological condition.

Gusterson aims to reframe debate for a public kept largely in the dark about the shifty nature of these strange technological beasts. Sixty percent of Americans polled favor drone warfare, though support drops under thirty percent if civilians are endangered (which they almost always are). Drone strikes “collapse the distinction between civilians and combatants and, further, the “new form of state violence, hybridizing war and police actions, wriggles out of international laws of war, and indeed the US Constitution.” Gusterson highlights how rapidly norms melted from an initial reluctance to murder people from high altitude to casual acceptance. Though the CIA was banned by a 1976 executive order from assassinating executives and conducting other ‘extrajudicial killings, after 9/11 all norms and good sense seem to have been abandoned.

Afghanistan is the most heavily droned patch on the planet. The first aerial assassination attempts went embarrassingly awry, missing Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, who slipped away or perhaps were never there. Gusterson instructively quotes a Pentagon spokesperson on one such miscue: ‘We’re convinced that it was an appropriate target . . .[although] we do not yet know who exactly it was.” A drone strike killed an al-Qaeda leader linked to the 1995 USS Cole bombing. A US citizen died as well but a survivor of the strike was acquitted of terrorism charges afterward in Yemen. A report found 41 instances in which the same prominent target was ‘killed” in more than one drone attack. F-16s and Predators, tracking a switched-on cell phone, killed an anti-Taliban Afghan leader on election tour instead of a Taliban leader. Bureaucratic dimwits insisted anyway their data was correct.

Gusterson distinguishes “mixed drone warfare,” in Iraq and Afghanistan where Drones function as air support for soldiers on the ground, and “pure drone warfare” in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia where no US forces at least officially prowl and the Drones hunt ‘bad guys.’ One pervasive hitch is that everyone on screen becomes a shimmering blur, and anxious ethnocentric beholders can make a threatening mirage out of whomever they monitor. Gusterson cites the tempting ‘leaps of logic’ that ignorant observers often make to fill in gaps about movement and motives of their quarry. Technology “gives you a false sense of security”

about identifying purported enemies. Is that a child or insurgent? Why take a chance? Above all, “a palpable hunger to attack” drives the way screen images are construed. The anesthetizing aesthetics of their video game takes over. Splat.

A Predator can lurk up to 24 hours at 10 to 15 thousand feet. The Reaper is twice as powerful, four times the price (22.5 million each) and hauls eight times the payload. Astonishingly, over half of Air Force pilots now are trained for drones. The share of ‘remote pilot aircraft’ shot up from 5% in 2005 to 31% by 2012. Manufacturers are ecstatic. No Yank is at risk in the cockpit, which is fortunate especially because half of all drones crack up. Three people in a tricked-out trailer guide each drone, slaving twelve hour shifts six days a week. The bleary-eyed Spartans sift assiduously through a confusing array of contradictory demands and murky orders. The ballyhooed pinpoint accuracy claims for drone weaponry suspiciously recalls the vaunted Norden bombsight of World War II, which had difficulty locating a German city, let alone a pickle barrel. Upbeat high-tech tales are geared to sooth public concerns. Gusterson goes on to contend the US has “created a new approach to counterinsurgency warfare and border policing that is organized around new strategies of information gathering, precision targeting, and reconceptualizing enemy forces as a cluster of networks and nodal leaders.”

US officials worry about Taliban fighters crossing to Pakistan from Afghanistan to regroup and return. So Drones have turned tribal area residents into, as a Waziristan chief complains, ‘psychiatric patients.” Tribal life has been reconfigured to avert encounters with these fickle ever-hovering death dealers. Yet you can’t do this just anywhere, at least as yet. Can you imagine, for example, the British government conducting drone strikes in the Irish Republic during the Northern Irish ‘troubles’ because known IRA members were roving around there? What would the consequences have been?

Reuters reports that drones kill 12 times as many ‘low level’ people as high profile targets. So-called “signature strikes” kill crowds of suspected insurgents based purely upon behavior patterns. “Double tap strikes” means help won’t go near a site for hours for fear of a follow-up missile. Comparing estimates by London’s Bureau of Investigative Journalism (2400-3900 casualties with 10 to 40% civilian), the establishmentarian *Long War Journal* (2,900 casualties with 156 of them civilians), and the conservative New America Foundation (2200 – 3600 casualties with 7 to 14% civilians), the author finds the upper end estimates most credible. Gusterson draws a valid parallel between drones and suicide bombing, as both undermining the reciprocity of vulnerability inherent in war, thereby changing war’s character in unappreciated ways. To victims on the wrong end the distinction between a technical device and a wired-up insurgent disappears in the blast wave. Drones amount to a kind of black magic where you stick a pin in a digital doll and your quarry suffers. The nerve-wracking plight of those beneath flight paths makes one appreciate why our ancestors, however deluded, raged to burn imaginary broomstick-riding counterparts at the stake.

A sort of warmed -over ‘felicific calculus’ vainly is resorted to on the fly by officials who reckon how many innocent lives might be saved later by taking a number of innocents right now in an attack on presumed enemies. However much an otherwise critical film like Eye in The Sky

dignifies it, the calculus smacks more of Madeleine Albright than Jeremy Bentham. The whole purpose of these gimmicks is to create and exploit slippage between rhetoric and reality to achieve the elite's underlying goals.

What strikes one most keenly is how Vietnam, and its criminally discarded lessons, echoes everywhere. Any military-aged male is an insurgent, as in Vietnam. The target list piles up, as in Vietnam. This form of warfare is a perpetual enterprise in which blundering perpetrators keep accruing more power. Drones only motivate more rebel recruitment, as in Vietnam. The US confuses "killing with winning," as in body-counted Vietnam. Decapitation does not work. The enemy is more incensed than demoralized and the US military consequently demands more resources and more of the same strategy, as in Vietnam.

The battlefield, under the 2001 Authorization of Military Force (AUMF), also is reinterpreted to extend wherever the enemy might be. The drone bathes itself in self-legitimating accuracy and does it not lead to a preference to kill instead of capture? To protect against any imagined threat, anything goes. Obama, once a constitutional lawyer, managed to assert that Libya strikes were not relevant to the War Powers Act because no US troops were on the ground, an argument which opens the door to attacks anywhere anytime by unchecked executive orders.

Gusterson foresees the difference between war and peace evaporating as we move into a world without demarcated battle zones. He brings up the key applicable concept of moral hazard: "a situation where a person may be willing to take risks because they know someone else will bear the consequences,' which is the very definition of elite rule at home as well as in foreign policy. Drones can retard the expected waning in the 'rally around the flag' effect occurring as wars go badly or – same thing – on and on. Insulating citizen soldiers almost guarantees conflicts will continue and even spread.

The author demolishes the "legalistic opportunism and disingenuousness with which the Obama Administration has made its case, picking and choosing tidbits from the law as if it were a buffet dinner while building up executive power." If war is not reciprocal such that both sides suffer to a degree "then it is torture," and so far we do not award medals for torture. Finally, there is no such thing as "absolutely unilateral" action because the targeted parties eventually find ways to hit back, as we have learned in the last year. In sum, "drones are an imperial border-control technology for the age of late capitalism," a tool of a stratified global society picking on the down and outers. Even anyone who thinks they know all there is to know about drone warfare will profit from Gusterson's rich and penetrating study.

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