# TWENTIETH CENTURY

Hilary W. Putnam

Hilary W. Putnam is Cogan University Professor *Emeritus* in the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University. Before joining the faculty of Harvard, he was Professor of the Philosophy of Science at M.I.T. He has also taught at Northwestern University and Princeton University. He is a past President of the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division), the Philosophy of Science Association, and the Association for Symbolic Logic. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and the French Academie des Sciences Politiques et Morales, and holds a number of honorary degrees.

Putnam has written extensively on issues in metaphysics and epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind. In recent years Putnam has also written extensively on the relations between scientific and non-scientific knowledge and on American pragmatism. His most recent book, titled *Ethics Without Ontology*, which appeared in Spring 2004, deals with many of these topics.

A. PHILOSOPHY
1. Neo-pragmatism

Yubraj Aryal: *What is happening in the recent development of American philosophy? My emphasis is on pragmatic renovation of the analytical tradition, neo-pragmatism, really?*

Hilary W. Putnam: First, we need to distinguish two versions of "pragmatism" now on offer to the philosophically interested public. I shall call them "pragmatism light" and "good old fashioned pragmatism". Pragmatism light is largely the creation of my good friend and favorite debating partner for many years, Richard Rorty. Rorty was certainly a brilliant philosopher, but his views were, in my view, deeply misguided. According to pragmatism light, truth is just a compliment that we pay to beliefs we like, and words and sentences do not represent parts or aspects of reality. The problem with all that, if you will permit me to be blunt, is that we *do* live in a real world, most of which is not of our making, and we do use words to talk about parts and aspects of it. Rorty's best arguments were that (as Quine, Davidson, and myself had pointed out) there are deep philosophical problems about the semantic notions of truth and representation. But, unlike Rorty, the three of us never proposed to just give up on these fundamental notions. I suspect that the popularity of pragmatism light came from its nice fit with "postmodernism"–for me that is no reason at all to accept it.

"Good old fashioned pragmatism" is, of course, the pragmatism of Pierce, James and Dewey. I do not consider myself a "card-carrying" pragmatist" of either variety, but I believe there were a host of insights in the writings of all three of these thinkers. I particularly value Dewey's conception of ethics as continuous with the theory of democratic life, and of both as based on pluralism, fallibilism

and experimentalism. Of course, pragmatism light values these two; the difference is that "good old fashioned pragmatism" believed in the possible of rational discourse about politics and ethics, while pragmatism light scoffs at the very notion of "rational discourse."

As for "the recent development of American philosophy", what I like is that it has become much more open. No thinker is excluded from discussion (McDowell and Brandom have even rehabilitated Hegel!), and the old positivist contempt for the history of philosophy is a thing of the past. The interest in pragmatism is a symptom–not the cause–of this greater openness.

Y. A.: Twentieth century witnesses mainly two philosophical currents both of which smash the foundationalist program (to establish certain humanist ideals like Truth, God, Centre etc.): one is Continental philosophy led by Heidegger, Nietzsche, Derrida, Foucault etc., and the other is Anglo-American Analytical philosophy led by James, Dewey, Pierce, Rorty and yourself. Whose phenomenon is postmodernism then-either Continental or Anglo-American? Or should we qualify postmodernism calling French postmodernism, American postmodernism?

H. W. P.: I have no interest in being called "Postmodern". But I agree with you that philosophy has become anti-foundationalist, and that in America the pragmatists had a significant role to play in that. But the fact that almost all philosophers are now anti-foundationalist (and, in fact have been anti-foundationalist for decades) is not wholly due to any wonderful arguments that "smashed" it. Part of it is just a change of philosophical fashion, always something to be suspicious of. The best *arguments* against foundationalism– and there are some good arguments– came from Quine, in his great paper "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (and his friend Morton White, in his sadly neglected book *Towards Reunion*

in Philosophy), and from Wittgenstein. But most of the self-styled "postmodernists" don't understand either Quine or Wittgenstein, in my opinion.

Y. A.: Let me focus on neo-pragmatism and your philosophical position on it. Is there any doctrine that we can call neo-pragmatism? In other words, is neo-pragmatism a doctrine?

H. W. P.: I don't see so-called "neo-pragmatists" (of both the "light" and the "good old fashioned" varieties) as having a single "doctrine". But there are some points that we perhaps all agree on. Among them are *fallibilism, pluralism* (not only in the sense of favoring political pluralism and a plurality of notions of human flourishing, but also ontological pluralism– the denial of the possibility of a fixed inventory of all possible "modes of being"), and *anti-reductionism*. "Neo-pragmatists" respect science but oppose "scientism".

Y. A.: At the heart of neo-pragmatism, there is a strong dislike for continental philosophical traditions like Cartesianism, Marxism (Rorty once told me "Marxism is not philosophy, only some vague ideas." in an interview), Deconstruction (Derrida is not only heavily criticized but also ignored by American academia) etc., despite some uses of Freud, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Foucault etc. What are the major discontents of analytic philosophy with Continental traditions?

H. W. P.: When I was in China in 1994, a young student expressed her dissatisfaction with Marx to me by saying "No 19th century point of view is final". She was right. But speaking for myself, I certainly admire both Descartes and Marx. That neither Descartes nor Marx achieved the kind of final answer to the great problems that they hoped for doesn't give us any right to *despise* them. All the great philosophers have this in common: as we get smarter, their writings get smarter.

The analytic tradition has two major discontents with Derrida (but not with Descartes), one of which I share, and one of which I disapprove of. The one I share is that he gives appallingly bad arguments at times (as Rorty also noted, although he admired Derrida). The one I disapprove of comes from the belief, almost universal among "analytic" philosophers, that the sole function of philosophy is to give good arguments. That philosophy can also have the function of helping us to question our own lives is something analytic philosophy doesn't even consider, because it has the idea that philosophy must always and only be "scientific". That philosophy itself can be pluralistic, can have a plurality of functions, and that "argument" need not always consist of deriving conclusions from premises, is what it doesn't see. Stanly Cavell has been an important force in criticizing this overly narrow view of philosophy.

Y. A.: What is your concept of internal realism (also called naïve realism)? How does your philosophy of internal realism reject Rortyan anti-realist philosophical position? I want to add one thing here: How does your reading of classical pragmatism differ from Rorty?

H. W. P.: I gave up internal realism years ago. In *Reason, Truth and History* (1981), in the course of writing on subjects that went far beyond my pre-1975 interests, I made what I now see as a false start by defending a version of anti-realist semantics that I sometimes called "internal realism". I gave it up for a more "realist" position by 1990, as I stated in my reply to Simon Blackburn at the conference on my philosophy at the University of St. Andrews in November of that year. A "written-up" version of that reply is published in Peter Clark and Bob Hale's *Reading Putnam*. The reasons I gave it up are stated at length, in my Dewey Lectures of 1994.

Readings of classical pragmatism: Rorty's gave us what I regard as a caricature of classical pragmatism: truth is what makes us happy to believe. On my reading–and that of every other expert I know of–the classical pragmatist had complex and serious theories of truth. And they took both truth and representation quite seriously.

Y. A.: Why did you give up your middle path philosophy of internal realism (between metaphysical realism and anti realism)?

H. W. P.: I was strongly influenced by Michael Dummett's "antirealist" views in the late 1970s and the 1980s. S if and only if (S would be justified if epistemic conditions were good enough)" is true, according to my "internal realist" modification of Dummett's view.

But how is this counterfactual to be understood? On my picture (which was different, in this respect, from Dummett's), the *world* was allowed to determine whether I actually am in a sufficiently good epistemic situation or whether I only seem to myself to be in one–thus retaining an important idea from commonsense realism–but the conception of an epistemic situation was, at bottom, just the traditional epistemological one. My picture still retained the basic premise of an interface between the knower and everything "outside". But while the need for a "third way" besides early modern realism and Dummettian idealism is something I feel as strongly as ever, such a third way must *undercut* the idea that there is an "antinomy", and not simply paste together elements of early modern realism and elements of the idealist picture.

This "idealization theory of truth" was presented in Chapter 3 of *Reason, Truth and History*. In Chapter 5, the problem of understanding counterfactuals was addressed, however, by adopting a verificationist account. I employed a similar counterfactual in *Representation* was addressed, however,

by adopting a verificationist account counterfactuals. This does not mean that the "internal" realist *abandons* the distinction between truth and justification, but that truth (*idealized* justification) is something we grasp as we grasp any other concept, via a (largely) implicit understanding of the factors that make it rationally acceptable to say that something is true." The dilemma I faced (but was not aware that I faced at that time) was this: let us suppose, as seems reasonable, that whatever makes it rational to believe that S makes it rational to believe that S would be justified were conditions good enough. If my understanding of the counterfactual "S would be justified if conditions were good enough" is *exhausted* by my capacity to tell to what degree it is justified to assert it, and that is always the same as the degree to which it is justified to assert S itself, why did I bother to mention the counterfactual at all? Why did I not just say that my understanding of S is just my capacity to tell what confirms S to what degree, *full stop*? It seems that the whole appeal to "idealized" verification, to counterfactual verification, was an unnecessary shuffle. But then the jaws of the Scylla of solipsism close on me! (I say "solipsism", because verificationism has the consequence that what makes my statements true or false is limited to *my* actual and possible experiences). On the other hand, if I repudiate the justificationist account of our understanding of counterfactuals, the Charybdis of the metaphysical realism I was trying to avoid sweeps me into its whirlpool. It was the impossibility, as I now think it to be, of steering an anti-realist course between the Scylla of solipsism and the Charybdis of metaphysical realism that led me to develop and defend what I believe to be an unmetaphysical version of realism in *The Threefold Cord; Mind, Body and World.*

Y. A.: Does Kantian transcendental moral philosophy still interest you once you renounced your philosophy of internal realism?

H. W. P.: I am amazed that you think I ever embraced "Kantian transcendental philosophy". What I have always claimed is that one can find important insights in Kant's philosophy *without* accepting Kant's metaphysics. Kant is one of my heroes, but so is Aristotle, so is Dewey, so is Levinas. Like all pragmatists and neo-pragmatists, I see ethics as resting on a number of different human interests (which are sometimes in tension, by the way), and not on any single "foundation". Those interests (I would call them human *needs*) include respect for the humanity in the other, equality of moral rights and responsibilities, compassion for suffering and concern to promote human well-being, and not only the desire to be governed by principles for which one can give one-another reasons, which is the one Kantians stress.

Y. A.: You long tried to save philosophy from the trap set by Western anti-experiential tradition. You defended experience, which is constantly attacked by western philosophy since Greek down to Derrida. But your defense of experience against the 'indeterminacy' of postmodern world view seems to deny a room for postmodern world. Are you trying to place us back in the naturalistic world? Are you resurfacing essentialism in pragmatist amelioration?

H. W. P.: Unlike Rorty in his famous paper "The World Well Lost", but like John McDowell, I don't see the fact that perception is always conceptualized as meaning that it is *barrier* between us and the real world; I see it as sometimes a barrier, when our concepts are wrong, but in both everyday life and science it is usually what enables us to perceive aspects of the real world, not a barrier between us and it. How do we know when it is a barrier and when it is a mode of access? We never know *infallibly*, but fallible knowledge is still knowledge. That is where pragmatists differ from "postmodernists".

Y. A.: *Let me ask you then some questions from philosophy of mind, one of your areas of research. What is your alternative image of human mind? How does it perceive reality? How far does your alternative theory of perception (to the causal theory of perception) emphasize the role of human language in the cognitive process?*

H. W. P.: I am working on a book on perception, but it will take some time to complete. For now let me just say that I think that perception does not take place in the brain, but takes place in the whole "transaction" between the organism and the world. This was Dewey's idea, and it is a profound alternative to the picture of experience as something that is located somewhere in the brain, and mysteriously correlated to what happens in the world. This is the picture I began to sketch in my book, *The Threefold Cord*.

Y. A.: *All fundamental reality is located in human mind. There exists nothing outside human mind (at least we cannot prove) even so-called real objects cat, rat, mat, hat etc. Humean philosophical skepticism has informed us that human understanding does not reflect the intelligibility of the world but the conceptual habits of human mind. How can you prove the existence of the real world beyond the conceptual one? How do you know it without conceptualizing?*

H. W. P.: Let me comment on each part of this little speech of yours. "All fundamental reality is located in human mind." False. Physical systems such as our solar system are fundamental reality if anything is, and they are not located in our minds. "There exists nothing outside human mind". False. ". . . at least we cannot prove even so-called real objects cat, rat, mat, hat etc." So what? As Stanley Cavell wrote in *The Claim of Reason*, "the truth of skepticism, or what I might call the moral of skepticism" is that our fundamental relation to the world is not one of knowledge– and certainly not one of "proof". That doesn't mean "we don't know anything"; what it means is that the word "know" only works in contexts in which we acknowledge (rather than 'know' or 'prove') your cats, rats, mats, hats, and, more important, other people. (See Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* for the best discussion of this.) "Humean philosophical skepticism has informed us that human understanding does not reflect the intelligibility of the world but the conceptual habits of human mind." Since Hume held the absurd theory that concepts are nothing but mental pictures, I don't see how he could have informed us of *anything* about the conceptual habits of the human mind. "How can you prove the existence of the real world beyond the conceptual one?" My relation to the real world isn't one of *proof* "How do you know it without conceptualizing?" I don't *know* that there is a real world (nor do I "not know" there is a real world": I *acknowledge* the world and other people, and I know (in the sense allowed by the language game) that in certain circumstances I am entitled to use the word "know" to make a claim.

Y. A.: *Thank you for you kind participation in our interview project!*

H. W. P.: Thank you for your interest in my opinions, and for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion in your country.
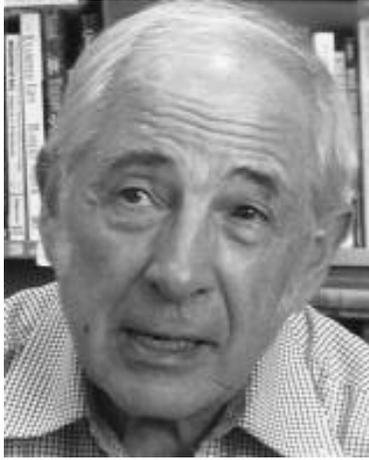
John Searle

John Searle is Slusser Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1959. Before that he taught in Oxford where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He has been a Visiting Professor at several American universities, as well as universities in France, Germany, Austria, Britain, Norway, Denmark, Canada and Brazil. He is the author of 17 books and over 200 articles. His most recent books are: *Freedom and Neurobiology* and *Mind: A Brief Introduction*. His works are translated into 22 languages. He is the winner of numerous prizes, awards and honorary degrees, including the National Medal for the Humanities in 2004.

2. Mind and Language

Yubraj Aryal: Let me begin from your notion of language. Today we live in the post-literacy digital age. The Saussurean notion of sign as 'concept' has been severely criticized. The rise of digital culture and new media has changed the nature and function of language. What is language for you? How does it create social reality in its compositional and generative potential? Is the social 'event' simply the extension of compositionality and 'generativity' of language?

John Searle: The question contains a false presupposition. It is indeed true that we live in a digital age, at least in the sense that a great deal of communication is now done digitally. For example, I am dictating this to a digital chip. But it is not true that we live in a "post-literacy age". On the contrary, without being able to read and write, it would be impossible to cope with the digital culture. We live in a hyper-literacy age, not in a post-literacy age.

Y. A.: No, no, by the word 'post-literacy', I do not mean the end of literacy but as critic Charles Bernstein says "To say we are in age of postliteracy does not mean that literacy is no longer necessary but rather that it is no longer sufficient. . . ." We can call it hyperliteracy, no problem at all.

J. S.: *(Continued***)** The Saussurean notion of a sign seems to me pretty much obsolete by now. We have gone way beyond Saussure as far as understanding language is concerned.

Furthermore, it is not true that the rise of digital culture has changed the nature and function of language. On the contrary, language today functions pretty much as it did fifty years ago when I was very young, and indeed, I believe it functions pretty much as it did 500 years ago. It is not language as such that has changed its nature and function, but rather the uses to which we put language are vastly greater, and this expanded technological ability has enabled

us to communicate in language much more rapidly and with much greater volume than we ever were able to before.

We do indeed create a social reality by our uses of language, but the essential features in that creation are not just compositionality and generativity, but especially deonticity, the capacity of human beings to create rights, duties, obligations, etc. And all of these require language. Compositionality and generativity enable us to extend deonticity, but they do not by themselves create it.

Y. A.: You are claiming that all social reality is linguistically constructed. In other words, it is human beings using language that create social institutions. Let me take you back to pre-linguistic era and ask: is the idea of God a language construction? If someone says God or many other forms of reality are product of nonlinguistic intentionality; intentionality of those ancient 'men' who had no language before that intentionality came in their mind, how would you refute?

J. S.: Social reality is indeed linguistically constructed. In this question you ask, "Is the idea of God a language construction?" Well most ideas that are expressed in language are constructed in language. But I wonder if you are not hinting at the possibility that the existence of God is a matter of language construction. There is a technical term for people who think that God is a social or linguistic construction. They are called "atheists." Either God exists or he does not. If he does not exist, then no amount of language can bring him into existence. If he does exist, then no amount of language can put him out of existence. So, though it is indeed true that you could not have the idea of God without having a language, (indeed you could not have most ideas without having a language), the existence of God has nothing whatever to do with language. I fear that it is almost overwhelmingly likely that God does not exist. But this, if I

am right about this, is a fact about the universe and not about language.

Y. A.: Can you locate all realities in language? How do you, then, address the problem of free will in human life? Are we free or determined? What is your project for liberation?

J. S.: No, I do not locate all realities in language. Mountains, molecules, and galaxies exist quite apart from the language we use to describe them.

There is a special problem about free will in human life. As far as we can tell, we are in most likelihood completely determined. However, it is impossible for us to abandon the presupposition of the freedom of the will because whenever we make a choice, that is, whenever we reflect and choose one option rather than another, we can only do so on the presupposition of free will. If I am given a choice between two alternatives A and B, I cannot say, "Well, I am a determinist, I will just sit back and wait and see what happens" because the refusal to make a free choice is only intelligible to me as an exercise of freedom. As Kant pointed out a long time ago, it is impossible for us to think away our own free will.

This, however, does not prove that we have free will. On the contrary, we simply do not know if free will is a real phenomenon or is illusory, and we will not know until we know a great deal more about how the brain works. The problem we have now, the problem of free will, is that it seems overwhelmingly likely that we do not have free will, and yet we cannot abandon the presupposition of free will. We simply need to know more about the conscious decision-making processes of the brain before we can answer this question.

Y. A.: What is your bone of discontents with the Jacques Derrida's emphasis on differential potential of human

language? What is wrong or lack in his perspective on human language?

J. S.: About my dispute with Jacques Derrida, the problem with Derrida is that he does not have a coherent philosophy of language. It is always harder to refute a really bad argument than it is to refute one that is only a little bit bad because in the case of the one that is a little bit bad, you can simply point out what is wrong with it. But in the case of Derrida, the argument is so bad that you have to rebuild the argument to try to make a coherent statement out of it. And then, of course, it is always open to him to say, "Well, you didn't understand my argument." But then he continues to state an argument which is more or less unintelligible. I have criticized his views in a number of articles and won't repeat these lengthy criticisms here.

Y. A.: *Derrida is attacking Austin and your emphasis on speech over writing. Would you hold that thought is prior and word post? On what grounds you try to refute Derrida's politics of arch-writing?*

J. S.: You say Derrida is attacking Austin's and my emphasis on speech over writing. We make no such emphasis. We do hold, as any sane person holds, but as Derrida apparently denies, that human languages existed in a spoken form before they existed in a written form. This is just a fact about human history. It could have turned out differently, but it did not. Indeed, alphabetic languages by definition are attempts to represent the spoken forms in a written script. This is part of their power, but they presuppose the existence of the spoken language, which they then represent with different symbols corresponding to different sounds in the spoken language. But some forms of language are necessarily written. You could not do symbolic logic nor most forms of mathematics without writing. This is why it is extremely difficult for blind people to learn higher

mathematics or advanced mathematical logic: because you cannot really operate with the symbols unless you can see them. So it is just ridiculously false to say that Austin and I emphasize speech over writing. We simply note obvious facts. The two obvious facts are that human languages evolved in spoken form before written form, and that some forms of communication, such as mathematics and symbolic logic, essentially involve writing.

Y. A.: *Whether speech (word) acts or signifies? What differences you maintain with Austin on the sources of speech acts?*

J. S.: In order to understand the relation of speech, act, word and sentence meaning, we need to make certain crucial distinctions. First, we need to distinguish between the *sentence* as a syntactical entity having a conventional meaning from the *use* or *utterance* of the sentence to perform a speech act. I think this was one of Austin's crucial discoveries: that what we are discussing in the philosophy of language are not sentences as such but rather the use of sentences to perform speech acts. And I have no disagreement with Austin about this. My only major disagreements with Austin are that he has a distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts which I believe cannot be made to work, and I try to replace it with a distinction between illocutionary acts and propositional acts, and also it seems to me he has an inadequate taxonomy of speech acts.

Y. A.: *Can speech guarantee the truth? How would you see Gadamer's relocation of truth from speech to mirror of speech?*

J. S.: "Can speech guarantee the truth"? Well, of course the mere fact that a speech act has been performed is not sufficient to guarantee that it is a true speech act. So speech

cannot guarantee truth. I have no knowledge of Gadamer's work, so I really cannot comment on it.

Y. A.: Where do you disagree and agree with Foucault and Habermas on their respective notion of language?

J. S.: Neither Foucault nor Habermas in my opinion has an adequate theory of language. They have interesting reflections on how language is used but it seems to me essential that one first answer the question, "What is language?", that one should have a theory of language, of how language is based on prelinguistic intentional capacities. So it isn't so much that I disagree with what they say, as I think that it is inadequate to answer the questions that most preoccupy me.

Y. A.: What is deontology in your system of thought? Is your deontology intelligible? Is not there any plausibility with it?

J. S.: "Deontology" for me is just a general term to describe all of those desire-independent reasons for acting that include such things as rights, duties, obligations, requirements, needs, authorizations, permissions, etc. I think that the existence of these is what makes human society possible, and indeed is what distinguishes human societies from animal societies. Without desire-independent reasons for action, we could not have any kind of organized civilization.

Y. A.: How do you read Hume's Theory of Causality? My question: In constituting intentional states with the conditions of satisfaction, you hold that human mind follows certain conscious causal and logical rules but would you not see some non-conscious mechanism determines those rules in speech acts?

J. S.: Hume is generally supposed to have shown that causation is not a genuine relationship in nature. In nature there are only regularities, and these regularities give us the illusion of causation by leading us to expect certain things to happen given that certain other things have happened. I think that this account is entirely false. I think that we find causation as a real relationship in nature, as distinct from mere regularities, and that as far as our experiences are concerned, we experience causation pretty much all the time. Whenever we perceive or act we are engaged in causal transactions with nature and often these causal transactions can be part of the actual conscious content. So for example, when I consciously raise my arm, I experience my intention-in-action causing my arm to go up. Of course there is nothing self-guaranteeing about that. I might be mistaken. But all the same, the experience is an experience of one thing causing something else.

As far as the unconscious is concerned, I think there is no question that a lot of the mechanisms that enable us to function cognitively, whether in speech acts, perception, or otherwise, are unconscious mechanisms. The important thing, however, is to see that we have the notion of an unconscious mental state only as a notion of something which could at least in principle become conscious. A mistake common in cognitive science is to postulate the existence of mental states which not only are unconscious, but which are not even the kind of thing that one could bring to consciousness, such as, for example, computational states.

Y. A.: How would you explain Lacan's dictum "unconscious is structured like language"? Do you find the symmetry between the features of language and features of consciousness?

J. S.: If someone says the unconscious is structured like a language, then I would first have to know how he thinks language is structured. Given a serious systematic account of the structure of language, we could then do a serious systematic account of the unconscious and see if language

and the unconscious have similar structures. It seems to me most unlikely that that they do, and nothing that I have seen would incline me to suppose that it is true. So for example, do we have the possibility of the full range of conscious speech acts in the unconscious? The claim that language and the unconscious are similar is only interesting if we suppose that we are discussing not how language functions in the unconscious, but how the prelinguistic unconscious functions like conscious language structures. I see no evidence at all to suppose that those are alike, though many of the functions of language are done unconsciously. But to repeat the point, it does not follow from that that the unconscious itself is structured like a language.

Y. A.: Let me take you to the cognitive science before I conclude. What is actually happening in cognitive science nowadays, after the emergence of philosophy of mind in the center of philosophy?

J. S.: The most exciting thing going on in cognitive science, as far as I am concerned, is that we are moving away from a computationally based cognitive science to cognitive neuroscience. With advances in neuroscientific research techniques such as the use of fMRI, we are now reaching a point where it is possible to do imagining studies that give us a deeper understanding of the functioning of the brain in cognition than anything that was previously possible, and I welcome this development and I assume that it will continue to proceed, that we will continue to get a greater understanding of cognition by studying neuroscience.

Y. A.: Philosophy of mind is drifting away from cognitive science to neuroscience nowadays. Does this herald the death of mind/ consciousness? If not what else?

J. S.: You ask, Does the drift of philosophy of mind to neuroscience "herald the death of mind/consciousness?" Of course not. These are the data that cognition is trying to explain. We are trying to explain mental phenomena, and of course that includes conscious mental phenomena. So it is a mistake to suppose that if we can give an explanation of mental phenomena, somehow or other this will somehow kill them off. They will no longer exist. On the contrary, it is only on the presupposition of their existence that we can engage in the investigation of mind and consciousness.

Y. A.: Where do you locate social ontology in the philosophy of neurobiology? How would you address the quality of mind/body?

J. S.: The relation of social ontology to neurobiology is mediated by the fact that the neurobiology not only creates consciousness and intentionality, but it creates the possibility of collective intentionality, where human beings cooperate with each other, and some animals can cooperate with each other. Human social ontology is only possible given this neurobiological capacity for cooperation. However, for the foreseeable future, we are not likely to make much progress in understanding social ontology by way of understanding neurobiology because we do not know enough about the neurobiology of even simple forms of intentionality to enable us to figure out the neurobiology of complex forms of social cooperation. So in the long run, I expect that we will learn a lot about the possibilities of society by understanding what brains do, but for the foreseeable future we are condemned to using philosophical and other empirical methods for investigating social ontology. We will not find a neurobiological solution to our problems.

Y. A.: Thank You for your kind participation in our interview project!

J. S.: I am grateful for the opportunity.

David Wood

David Wood is currently Centennial Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt. He joined the Vanderbilt faculty in 1994, after developing one of the top philosophy departments in the UK at the University of Warwick. Dr. Wood's interests lie in the possibilities of reading and thinking opened up by contemporary continental philosophy and by nineteenth century German thought. His recent books include: *Time After Time*; *The Step Back: Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction; Truth: A Reader* (ed. with José Medina; *Thinking After Heidegger*; *The Deconstruction of Time* and *A Conversation Between Neighbors: Emmanuel Levinas and Søren Kierkegaard in Dialogue* (co-edited with J. Aaron Simmons is forthcoming).

3. Derrida and Deconstruction

Yubraj Aryal: Since you are a friend of Derrida let me begin from a general question what kind of man was Derrida in life? When did you first meet him and how did you find him? What kind of philosophical attitude did he hold in life?

David Wood: I first met Derrida when I was a graduate student in Oxford in the late 60s, before he was "Derrida". He was invited to Balliol College from time to time to lecture by my supervisor Alan Montefiore. We were all captivated by his sparkling intelligence, his philosophical originality, and his generosity with students, giving them time, taking them seriously. This generosity has been remarked on by many others. I would also emphasize his gentleness, compassion, seriousness, and wit. He was a delightful interlocutor, a good listener and never self-important.

Y. A.: What would he think about the future of Deconstruction in academic locations, particularly the future course of continental French philosophy in the face of emergence of American philosophy? How much Derrida is read in French and American universities today? In Nepal it is all right!

D. W.: The history of Derrida's reception in the USA is complex. Initially, he was welcomed most in Comparative Literature departments as they came to terms with structuralism. He had strong supporters at Yale, Cornell, SUNY Buffalo and UC Irvine. Subsequently, he was recognised by a handful of philosophy departments, especially those of a more Continental persuasion, who (like Derrida himself) were working through the legacy of phenomenology, especially SUNY Stony Brook, Penn State, Loyola Chicago, Memphis, De Paul, Villanova and Vanderbilt. It is said that Derrida was a prophet honored everywhere but in his own country. While he had an

important position as Director of Studies in Philosophy at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, he was (unlike Foucault, and Levi-Strauss for example) never elected to the prestigious College de France. Indeed he was the object of a number of unscrupulous campaigns directed by both British and American philosophers of a more analytical persuasion to discredit him. Derrida's work continues to be discretely influential in the work of thousands of academics–often not philosophers–whose style of philosophizing he impacted, even where they do not specifically teach his texts. His later more political work, from *Specters of Marx,* to *Rogue*s, has given him something of a new lease of life for those concerned with questions of social justice. Derrida was never particularly wedded to a program called Deconstruction. If anything he was embarrassed by any suggestion that his work could be codified in that way.

Y. A.: *Let me pick some controversies that surround him. It is often said that deconstruction is textual strategy and that it is often a-historical in its heart. What would you say about this view?*

D. W.: Derrida cannot be held wholly responsible for all the ways in which his ideas have been applied by his disciples and admirers. He has striven to clarify what he meant by the idea that "il n'ya a pas de hors texte." which can be translated "there is nothing outside the text" or "there is no outside-text". He insists (in *Limited Inc* for example), that "text" is not to be understood in a way limited to (for example) a work of literature or philosophy, but has a broader reference to the textuality of the world, and of experience. He was no arguing for any kind of textual idealism. Quite the contrary. Rather he is arguing against brute facts, against pure perception, against naïve realism etc. and in favor of the idea that the real and our experience of it is essentially articulated, differentiated, 'structured'. In

his early formulations of a general strategy of deconstruction (in *Positions*, for example) he does suggest that texts–in both the literal and broader sense–are structured by binary oppositions which privilege one side of the binary, and that what deconstruction does is to effect an inversion of this structuring dominant opposition, while introducing an 'indecidable', an undecidable term, that will frustrate the natural tendency for the inversion to right itself. This does have something of an a-historical aspect to it. And yet the opposition between historical and a-historical is one that itself needs deconstructing. Derrida is not a structuralist of a Levi-Straussian stripe. Indeed the first essay he published in English ("Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences") was a critique of that structuralism.

Y. A.: *Derrida is often charged with a one-sided view of language. It is said that he turns a blind eye to the social potential of language emphasized by Austin and Searle. Could you be unaware that there is society somewhere outside and inside alike while reading the text? Searle and Gadamer say that Derrida has lack of seriousness about the natural communicative potential of language. He does not even consider speech. Would you agree or not?*

D. W.: As Christopher Norris has argued (in e.g. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*), there are actually profound resonances between Austin and Derrida, in particular Austin's methodological decentering, in which we turn away from what we might take to be the central focus of our problem (say Free Will) to look at the network of supportive concepts and expressions in which it is embedded (such as the kind of excuses and justifications we give for our behaviour, in "A Plea for Excuses".) This is very close to Derrida's movement away from single expressions to considering their 'textual' articulation. It is not that Derrida is blind to the social dimension of language, or lacks an interest in speech. It is rather that he resists the idea that

we can standardly find in communicative situations a co-presence, a communion of minds, in which language is simply a transparent vehicle for the natural exchange of ideas. Instead Derrida will focus on ways in which the very use of language to communicate presupposes the possibility of miscommunication, misunderstanding, so that it is not possible to rigorously separate (for example) serious and non-serious instances of communication. Derrida does not so much have a problem with speech as such as with the philosophical burden borne by a certain model of speech as a pure bearer of meaning, in which a speaker knows fully and immediately what he is saying etc. An earlier example of a thinker who has doubts on this score would be Freud. This is not to say that we never successfully communicate in a practical sense. But even if we come to an agreement, we may never be totally sure we know what we have agreed on. Think of the case of the lovers who each say "I love you". Their agreement may be sufficient for the moment even if full convergence of meaning may rest on the truth of an indefinite set of counterfactuals. (They may never address the question of whether their love would survive one party becoming a penniless paraplegic.)

Y. A.: Did Derrida kill philosophy? In other words, is there death of philosophy after Derrida? How did he save philosophy if he did not kill it?

D. W.: Many philosophers–or example, Nietzsche, Marx, Heidegger, perhaps Foucault–have announced the death of philosophy in one form or other. In each case, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, reports of its death have been greatly exaggerated. Recall "The king is dead. Long live the king." The death announced each time is not the death of philosophy as such but of a certain model or orientation of philosophy, such as philosophical idealism (attacked by both Nietzsche and Marx), or as metaphysics (attacked by both Heidegger and positivists like Carnap). The subsequent

history of 'philosophy' seems to have little difficulty reabsorbing the demand for radical renewal into its living body. Indeed, it may well be that announcements of the death of philosophy are its very lifeblood, marking a moment of critical transition or transformation. That is not to deny that deconstruction was not susceptible to a certain deadening or petrification, as when it was reduced to a code or a formula, as when Hegel's dialectic turned into a three-step: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. At times, and it would be hard to avoid this, Derrida seems to imitate himself, or repeat himself, to be working a familiar vein, but what was exciting about him as a thinker was his ability to reinvent himself, to allow 'deconstruction' to evolve and adapt, to effect new ways of intervening illuminatingly, often in response to concrete events and circumstances, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, or 9/11. Derrida made many different contributions to philosophy in its war against complacency, and naivety, often (to the frustration of impatient minds) refusing to exempt philosophy from its own critical methods.

Y. A.: But his opponents often say he has suspended liberal humanist ideals, which have nothing wrong with them (on this ground they even term him a monster). They argue that human civilization has come to the marvelous state of progress in the 21st C with these humanist ideals like God, Centre etc. Why do we need to dismantle them?

D. W.: I would compare Derrida here to Socrates. It was equally said of Socrates that he questioned the meaning of 'virtue' and 'justice', and in doing so corrupted the youth. But these arguments against critical reflection are arguments against philosophy, not specifically against Derrida or deconstruction. Deconstruction does not aim to destroy the values it interrogates, but rather to refresh them, or to draw our attention to the aporetic complexities they exhibit. Some may think it negative or destructive to critique the idea of God, or Centre (or Community or Freedom or Truth), but the

fact is that each of these concepts, when understood naively, uncritically, can be enormously dangerous. In more traditional language, we know that they can serve crude ideological ends, justifying the use of power, war, domination etc. Moreover, while humanistic ideals seem incontestably good things, when we start to focus on nonhuman animals, they quickly show themselves to be speciesist prejudices.

Y. A.: Is not postmodernism a nihilist attitude, then? Is Derrida still a humanist? On what ground?

D. W.: It is difficult to ask the question of Derrida's humanism without invoking the legacy of Heidegger (Letter on Humanism) and Sartre (Existentialism and Humanism), each of whom tried to rethink humanism in such a way that they could still claim to be humanists, albeit in a deeper sense. Derrida follows this path, in a way, when he goes so far in reaffirming the importance of justice as to identify deconstruction with justice (just as Sartre will identify existentialism with radical freedom and responsibility). Is this compatible with nihilism? Surely so! If nihilism marks the recognition of the death of God, the absence of ultimate or absolute grounds for value, that does not announce the end of values, but rather the relocation of the excavation site, and perhaps too the attempt to wean us off a certain kind of desire for transcendence. Derrida surely inherits Nietzsche's hope that we can 'be true to the earth'.

Y. A.: In refuting grand narratives, postmodernism sounds like another more strict form of grand narrative, isn't it so?

D. W.: I think there is a difference between a grand narrative (like that of Enlightenment Progress) and the deflationary claim (Postmodernism?) that Grand Narratives are no longer believable. Lyotard's classic analysis (*The Postmodern Condition*) was subtitled *A Report on Knowledge*. Incredulity towards grand narratives is not so much a theoretical claim as a 'report' about what still 'flies'.

If we read his diagnosis in more theoretical terms, it would still be a negative thesis about the ungroundedness of the claims of a grand narrative. That does not itself seem like a grand narrative, but rather a logical point having consequences for grand narratives.

Y. A.: How would you refute the charges by Marxist and feminist intellectuals to Derrida?

D. W.: Many Marxist and feminist intellectuals have come to appreciate Derrida as a fellow traveler. His *Specters of Marx* is a defense of a certain legacy of Marxism against those who would bury it. The object of his own critique would be scientific Marxism, and essentialistic feminism. As I see it, Derrida takes up positions within Marxism, and within feminism, and when Marxists and feminists attack him it is not because he takes up a position wholly external to their own tradition, but precisely that he cannot subscribe to a dogmatic interpretation of either Marxism or feminism. If he is misread as a textualist idealist, Marxists will attack him. But in fact, if anything, Derrida is an arch-materialist, emphasizing how context always determines meaning, even if it never saturates it. But he is not a reductionist. When Engels said that the economy is determinative in 'the last analysis', Derrida would respond that there is no last analysis. As for feminism, it needs to be noted that Derrida's critique of what he called phallogocentrism is in effect a general account of the logic of patriarchy, and hence of a piece with a broadly feminist position.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

D. W.: Thank you!

Leonard Harris

Leonard Harris is Professor of Philosophy at Purdue University; Chair, Philosophy and Literature Ph.D. program; William Paterson University's University Distinguished Visiting Professor, 2002-2003; non-resident Fellow, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University, 2001-2002; Fulbright Scholar, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, 1998-1999; Visiting Scholar, King's College, Cambridge, UK, Visiting Scholar, summer 1984. He is the co-author of *Alain Locke: Intellectual Biography*; editor of *Racism*; *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*; *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond; Children in Chaos: A Philosophy for Children Experience*; and *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917*. He is the co-editor with S. Pratt and A. Waters *of American Philosophies*; co-editor with A. Zegeye and J. Maxted of *Exploitation and Exclusion: Race and Class*. The Alain L. Locke Society and Philosophy Born of Struggle Association are two organizations regularly sponsoring scholarly conferences he is noted for initiating.

4. Modernity and Rationality

Yubraj Aryal: Could we rekindle a faith on human rationality burnt down by continental philosophers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Heidegger?

Leonard Harris: There is no reason to 'rekindle a faith in human rationality' since it never existed as a massive social phenomenon. Faith in secular reasoning exists. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Heidegger all used the tools of modern secular reasoning to cast doubt on the efficacy of rationality as a sort of thinking mechanism or machine, but relatively few persons ever lived their lives as if they were thinking machines. Faith in historicism and reason as a sure solution to social problems, I think, was more affected by these authors. That faith should die, and along with it, the idea that 'reason' is some sort of thing in the universe of which we are epiphenomenon of its scion.

Y. A.: What is wrong with these philosophers' notions of language? What that 'camouflages' and 'precludes' us from achieving meaningful and emancipatory communication?

L. H.: Nothing is particularly wrong with the view that positivism is misguided. The view that language, at its best, picks out objective things in the world is right. Emancipatory communication, understood as that which is without distortions or unclear meaning, is a remnant of positivism. Emancipatory communication is a process, not a series of moments of enlightenment and exchange of right views.

Y. A.: Enlightenment modernity which envisions the form of technocratic communication assumes inter-subjectivity of mutual understanding as well as the creation of communication without domination seems unattainable goal like a Novalis' search for blue flower. Foucault has shown us

how nexus of power works everywhere with dominating force.
Would you see the possibility of such egalitarian society?

L. H.: If by an 'egalitarian society' one means a society without conflicts over power, any form of class or ethnic division, and the existence of similar material desires, then I think such a society is not only an illusion, but one that would require what Marx thought it would require: a change in human anthropology. That is, for Marx, material conditions determine what we are as a species being and our species being in turn, shapes material conditions out of available resources. If we had a different species being, then egalitarianism could be possible. Short of that, it is not possible.

Y. A.: *Derrida has turned down the foundations of inter-subjective communicative rationality? What is your reservation with Derrida? Does anything preclude you to say that Derrida is enlightenment philosopher?*

L. H.: Derrida precludes me from claiming him as an 'enlightenment' philosopher because he has critiqued the idea of the 'human' as an ontological entity. "Humanity" is rouge. That is a cornerstone of the Enlightenment. That rouge is for Enlightenment philosophers that which makes the species a unified being. Another way to think about this is to look at 'Renaissance." Whether it is Pico in "Dignity of Man" or Alain Locke "The New Negro Renaissance," a 'renaissance' is intended to express a new conception of humanity–a conception that in some way wants to treat 'humanity' as an ontological entity with some set of special traits. By rejecting 'humanity' Derrida also rejects could be read as also rejecting 'Renaissance'. Both are rouges. On my view, Derrida's rejection is also a rouge; one less beneficial than "humanity" and "Renaissance" because these tell us what we can become–they are a utopian vision of possibility– whereas their rejections tells us at best, what we are. And

what we are will not be what we will become, with or without Derrida's pastiche.

Y. A.: *Could we incline to challenge the legitimacy of some of the rational standards in human sciences?*

L. H.: We try and change the standards of the human sciences constantly. William J. Wilson, for example, uses studies of the 'underclass' in Europe and Chicago where previous scholars often studied the misery of the underclass by looking only at class dynamics in a race-divided America; communication across the internet has rendered all forms of analysis that relied on face-to-face communication, hard copy media, radio and television obsolete as sources that will tell us anything about predicting internet behavior.

Y. A.: *What is emancipatory knowledge? How it differs from ideology? What are problems of ideology? How can critical theory /rational inquiry emancipate us from ideology?*

L. H.: The questions are structured to give a set of narrow answers. I reject the idea that 'ideology' is invariably oppressive and 'emancipatory' is a function of having 'knowledge.' Knowledge is not a thing; it is not a stable core of facts or the knowing of some set of essences from which smaller truths can be derived by use of a translation manual that maps out the easy steps from the grand generalities to specific conditions. Emancipatory consciousness is an array of values and practices that may be of use in helping us move from moral decrepitude, postmodern insensitivity and self absorption, and terrible nationalism to living out alternatives.

Y. A.: *On a last but not on distracting note, as a member of community of the blacks, would you see the pathogenesis in white man's rationality even today? To what extent? And even in Kant, Hegel and Habermas?*

L. H.: Racism is not 'pathology' nor is it confined to whites. I don't think it has much to do with rationality. It is well known that Kant and Hegel were racialist–that is, they believed that the world consisted of different racial kinds and that these kinds had intrinsic biological, spiritual, and historical traits which were inalterable; each also thought that whites were superior to all other persons. None of this is true of Habermas. I think Martin Matustic's work on Habermas has made this clear.

The difficulty with contemporary philosophers, continental or otherwise, is that they too often ignore the problems that racism presents to the history of philosophy and to the usefulness of their own philosophies. I suggest several works in this area, starting with Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* as background reading and then Page DuBois' *Slaves and Other Bodies*, Leonard Harris' *Racism*, B. Boxill's *Race and Racism in Philosophy*, A. Valls' *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy* and B. Bowser's *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective*.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

L. H.: Thank you.

Kathleen M. Haney

Kathleen M. Haney, the author of *Intersubjectivity Revisited* and numerous articles, primarily on applied and comparative phenomenological topics, was educated at Tulane and Northwestern. She teaches philosophy at the University of Saint Thomas in Houston, Texas. She is currently editing a volume of essays on Edith Stein.

5. Modernity and Postmodernity: A Debate

Yubraj Aryal: I will focus on modernity and postmodernity along with some of the classical debates over them. My first question: Is postmodernity simply a continuation of modernity or a radical break from the modernity is quite debatable. What would you think of it?

Kathleen M. Haney: Postmodernity is still to come, in my opinion. The modern emphasis on calculative reason, when faced with the reasons of the heart that haunt PascaI, becomes the postmodern belief that reason is defunct. I don't think that most main stream academics and intellectuals envision a real postmodernity, as yet. As far as I can see, with few exceptions, Personalism for one, the central themes of the modern continue to abound. In order to move beyond modernism, I think we have to move beyond the unhappy history of the last several hundred years. I use the word "history" advisedly. Though moderns are inclined to despise or disregard history, meaningful, chronological sequence (as well as concomitant retrograde movements) continues unabated. The question of historical epoch seems to me to be about arché and philosophy's task is to interpret archaic experience. The historical periods in Western history were each characterized by the governing ideas that were being played out. If the values and goals of the moderns are still pursued, our time is not yet a new time. As far as I can see, a legitimate postmodernity would recover and cherish the great ideas of the past as well as recognizing the strengths of the present concerns. What's new about this would be its openness to a culture comprised of what the poet calls "the best that has been known and thought in the world" including non-Western cultures and non-parochial contemporanity.

We seem to be enacting an extension of the epistemological discussion that emasculated philosophy and made it more or less irrelevant to the theoretical advances in the sciences and technology. Tellingly, however, we are no closer to grounding what appropriate human purposes may be so that we cannot suggest a measure for what is euphemistically referred to as "progress." Indeed, it seems to me that the assumption that technology and its globalization represent improvement begs the question of what the well-lived human life might be. The diffuse vagaries of the so-called postmodern still rest upon metaphysics of naturalism and materialism, with a nod to culture and interpretation that justifies relativism. Modernity and what passes for postmodernity share in denying the human access to the divine or indeed a divine to access.

Y. A.: What must be the criteria of definition of modernity and postmodernity as you think?

K. M. H.: Let's take some of the dominant features of modernity and imagine that retrieving its losses, while sustaining its advances, would lead to a genuine postmodernity. Also, since the term "postmodernity" has been over determined, let's use the term "contemporary" as a substitute. Then, the modern and postmodern would be superseded by the contemporary. The new arché would be a revival, retrieval and a renewal, with the aim of recognizing that persons are the only real values. As Edith Stein notes, anything that has value derives it by contributing directly to a person's self-realization or to her efforts to help others realize themselves. This new arché would transform societies and capital into instruments in the service of a full personhood.

Y. A.: Postmodernity holds that history has died. We are living in the age of posthistory. What constitutes the idea of

posthistory and how it contributes to the postmodern cultural crystallization?

K. M. H.: Speaking as a philosopher not as an intellectual historian, one of the great losses of modernism, as you point out, is history. And his-story involves recurrent narratives about the meanings that humans make. For the Greeks, his-story moved out from myth into reason. During the Middle Ages, the advances of reason led to knowledge of God. The moderns jerked reason away from its moorings in meaning so that industry became technology. Techné, know how, obviates the question of what is worth doing. As Heidegger points out, the technology that overcomes history and is itself immediately subject to its own historical extinction, takes nature as "standing reserve." In the United States, personnel departments have been replaced by departments of "human resources." But, people who lived in earlier times had their traditions to locate them in nature and with others in ways of symbiotic co-existence and even respect and appreciation. For the postmoderns his-story is another dark age; one that denies meaning. Without a story, there is no plot and without a plot, there are no roles for humans to unfold–"not that we die, but we die like sheep."

Y. A.: Death of history signals the death of 'man'. What is postmodern man, then?

K. M. H.: Dead? Or, at least disconnected from life and the value of life, a kind of artificial contrivance. Magical realism, in my lexicon a contemporary phenomenon, pushes against posthistory with the recognition that humankind is still of (a) woman born. Our stories are continuation of our parents' and their parents' stories, which may include colonialism or imperialism or trade that modified them by introducing them to others and their ways. Autobiography has genetic dimensions as well as social and cultural ones. Knowing oneself occurs *in situ*, since we live in spatial and temporal

dimensions. The postmodern man then is self-deceptive and self-limiting. He comes from nowhere and has nowhere to go.

Y. A.: *What are the limitations/pathogenesis of enlightenment constructed modernity that plunges itself into the crisis of authority, knowledge and truth leading to the birth of postmodernity? Please focus particularly on Horkheimer and Adorno, Eric Voeglin and Hannah Arendt's views about modernity.*

K. M. H.: Horkheimer and Adorno, insofar as they never quite bring themselves to dump Marx, a quintessential modern, aid in the birth of phony postmodernism. Horkheimer's intellectual elite are perniciously divorced from the world and, thus, unlikely to achieve the wisdom of Plato's philosopher kings. Voeglin and Arendt are, of course, more interesting figures, since their range extended to the premodern. Arendt's basic criticism of modern education, that its interest is in training functionaries of society and thus violates the Platonic dictum that "all education is for the soul," was the fruit of the Nazi incursion in the life of her native Germany. She points out that mass culture amounts to mass entertainment. Arendt also reminds us of the ancient root of "culture" in cultivation, in "an attitude of loving care." She reasons that the goals and structure of a consumer society must be antithetical to tending to persons or to nature. So, if the modern tradition tries to inculcate itself in its young, it must do so by bad faith. Of course, a crisis of authority results, after all our parents lied to us and lied about what really matters.

Y. A.: *Would you please map out some cultural forces (Kantian-Hegelian-Marxian-Heideggerian-Freudian) that contributed to the emergence of modernity?*

K. M. H.: Usually, and with good cause, I believe, philosophers date the beginnings of modernity to Descartes, since he invented the "mind/body problem." The body is *res*

extensa (extended substance) and the mind *res cogitans* (thinking substance). I don't think Descartes bound himself to an ineluctable dualism but his dichotomy also seduced philosophy into a prolonged affair with epistemology that inhibited philosophy's growth in both knowledge and love.

The next couple hundred years expressed the extravagances of both as the two sides, empiricism and rationalism, battled with each other for the crown of truth. So, now some people entertain the notion of an objectivity which can be known without subjects while others hold that subjects are always confined to subjectivity. The latter are commonly considered postmoderns. This mess results from Kant's claims to reconcile science and philosophy coupled with disillusionment as his failure was exposed.

Y. A.: *Some of the original thinkers such as Daniel Bell and Alasdair MacIntyre argue that the crisis of modernity occurred because of too much secularism of religion and by the attempt to define tradition as dogmatism. They are giving the religious solution to the problems of modernity in the word of Bell 'a return of the sacred'. My question: how would Bell and MacIntyre see the logistic contradictions of capitalist modernity and how would they propose religion as antidote to the ennui of modernity?*

K. M. H.: I'm afraid I take a more Foucaultian view that intellectual history is of a piece throughout its various intellectual and cultural expressions. Religion was effected by the change of arché that chose to think that the modern natural sciences in (only inductive) objectivity are a greater harbinger of truth.

Y. A.: *Some people like Edward Tiryakian see modernity "as a historical struggle between three interacting cultures: the Christian, the Gnostic and the Catholic. Would you explain this kind of evolutionary concept of religion in the light of recent religious resonance in the postmodern age?*

K. M. H.: To my mind, we might do better to think of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, as well as many of the traditional religions of various metaphysical tenets as belonging together with those of most traditional societies. More basic than their differences from each other is their adherence to the insight of the Greek tragedians that humankind is subject to higher law. When a tragic hero, an Oedipus say, wittingly or unwittingly, violates that law, its consequence will descend upon him. The gods punish patricide. They will not have their fire stolen, as Prometheus testifies. All of this is quite different from the modern hubris made famous in the 18th Century Enlightenment and with us still. Humans are not in charge. Our adjudications of cultural mores and so forth may not square with higher law. Traditional people, often more dependent upon agriculture than industry, faced constant reminders that even legitimate human needs are not always met. Sometimes the rains do not come or they come late or in too great an abundance. Humans do not control nature, as we are now seeing in climate change. I'm not saying that humans do not influence or even destroy nature. I'm only saying that the religions teach us that our place is under laws which we cannot make or unmake.

Y. A.: *Would you tell something about the nature of transitions from premodernity to modernity and modernity to postmodernity? Are they identical?*

K. M. H.: Skepticism, confusion and dissatisfaction seem to usher in all the grand transformations of arché. This is necessary so that there is motivation to wonder and to open up a space to move into. I'm hopeful that the conundra of postmodernism will provide us another opportunity.

Y. A.: *It seems that different cultural forces are reintegrating in the recent times to constitute a unified self/subject which postmodernism dislocated from object. Is it the attempt to return to premodernity or transgress the postmodern? Is the thing occurring in the Hegelian scheme of thesis, antithesis and synthesis?*

K. M. H.: I suppose many phenomena can be shoved into the Hegelian schema. I think that the self/subject turned out to be essential for praxis.

Y. A.: *When we say modernity, it needs to be qualified. We people of non-European space are not ready to define ourselves in terms of European model of modernity. Western concept Globlism should not overshadow our need of geographic modernism. You and I belong to different spatial worlds. Would you differ from my viewpoint?*

K. M. H.: I think that geographic modernism is a moving target. I think this is a good thing. To my mind, it may become clear that many of the technological innovations that characterize the modern in its many cultural guises are not sustainable. One of the most significant lacunae of our time is that we no longer ask the perennial question of what constitutes a good human life. I attended a philosophy conference in Kuwait several years ago that took the question of science and technology seriously by structuring technology as a choice, involving significant disadvantages as well as benefits. It seems to me that emerging nations such as your own have the luxury of looking at the West thoughtfully with an eye to enhancing the self-realization of each of the persons in its societies. Some of the West's advances have brought many of its people to meaninglessness. The favors of modernism are expensive and Nepal need not buy into those which cost too much. I realize that your great opportunity for circumspection demands remarkable insight into both value and pragmatics. I hope that you can use your past better than the West has done.

Y. A.: *European/American societies are still tied with enlightenment ethos. Genuine postmodern impulse is not European/American but anti-western. As an evidence, we can see a wonderful reintegration of tradition with modernity in China, Japan, Islamic world, Latin America etc. (which is a marker of postmodernity). In these locations, no European modernity prepared any ground for postmodernity. Would you not agree?*

K. M. H.: I'm tempted to agree, I must admit. I try to see though that the developments originating in the West have prepared us–in so many ways–to conduct the conversation that we are having. I think it can be beneficial to us both. We can learn from each other not only because of the influence of the Western discourse, but also because we have both deeply imbibed the elixir of free discussion.

Y. A.: *Let me talk about the United States/ in the world politics, the U.S. always strives to smother every other authority than herself. After the fall of communism, there is a single world order led by the U.S. In the sense, there is a single authority, single voice (no voice was heard in the time of Iraq invasion 2003). It seems that the United States is still in modernity and has to be set in the process of postmodernization to ensure the harmonious but independent existence of every sovereign country based on the pluralistic ethos. How would you see it?*

K. M. H.: I think this question is a very complicated one. Sadly, I must agree that the United States remains in modernity, at least in its recent foreign policy. In my view, what passes for "postmodernization" would only make things worse. After all, a pluralistic ethos cannot make any claims to moral right. As Aristotle knew, the ethos of a community refers only to its typical practices, which may or may not lead to human happiness. It seems to me that ordinary practices must be measured against universal principles.

Otherwise, if a nation were to determine that its mission is to advance the establishment of American style democratization (aka "freedom"), who's to say that is not appropriate policy? My point is simply that when the touchstone for good is removed, we cannot make moral judgments except on the basis of what you refer to as "pluralistic ethos," that many different notions of what is good for human life are equally acceptable, in theory. Then, a nation could express its ethos by interfering or not in its neighbors efforts at genocide, say. If, on the other hand, we want to hold (and I do) that the systematic, intentional extermination of a people by another is wrong, we must find grounds other than taste. As far as I can see, in a nation or a world with conflicting tastes, money and power rule the day. I'm afraid that the only recourse is for nations and peoples to reason together about their emotional grasp of values and significance as if all persons shared in the commonwealth of planet earth.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

K. M. H.: My pleasure!

Kelly Oliver

Kelly Oliver is W Alton Jones Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University, where she is also an affiliate in Women's Studies. She is the author of over fifty articles and eight books, including *Woman as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex and the Media, The Colonization of Psychic Space :Toward a Psychoanalytic Social Theory,* and *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. She has edited several books, including *Recent French Feminism* and *The Portable Kristeva*.

6. Feminism: Some Current Issues

Yubraj Aryal: What is being happening in academic debate about feminism in the departments of humanities and social sciences after 1990 to present?

Kelly Oliver: There have been so many developments in feminism and feminist theory in so many disciplines in the last few decades, that it is impossible to delineate them in an interview setting. I do think that feminism has become an accepted part of the canon, if still marginal, within most academic disciplines in the humanities.

Y. A.: There is no single feminism but so many feminisms today. Which one would you prefer? Why?

K. O: I would resist one particular label or method of feminism. I think that different types of feminism are necessary and appropriate for different situations. For example, it may be necessary to argue for women's equality and women's rights when facing basic inequities and injustices. But, it may also be necessary to think beyond equality and rights in terms of differences and relationships. In other words, the discourses of equality and of rights have limitations when thinking about how we experience the world and each other.

Y. A.: Some section of intellectuals proclaims the death of feminism. Is feminism really dead? We are living in the post-feminism. Does this mean feminism is no longer relevance today?

K. O.: Given that most of the world's poor are women and children, and given that violence towards women, including domestic violence and rape, are still significant problems, I think that it is unreasonable to proclaim the death of feminism. We need feminist discourses in order to counter

anti-woman or patriarchal discourses that keep women poor and beholden to men.

Y. A.: *But advocates of feminism like yourself live in western metropolitan cities and have a fancy to speak about the rights and miseries of the women of third world space. The poor and illiterate women of the third world neither read your text nor understand your discourse, and nor you visit them and extend some solid help. It seems that your elitist discourse would have no meaning for them. Surprisingly and sadly, you people consciously or unconsciously desire the eternal existence of such space because that is what you can textualize and earn big sum from big publication houses. Am I wholly wrong?*

K. O.: You raise important issues. I agree that Western Feminist Theory may be irrelevant to the lives of all women. That is why I answered your previous question by saying that different feminist strategies are appropriate in different contexts. Theory, or books even, may not be appropriate in some contexts. But, we must struggle for women's freedom wherever we find ourselves; and hopefully feminist theory is in itself a form of feminist practice that can make some difference. It is also true that most of the people living in poverty in Western Cities are women. And, we need to fight on all fronts to promote the welfare of all women, most of whom in various ways, have been subjected to discrimination and hardship because they are women. We should be aware, you and I, that we are engaging in what you are calling "elitist discourse" even now, but hopefully in order to further conversations across cultural and class differences.

Y. A.: *How do you prefer to relate the two seemingly opposing terms 'men' and 'feminism'? And much the related question, how would you prefer to define the relationship of a woman with her male partner?*

K. O: I don't see "men" and "feminism" as opposed terms. Men can also be feminists. In fact, we need men to also be feminists, not only for the sake of women but also for their own sake. A feminist world will be a better place for both men and women. Women and their male partners need to reconceive of love relations beyond stereotypes.

Y. A.: *The discourse on sexuality like man is strong, female weak; man is logical, woman wholistic etc. seems has its foundation on biological evolution. In the prehistoric age, man would kill animal and his female would gather and feed it to her children. Killing would demand some logic and tact, therefore, nature developed reason in man whereas to gather and nurture woman needed no logic only creativity and sensibility, therefore, nature developed her mind in another way. Would you not like to see this discourse from the point of view of man as a killer and woman as a nurturer? See another instance, when some danger would appear before a family of an ape, the female ape would rush on top of the tree where as male would posit himself down in defensive position. Then, do not you think man is a protector of his female is less patriarchal construct and more natural. Would you still imagine my mind is polluted by the germs of patriarchy?*

K. O. Your appeal to nature and the so-called animal kingdom is problematic, not only because as human beings we create our own nature to a great extent, but also because sex and sexual relations in the animal world vary greatly. In fact, I think that you are mistaken that with most predatory animals it is the males that hunt and kill to provide for the females. Among lions, for example, and other predatory animals, the females often hunt and kill and the males take their food away by force. My point is that nature provides us with examples of all kinds of sex and gender relations; so we ought not generalize based on what is natural. In the case of

human beings, our sexual relations are always complicated by so many other factors, including economic issues and issues of financial independence.

Y. A.: *Since you scholarship is inclined to see the connection of feminism and terrorism, let me ask you how far women have been victimized by terrorism today–its magnitude?*

K. O.: In my recent book, *Women as Weapons of War*, I explore media representations of women terrorists and how those images differ from male terrorists. What I found is that women are characterized as in themselves dangerous. It is not that women are described as deploying bombs or using weapons, but rather, their very bodies are seen as dangerous weapons. We see the same phenomenon when it comes to women soldiers and female interrogators. The popular press often refers to them as "more dangerous than the male." So, my work is not so much about the affects of terrorism on women as the images of women as evoking terror.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

K. O: Thank you. And thank you for your interest in my work.

Bat-Ami Bar On

Bat-Ami Bar On is Professor of Philosophy and Women's Studies and chair of the Department of Philosophy at Binghamton University (SUNY). She is a recipient of the Chancellor Award for Excellence in Teaching. Her areas of research and teaching focus on violence, democratic theory and feminism. She is the author of *The Subject of Violence: Arendtean Exercises in Understanding* (with Rowman and Littlefield) and the editor of two special issues of *Hypatia* (23/2 and 11/4), *Jewish Locations: Traversing Racialized Landscapes* (with Lisa Tessman, Rowman and Littlefield), *Daring to Be Good: Essays in Feminist Ethico-Politics* (with Ann Ferguson, Routledge), *Engendering Origins: Critical Feminist Readings of Plato and Aristotle* and *Modern Engendering: Critical Feminist Readings in Modern Western Philosophy*. She is also the author of numerous anthologized and journal essays.

7. Terrorism: Some Current Issues

Yurbaj Aryal: How has terrorism shaped twentieth century philosophy and aesthetics?

Bat-Ami Bar On: Terrorism has not made it onto the disciplinary philosophical radar till the 1970s, though terror has, most famously in Hegel's discussion of it in *The Phenomenology*. Most professional philosophy papers and books about terrorism have been published since 11 September 2001. Giovanna Borradori is one of the few to describe a philosophical work as conceived in a time of terror (2003) and to raise questions about the effects of terrorism on current philosophizing. She directed these questions to Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida and both responded to them within their own conceptual/methodological framework. Existing frameworks have been applied to terrorism in ethics and political theory and the one most frequently deployed is schematically derived from the "just war" tradition. Even a few of us who find the "just war" framework problematic tend to return to it.

Y. A.: Can there be an ethics of terrorism? What are its parameters? Who is a terrorist? For George W. Bush, Bin Laden is a terrorist, and Bush is a terrorist for Bin Laden!

B. A. B. O: Terrorism, which is a violent practice, can of course be thought of and assessed from a moral point of view and there are plenty of professional philosophical papers that do just that. The question "who is a terrorist?" tends to be asked rhetorically and obscures rather than help clarify the parameters of a moral discussion of terrorism as a violent practice. Once the focus is on terrorism as a violent practice, it is possible to ask whether it can be morally justified or even merely be morally permissible. Most professional philosophers tend to believe that terrorism is morally unjustifiable, though different philosophical analysis

of the justifiability or permissibility of terrorism raise different issues. A few professional philosophers believe that the kind of violent practice that terrorism is morally justifiable, or is at least morally permissible, within the "just war" framework. I believe that the intuition that terrorism is morally problematic is right. However, I believe that in order to understand the wrongs of a terrorism with political ends it is important to examine it from the point of view of political theory and not only ethics.

Y. A.: Western representations of terrorism seem to be tainted with selfish western interest. For instance, Bin Laden was a freedom fighter when he was fighting against the USSR. Now he is denounced as a terrorist. Is this not indicative of the vested interest that shapes western representations of terrorism?

B. A. B. O: Some western representations of terrorism are tainted by vested western interests. Some of the best commentators on this remain the linguist Noam Chomsky and the historian Howard Zin. But not all western representations of terrorism are so tainted and many professional philosophers working in the west have been extremely careful to disentangle their analysis of terrorism from United States or other western hegemonic interests. But why worry only about "western" biases and prejudices? Why not also look at issues of gender, as does Kelly Oliver who argues convincingly that the representation of women terrorists is extremely tainted? Oliver's analysis is still of western representations, but her critique is not of western interests but patriarchal ones.

Y. A.: Representations of terrorism suffer from the prose of otherness. What is your stand with respect to this idea?

B. A. B. O: While I agree that some representations of terrorism are caught in the representation of terrorists as "other," not all are and in the professional philosophical literature the "othering" of terrorists is not too common. To the extent that terrorist are represented as "others," one needs to examine the work that the "othering" of terrorists does. Oliver, whose work I mentioned earlier, does a remarkable job of adding complexity to the analysis of the "otherness" of terrorists in the case of women suicide bombers.

Y. A.: How far do you think the issue of terrorism is related to the clash of western civilization with Islam?

B. B. O: Samuel Hantington's thesis in *The Clash of Civilization* regarding the organization of world politics around a clash of civilizations has been criticized by many and rightly so. To try and make sense of terrorism relying on Huntington problematic thesis, leads to more unclarity than clarity. It also leads to a forgetfulness of the history of terrorism. Terrorism, may be different in the present but it did not spring into being in the post cold war world.

Y. A.: Is it good to distinguish terrorism along a local/global axis? Can the western media minimize the terrorism in Kashmir or Panjab by terming it simply local?

B. A. B. O: The distinction between local and global terrorism is useful for some analyses of terrorism and so is not necessarily insidious. In certain contexts it is indeed suspect. For example, "globality" may be used to signal priority and serve to justify allocations of funds that leave populations exposed to "local" forms of terrorism in a very risky situation without that risk being justifiable.

Y. A.: As I see it, globalization, which many people in the third world believe is a form of economic colonization, and the so-called democratization of Iraq and Afghanistan only boosts the cause of terrorism. Isn't it so?

B. A. B. O: I am not a social scientist and this question calls for an analysis that is best done by social scientists. Still, I would like to point out that I do not think that the explanation of terrorism can be reduced to a single cause. Even if such reduction was possible, it would be extremely hard to use the cause in question to justify a turn to terrorism Personally, I am not even sure that any cause can make sense of a turn to terrorism. I think we need to worry about the attraction and temptation of violence when it comes to politics, which is shared by terrorists and states alike. I am making this observation not meaning to imply that pacifism is the only possibly coherent position one can hold. I am not a pacifist. However, I am a reader of the work of Hannah Arendt and have learned from her to appreciate how hard it is to create and maintain a sphere where political action can flourish and how violence threatens the very existence of political action. It is because I am committed to political action that I worry about the ease with which we are willing to accept the infusion of violence into politics.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project.

B. A. B. O: I appreciate being asked and am honored to participate in the interview project.

David E. Schrader

David E. Schrader currently serves as Executive Director of the American Philosophical Association. Prior to assuming his present position he taught philosophy for over thirty years at Loras College (IA), Austin College (TX), and Washington and Jefferson College (PA). He is the editor of one book, *Ethics and the Practice of Law*, and author of another, *The Corporation as Anomaly*. He has also published numerous scholarly articles in such fields as philosophy of religion, religion and science, theoretical and applied ethics, and philosophy of sport.

8. Postmodernism and Some Moral Questions in Twentieth Century Ethics

Yubraj Aryal: What are some pertinent issues in ethics today with the rise of multiculturalism, environmentalism, globalism and digital culture?

David E. Schrader: Each of the phenomena that you mention, the rise of multiculturalism, environmentalism, globalism, and digital culture, generates important ethical issues that are either new or that take a different form than in the past. While these are not the only phenomena that affect current conversations in ethics, let me address the impact of each of them separately.

Multiculturalism, I take it, is the recognition that the people of the world do not all share a common culture. Moreover, the people of a single political state may well not all share a common culture. The rise of multiculturalism has made particularly pertinent issue relating to the ethical significance of intermediate levels of human group identity. Traditionally, ethics has paid little attention to such issues. In its attempt to give universal prescriptions, traditional ethics has tended to abstract away from human differences. We see this in Immanuel Kant's focus on humans as members of a "Kingdom of Ends." We see it in the utilitarian tendency to see human beings, and perhaps other animals, as generic possessors of pleasure and pain. We see it in John Rawls' "original position," in which Rawls urges us to think of principles and institutions of justice in a framework that abstracts or strips away the concrete individuating circumstances of our lives. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls takes particular pains to urge us to strip away our religious identities before we enter the form of public dialogue. Traditional work in ethics has, of course, paid some attention to the unavoidable fact that each of us

does have a distinctive identity as a citizen of a particular political state. But that has frequently been the extent of recognition of differences in human identity.

The American continents, both North and South, are unique in the extent to which most of the population traces cultural roots to other areas. In the setting of the United States, recognition of the ethical importance of culture has roots in William James's small essay, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings." That recognition was sharpened in the work of some of James's African-American students like W.E.B. DuBois and Alain Locke. From the end of the American Civil War (1861-65) American racial discrimination against a background of formal legal citizenship forced a recognition by Americans of African descent that they were a culture set apart within the United States, and that the United States therefore had to be viewed as a nation of multiple cultures.

The dramatic advances in communication and transportation of the past few decades have heightened the recognition of multicultural engagement in virtually every part of the world. The ethical challenges are obvious as we look at the multiplicity of conflicts that beset different nations as people confront the need to find more peaceful ways of living with neighbors of different cultural roots. How are we to frame and understand the ethical significance of cultural identity and membership?

Environmentalism raises some related issues concerning the ethical import of group identities, as well as raising the most fundamental questions concerning the constitution of the moral community. The first set of questions focuses around the issue of species. Is the species to which an individual belongs ethically relevant to our treatment of that individual? Is there a moral reason to regard killing a member of an endangered species as morally problematic in a way that is different from the killing of a member of a non-endangered species? The second set of questions carries us into the work of those philosophers who would argue that all sentient beings or more radically all living beings belong to a common moral community. Carrying the issue even further, the work of the mid-twentieth century American ecologist, Aldo Leopold, argues that the ecological interdependence of animals, plants, and even soil leads to the adoption of a "land ethic" that expands the moral community to include all parts of the environment that affect our lives. In short, environmentalism presses us in a new way to clarify and justify our understanding of the range of things to which we bear moral relationships.

Globalism raises a broad range of ethical issues. Among the most important, on my analysis, is that of linguistic hegemony. Ethical reasoning and ethical living both require an engagement through language. Globalism tends to promote the use of a common language of commercial and technological engagement. The language that is increasingly emerging as the common language of commerce and technology is English. The issue of the extent to which the emergence of English as the dominant language of global commerce and technology gives native speakers of English a position of greater dialogical power in global conversations concerning ethical issues is a fundamentally important ethical issue. The fact that some people in other parts of the world see the spread of American culture and a version of American cultural values as a threat should push us to examine carefully the moral significance of the vehicles though which global dialogue occurs.

Finally, digital culture raises a whole multitude of issues related to modes of human relationship and to people's expectations concerning control over personal information. The fact that anyone with the technological capacity can create a website generates a variety of questions about how we can determine what kinds of public

information are honest and reliable. The ease of carrying on intimate conversations with strangers who may or may not be truly representing themselves raises questions about the nature and possibilities of friendship far beyond anything that Aristotle might have considered. The question of what kind of culture digital culture actually constitutes is also broadly and deeply fraught with ethical implications.

Y. A.: *What is the value of ethical morality in our life? How has the duality between mind and body shaped the ethical question in life today?*

D. E. S: The second question you pose here presupposes that there is a duality between mind and body. That is surely not an uncontroversial presupposition. It is not clear to me, however, that the question of whether there is such a duality makes much difference to ethical questions. Ethics, I take it, concerns how we live together. That clearly involves our physical relationships with one another. It also clearly involves our emotional and psychic relationships with one another no matter how we should understand the relationship between emotional and psychic life and physical function.

Ethics has long been characterized as "practical philosophy." It provides guidance for the practice of living. Every time we engage in action that relates to other people, perhaps even to non-human parts of our environment we act on the basis of ethical choices. Thus ethics is an inescapable part of all of our lives. The quality of all our relationships reflects the morality by which we live.

Y. A.: *Who constituted ethics? What is the sociology of ethics? To remind you, Nietzsche has unveiled the origin of the ethic/morality as the invention of the shrewd man in order to control others to full-fill his purpose? Did Nietzsche misinterpret the ethical origin of human beings? Can there is possibility of pure ethics unconditioned by power and ideology and wishful interests?*

D. E. S: It is, I think, misleading to say that Nietzsche "unveiled the origin" of ethics. That suggests that he laid bare the truth. Yet Nietzsche is mistaken on this point. Nietzsche's claim should remind us of Thrasymachus's claim, made in Book I of the *Republic*, that justice is the interest of the stronger. Socrates was right in dismantling Thrasymachus's claim. Ethics is constituted by all of us in society collectively. It is a social product, formed by an ongoing social-historical conversation. Nietzsche was right in recognizing that ethics must invariably be conditioned by power and interests. But everything we do is to some extent conditioned by power and interests. Interests importantly shape what we would like to do. Power importantly shapes what we are able to do. Ethics, as I see it, arises as an evolving set of equilibria of diverse human interests. As people engage with one another in the world they must develop ways of mediating their inevitable conflicts because of the inescapable need that human beings have for cooperating on common projects of survival and culture. Because those equilibria must develop in response to the various interests that gain expression in the public forum the general historical tendency will be for the equilibria to become increasingly more inclusive. Outright oppression or manipulative discourse may succeed for a time in repressing important needs and interests, but those needs and interests will normally reach a point of urgency wherein they are raised with sufficient noise and clamor to become a part of the conversation.

Y. A.: *What is the nature of ethics–personal or public? If personal, Saddam and Bush each had/has his own ethics. Which should we consider good to follow? Why?*

D. E. S: At very least, ethics is interpersonal. It involves the guidance of relationships. When enough people are involved in the web of relationships we should then speak of ethics as public. The notion of an ethics that is strictly person is incoherent. To say that Saddam and Bush each has his own ethics can only mean that each is part of a community that has come to share an ethic. That may remain unproblematic until the members of that community find themselves having to interact with members of other communities. One feature that Saddam and Bush seem to have shared is that they both appeared to be reluctant to engage in genuine dialogue with those outside their own community of ethical agreement. Saddam, of course, simply executed or tortured Iraqis who questioned his decisions. Bush, by contrast, used political rhetoric in an attempt to push those who questioned his decisions to the margins of the American political dialogue. The present political climate in the United States, however, illustrates my earlier point that important needs and interests will tend to break through attempts to marginalize them.

We should, of course, not simply follow either Saddam or Bush. Surely we should listen to Bush, and when Saddam was alive we should have listened to him. At the same time, we must listen to those who were critics of Saddam and to those who are critics of Bush. We must then set our paths by deciding what course of action provides the most comprehensive honoring of significant human needs and interests. There is, for example, much that is laudable in Bush's talk about freedom. At the same time, just as freedom was violated when Saddam sought to impose his power on the people of Iraq, so freedom is violated to the extent that Bush attempts to impose either his or America's interests on people whose interests are quite independent of American purposes.

Y. A.: From onward let me ask some questions from postmodern ethics. What is postmodern ethics? Is there any ethics in postmodern age? Which one you choose either to follow the view of deconstructionist postmodernists who turn the possibility of any ethics into pure nihilism problematizing the nature of 'human self' and epistemology or constructive postmodernists who try to construct some value for life. Why?

D. E. S: I have to say that the whole notion of postmodernism seems a bit odd to me. Postmodernism seems much clearer in what it rejects than in what it accepts. It rejects foundationalism. William James and over a century of American pragmatists have also rejected foundationalism. It rejects a hierarchy of sciences. William of Ockham also rejected a hierarchy of sciences over seven hundred and fifty years ago. It rejects "metanarratives." Martin Luther also rejected "metanarratives" almost six hundred years ago. In the end, I'm not sure that the term, "post-modern age," has clearer descriptive content than a term like "post-medieval age" or "post Han dynasty age." The age in which we find ourselves, like every past age, is always in a process of change. The attempt to carve human history into distinct "ages" obscures the genuine dynamism of history.

As my comments in response to your earlier questions would indicate, there must be ethics in any age in which human beings engage one another in the concrete task of life. As you note in your question, some of those who call themselves "postmodernists" come to embrace a kind of nihilism that seems in the end to provide warrant for the basest forms of self-assertion and ultimately an invitation to tyranny. On the other hand, those "postmodernists" who engage in the constructive task of ongoing dialogue about the parameters of our common life join, whether they would like to think so or not, the ranks of ethical constructivists who have been major voices in philosophy for centuries.

Y. A.: *In what ways the emergence authority crisis of postmodernism influence the private and public morality with regards to marriage and family, and love and friendship, which are important domains of ethics?*

D. E. S: The present authority crisis strikes me as largely similar to a myriad of authority crises that have preceded it. When people accept institutions or structures on the basis of authority they tend to blur distinctions that may be very important. Let me take marriage as an example. In the United States, as in many other places, marriage is at least two different things. There is a religious institution of marriage and there is a civil institution of marriage. Marriage as a civil institution is a form of civil contract. Marriage as a religious institution is a religious rite or, in some religious communities, a sacrament. In the current controversy about whether same-sex marriages should be allowed civil marriage and religious marriage generate different issues. The question of whether the state should allow same-sex couples to enter a contract of civil marriage is at bottom a question of what kinds of contracts the state should allow. President Bush has spoken often of the "sanctity" of marriage. It is hard to see how the idea of "sanctity" has any place in a discussion of civil contracting. "Sanctity" is a fundamentally religious category. Perhaps there is a compelling civil interest in outlawing marriage contracts between same-sex couples. If there is, however, those interests would need to be set out in terms appropriate to the discussion of civil contracting. By contrast, many people who argue that religious bodies should allow same-sex couples to enter into marriage base their arguments on what they see as the demands of justice. Justice is surely an important notion within most religious communities. However there are other notions as well at play in those communities. Any case to allow same-sex religious marriages would need to address the alleged

prohibitions on such unions arising in the scriptures of that religious community. My point here is that traditional authority has blurred an important distinction, and the current crisis of authority demands that such distinctions be raised in order to help people clarify the ethics of an institution like marriage.

Family, love, and friendship are also relationships regarding which we see confusions at present. As with marriage, those confusions need to be thought through carefully. This is an issue on which we continue to learn from one of the great philosophers of the modern period, Immanuel Kant. As Kant told us over two hundred years ago, the authority of others does not provide a secure foundation form moral life.

Y. A.: *Would you have any reservation against Richard Rorty, Michael Polanyi and many others who demolish the claims for foundationalist ethics? Would you not agree with Rorty who says, ". . .any human being's deepest moral dedications are a matter of personal, performance knowledge rather than a matter of following principles."?*

D. E. S: My answers thus far should make clear that I do not think that ethics can be based on a foundationalist approach. Likewise I think that those advocates of socio-biology who seek a micro-foundation for ethics in accounts of individual rationality are fundamentally mistaken. We must be careful neither to over-value nor to under-value the ethical importance of following principles. If we view ethical principles as static or eternal truths that govern human behavior, then we are in danger of falling into some dangerous form of dogmatism. On the other hand, if we dismiss the idea of principles altogether, then we seem bound toward nihilism. Ethical principles should be viewed in much the same way we view law. Like laws, ethical principles are important for guiding our behavior and relationships. Like laws, ethical principles must operate at

an appropriate level of generality since, again like law, codified statements regularly lack the sensitivity to particular circumstance that is needed to be of genuine service in guiding our behavior and relationships. Finally, like laws, ethical principles need to be periodically revised or, in some cases, even abandoned when the circumstances of our common life show us that those principles have ceased to serve us well in the project of living together well and productively.

Y. A.: Cultural theorists have pointed out the moral decay and intellectual anarchism in ethico-political spheres unveiling the ideological rhetoric imbedded within moral judgment. Simply take a case of Sep. 11! Regarding the event, Osama Bin Laden has his own ethical stand as does George W. Bush have. Can our commitment to morality be codified in certain moral principle free from ideological rhetoric? To put it differently, are moral issues only the matter of rhetoric?

D. E. S: There are several different issues involved in this question. First is the issue of the relation between ethical positions and ideological rhetoric. I take it that an ethical position must be a part, probably a fundamental part, of any ideology. As the ideology is expressed in language it must create an ideological rhetoric. To that extent, any ethical position will end up giving rise to some ideological rhetoric. The only kind of moral principle that I could imagine being free from ideological rhetoric would have to be some kind of "do nothing and say nothing" sort of principle. To say that ethical positions will invariably generate a concomitant rhetoric, however, is surely not to say that moral issues or positions are only matters of rhetoric.

My central point here is that to say that a position (in ethics or any other area of discourse) manifests itself in a discourse is surely not to say that there is no substantive content to the position beyond the discourse. To recognize that the sentence, "There is a computer on my desk," is a piece of discourse surely does nothing to minimize the actual presence of a computer on my desk. Ethical positions, as I've said above, are human social creations that arise in discourse. That discourse, however, is discourse about something. It is discourse about the various interests and needs of the human beings who inhabit and interact in a common world. In this sense, discourse is particularly central to ethics. Nevertheless, there is content to the discourse.

Human beings have developed biologically as creatures that survive and thrive through collective activity. Like many other forms of animal life, we survive because we are able to engage in collective activity that enables us to accomplish things that we could clearly not accomplish through individual actions. Our earliest ancestors, for example, typically hunted in groups. The fact that human beings are herd animals is precisely why the search for a rational micro-foundation for human cooperative behavior is misplaced. A feature of our biological evolution that has been particularly important to our form of cooperative activity is our capacity to use a highly complex language. Language provides one of the most important mechanisms through which human beings can coordinate their activities. It also provides one of the most important mechanisms through which we can relay our interests and needs to others and through which we can apprise others of our reactions to their activity. Thus ethics is particularly bound up with language, but the language clearly maintains its roots in the concrete lives of the people who use it. Hence ethics can never be free from rhetoric, but at the same time it is clearly much more than rhetoric.

Y. A.: How can we coordinate other forms of human discourses such as aesthetic, philosophy, politics with the

[constructivist] moral discourse so that we can maintain global peace and mutual understanding in the new globalism? Should this be necessary?

D. E. S: I do not think that the issue is so much one of coordinating different forms of human discourse as it is an issue of promoting general and broad-ranging conversations that are as inclusive of the human community as possible. A negative response to globalism is for various leaders to attempt to dictate to one another. Whether it be President Bush, President Ahmadinejad, or even leaders in the world's scholarly communities, speeches filled with pronouncements of one nation's or one culture's or one religion's superiority over others are counter-productive. People in their conversations with others, both within and outside of their primary communities, must listen and engage in discourses aimed at mutual understanding. It is important, for example, for Americans to understand that the pronouncements of American leaders to the rest of the world regularly sound threatening. It is likewise important for Iranians to understand that chant's of "Death to America" will be understood by Americans as expressing a desire to kill all of us. Global conversation requires all parties to the conversation to listen carefully to one another and to speak to one another in ways that will facilitate understanding.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

D. E. S: Thank you for inviting me to participate. It has been a pleasure.

Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski

Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski holds the position of George Lynn Cross Research Professor of Philosophy and Kingfisher College Chair of the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at the University of Oklahoma, where she has taught since 1999. She is past President of the Society of Christian Philosophers and past President of the American Catholic Philosophical Association. She is also an honorary lifetime member of Alpha Sigma Nu, the Jesuit Honor Society, and is a member of the National Research Council. Her books include *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge*; *Virtues of the Mind; Divine Motivation Theory; Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction; On Epistemology* as well as many edited collections and articles in epistemology, philosophy of religion, and virtue ethics.

9. Postmodernism and Some Questions on God in Twentieth Century Religion

Yubraj Aryal: *Is there a God? What are the proofs? Why is God important for us? Why should we pray?*

Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski: It is helpful to begin by asking what would make belief in God reasonable. Is proof necessary? What kind of proof? Does it have to be a proof the premises of which are accepted by everyone? The traditional arguments for God's existence are still popular and all of them have contemporary forms, but I prefer not to discuss them here since they are well-known. Some Calvinist philosophers have made a different approach popular. They argue that a person can be reasonable in believing something without having reasons at all, and belief in God is like that. There are many beliefs for which we do not have reasons, at least, we don't have arguments that support them, much less proofs that demonstrate their truth, but they are nonetheless reasonable. Examples are the belief that the people around me have feelings and thoughts, my belief that a human being is more valuable than a tree, or my belief that when I wake up in the morning I am the same person as I was the day before. The Calvinist philosophers argue that it can be reasonable to believe in God in the same way. We were designed by God to believe in other minds, the existence of a self, the dignity of human beings, and in the existence of God without argument or reasons that support those beliefs. These beliefs are reasonable because reasonable people, people who are using their faculties in the right way, accept them.

There are other approaches, of course, some of which focus attention on what we mean by "God." Imagine that there is a superior being who hears your prayers and attempts to answer them, but is not the creator and is not omnipotent,

and imagine there is another being who is the creator of the universe, but that being is not a person and pays no attention to you. Which one is God, if either of them is? Or suppose that there is not actually a distinct personal being who hears your prayers, but your prayers become part of the mind of a great World Soul that expresses the yearnings of the hearts of all the conscious beings in the world, but is not able to act in response to the prayers. Would that be God?

We could go on and on with these possibilities, but I am going to answer the question in a different way, unlike any of the routes I've mentioned. I need to begin with a truism: Human beings have many desires by nature. The idea that there are natural desires occurs repeatedly in the history of ideas. Aristotle argues at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that everyone has a natural desire for happiness and he begins the *Metaphysics* with the astonishing proclamation, "All men by nature desire to know." To take an example from the modern era, Charles Darwin argued in *The Descent of Man* that there are many desires built into our biological nature, including a natural moral sense. These days the idea that there are natural desires is presumed in many fields of work, including psychology, biology, sociology, economics, theology, and philosophy, although not all agree on what the natural desires are and some writers attempt to reduce them to a few basic ones such as the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain, or the desire for power.

So I think it is a safe bet to maintain that we all have natural desires. Some of the more interesting ones are a desire for truth, a desire for meaning, a desire for love, a desire to form bonds and communities with other persons, and a desire for connectedness to the world around us. I will return to the desire for connectedness, but I want to focus first on the desire for truth. I don't mean anything fancy by "truth." When I say we have a desire for truth, I just mean that we have a desire to figure out the way things are, the

way the world is. I imagine that virtually everyone has that desire and I imagine that almost everyone thinks that the desire can be satisfied. The belief that the desire for truth is satisfiable is probably a natural belief. So there is both a natural desire for truth and a natural belief that the desire for truth is satisfiable. There may be some philosophers who have convinced themselves that this natural belief is false and they have become radical skeptics, but most of us keep the belief. We think that the natural desire for truth can be satisfied.

Notice that we have no proof that this desire can be satisfied. That is because we have no defense for the belief that our most fundamental faculties and opinions taken as a whole are reliable. In order to test some of our faculties and opinions, we have to make use of some of our other faculties and opinions, or the same faculties on another occasion, so there are no non-circular guarantees that we reliably get the truth. For example, we test our memory by perception, we test one perception by another perception, we test much of what we believe by consulting other people, so we use beliefs about them to test other beliefs, and so on. We can give up some of our beliefs, and we may mistrust our faculties on a particular occasion, but there is no way to test the reliability of our opinions and faculties as a whole. We must trust our basic faculties and the procedures we use to get our beliefs, as well as most of the beliefs we already have that we use as the basis for acquiring new beliefs. So we trust that the natural desire for truth is satisfiable. We trust it because it is natural, not because we have proof that the desire is satisfiable. We cannot live a normal life without trusting that desire.

If we trust the desire for truth because it is natural, what about other natural desires? An interesting one I mentioned earlier is the desire to be connected with the universe. We want to think of the world in a way that gives us a role in it,

that permits us to participate in it, not merely to have a detached understanding of it. Until recently, most of the philosophies of the world were directed by this desire as well as by the desire for truth. They aimed to give us a view of the universe that is intelligible, but also satisfying in some deeper sense. It is difficult to specify what that deeper sense is, but we know the main thing that satisfies it–religion. That is why so many philosophies in world history have been either indistinguishable from religion or competitors to religion. Both philosophy and religion satisfy the same desire.

But philosophy in the West does not attempt to do that any longer, nor do philosophers leave it to religion to satisfy the desire for connectedness. Instead, they claim that the desire is not satisfiable in any way that is compatible with our trust in the desire for truth about the way the world is. Religion is out, and so is the kind of philosophy that was historically dominant until recently.

But if we dismiss the desire for connectedness to the universe, why shouldn't we also dismiss the desire for truth? If the desire that religion satisfies is untrustworthy, why think that the desire for truth about the world around us is trustworthy? Why should we trust the one but not the other? Conversely, if we trust the natural desire for truth and believe that it is satisfiable, as I've argued we must if we want to live a normal life, why not trust the natural desire for connectedness with the universe and believe that that desire is satisfiable also? In neither case do we have proof that the desire is satisfiable and in both cases the desire is natural.

I think that an investigation of the self-trust we need to live our lives reveals that we need to trust more than the fact that our epistemic faculties are reliable and our beliefs are not mostly false. We need trust that our emotions are reliable as well. We trust that what we admire upon reflection is admirable, what we fear upon reflection is fearsome, what we love is lovable, what we hope for is deserving of hope, and in any case, there *is* something worth loving and something worth hoping for, and something other than our own faculties in which we can justifiably place our trust. We also need trust in the traditions that shape us and help us interpret our experience. In my view, if we press self-trust far enough, we finally get to the point that we see that we need something outside ourselves to satisfy the deepest yearnings of our hearts. It is self-trust that pushes us outwards to God.

You asked why God is important to us. I think the answer is that God satisfies desires many desires we trust: the desire for truth, the desire for love, the desire for good, the desire for connectedness and purpose. Your question about prayer is a good one. I think that a belief in the existence of God explains many things we want explained: Why does the universe exist and why does it obey laws? Why does the universe include conscious and self-conscious beings? What is the origin of good and evil? But belief in the existence of God does not fully satisfy the desire for connectedness with the universe unless we are able to make personal contact with God. Prayer is learned through religious traditions and follows the patterns of the tradition, so there are many forms of prayer, but I think that what they all have in common is the drive to connect to a divine being. Depending upon the nature of God and the relationship between God and human beings, prayer could have a number of distinct purposes: to adore God, to express gratitude to God, to ask for God's forgiveness, and to ask for favors from God. Most of us spend much more time on the last than on any of the others.

Y. A.: *How would you associate/dissociate religion from God? Cannot we create a religion without God? Would it be more benevolent than religion with some authoritative entity?*

L. T. Z.: Theistic religion is not the only way to satisfy what I have called the natural desire for connectedness to the universe. Non-theistic religions and ancient philosophies such as Platonism and Stoicism also aimed to satisfy that desire, and probably did so satisfactorily for many people. Would non-theistic religion be more benevolent than a religion with an authoritative God? I don't see any reason to think so, especially if God is benevolent, as he is in the major monotheistic religions. Perhaps the worry is that God as an authoritative figure suggests a totalitarian dictator which models authoritarian human relationships. That can happen, of course, and that shows the importance of the right personal model, not the desirability of having no model at all.

How we structure personal relationships and relationships between a governing authority and the governed depends upon how we see the world as a whole. A model of a universe governed by a loving personal God should lead to benevolence, but whether it does so depends upon whether believers see benevolence in the Creator, or whether they primarily fear him.

Y. A.: *Where does the idea of God come from? What is the historical emergence of God?*

L. T. Z.: The idea of God can come from a philosophical argument, but primarily the idea of God comes from experience, both personal experience and the historical experience of groups of people over many millennia. I am a Roman Catholic and my view of God comes from that tradition. I think the most significant feature of the conception of God is not the supreme goodness or power or authority of God, nor the idea that God is creator of the universe, but the idea that God is personal. If there is a person at the center of Being, that tells us something

important about ourselves and the source of our dignity as individual persons.

Y. A.: *In life, I sometimes love to imagine myself as a believer in the famous Kantian dictum, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe–the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." But then I have a second thought that contradicts the first: Why is God so merciless as to do nothing when there is so much evil in the world? I then begin to see the humanistic content in the Neitzsche's assertion "Death of God". Have you ever been caught up in this sort of contradiction?*

L. T. Z.: There are many conflicts that arise within the things I trust. I trust my memory of something I said to another person, but it conflicts with his memory, and I trust that too. I trust my feeling of intellectual admiration for a person whose belief conflicts with mine, but I also trust my belief. I trust my visual sense, but it conflicts with what I expect to see. I trust my reasoning process, but it leads me to a conclusion that conflicts with other beliefs I trust. And, of course, there are many other examples. The conflict between the reasoning that leads me to think that a good and loving God would not permit so much evil, and my belief that a good and loving God exists is a poignant and heart-wrenching example of a conflict within the things I trust. What should I do? The same thing I do in all the other cases of conflict between the things I trust. I try to resolve the conflict as far as I can, but ultimately I am forced to ask myself which I trust more. That doesn't necessarily make the conflict go away, but it resolves some of the anxiety of having the conflict. Suppose there is a conflict between what I think I see and my memory. I look out my back window and I think I see my dog running along the creek, but I remember I did not let him out. I try to resolve the conflict by looking for him in the house. If I see him, I decide I must have been mistaken when I thought I saw him outside, but that's

because I trust my close-up view of him, lasting as long as I care to look, more than I trust a brief glimpse from a distance.

In other cases the resolution of the conflict is harder. When a student first hears Descartes' method of doubt and his Evil Genius scenario, she may find his reasoning irrefutable and find herself concluding that she does not know she is sitting in a chair even though she also trusts the belief that she knows she is sitting in a chair. Which does she trust more? She may think of some way out of the dilemma, but that just means that she finds something she trusts more to use as a way to resolve the conflict, just as I use my close-up view of my dog as a way to resolve the conflict between what I thought I saw and my memory.

Theists approach the problem of evil the same way the student approaches the problem of radical skepticism. They have a belief they trust, but they also see an argument against it that they may not be able to answer: How can there be a God who is both all-powerful and all-good when there is also so much evil in the world? I see nothing wrong with not answering the argument for the same reason I see nothing wrong with not answering the skeptic's argument, *provided* that the theist trusts her theism more than the argument against it. But as I said, knowing which you trust more does not necessarily make the conflict disappear. It just means that as long as you trust what you trust, you know which way you will go- where you will end up.

Can we believe in God when we see the crying woman whose child has been blown to bits? Well, as you say, can we believe in God when we see the starry heavens and feel the moral law within? Clearly there is much we do not understand, and we need the humility to admit it, but one of the things I trust is my observation that a conscientious person does not shirk from having beliefs about important matters. If the atheist decides that evil demonstrates the non-existence of God, then she needs something to put in the place of God. She might have a religion without God, as you suggested, or she might think no religion is rationally acceptable. But then she needs something to put in place of religion, something that satisfies the natural desire for connectedness, and there are not many options of ways to do that.

Y. A.: Postmodernism says there is no ultimate truth, and so there is no God. Would you find pitfalls in the postmodern outlook?

L. T. Z.: I do not understand the postmodern view. It seems to me to be a desperation move. What is the postmodern person rejecting when she rejects "ultimate truth"? In answer to your first question I said that when I use the word "truth" I don't mean anything fancy. When I say we have a desire for truth, I just mean that we have a desire to figure out the way the world is. And we want to figure out the way the *whole* world is, not just the little part we experience. When I say "the whole world," I mean everything that exists. What does it mean to exist? Does it mean to be the object of a possible experience? I don't think it can mean that because we already know that much exists that we don't experience, and it is a small step from that to concluding that there may be much that we *can't* experience. In fact, it seems pretty obviously true that there is much that *humans* can't experience. Is there anything that *nobody* can experience? I don't think we can rule that out. I mean, it is not a conceptual impossibility. If to grasp truth is to figure out the way the world is, then I suppose we would have ultimate truth if we figured out the way the whole world is, including the part we can't figure out, and we can't do that. If there is some part that nobody can figure out, then nobody can grasp ultimate truth. That doesn't mean there is nothing *there*, but it would mean that nobody can grasp it.

Suppose, however, that there is a God who is similar to the God of Judaism, Islam or Christianity. Then there is somebody who can experience everything that exists. Nothing exists that cannot be experienced by somebody, at least by God, so there is somebody who can grasp ultimate truth. So if there is no God with that capacity, there is no ultimate truth. But I don't see the argument that there is no ultimate truth and that is why there is no God. The argument would have to go in the other direction.

Postmodernism can be interpreted as a certain way of understanding our place in the world. Where did it come from? It can't be that we discovered its truth (the truth of the lack of truth?) It is another way of satisfying the natural desire for connectedness that is a competitor both to traditional religious and philosophical ways, and Enlightenment atheism. Time will tell whether it can satisfy that or any other human desire. I suspect not.

Y. A.: After the collapse of Communist experimentation in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries, fundamentalism in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism has opposed the cultural forces of modernity. American Christian fundamentalists agree with Martin Luther that "Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has." Does the call for a return to God attack western humanist traditions?

L. T. Z.: I think we should distinguish the fundamentalist attack on reason from the call for a return to God. In answer to your first question I said that we have to trust our basic faculties. We have no choice. The desire for truth arises from within ourselves, and the natural belief that that desire can be satisfied requires us to trust our natural human faculties, including reason. If we distrust reason, we distrust ourselves. I went on to say that if we trust the natural desire for truth, we should also trust the natural desire for connectedness to the universe. Religion satisfies that desire even when the religion is not theistic. We have just as much reason to trust our religious impulse as to trust our natural desire for truth and the faculties that help us to attain truth, including reason. So I do not see reason and religion as opposed. The call to return to God, or religion, is a call to be consistent in our trust of our natural desires, not a call to reject one of our natural desires for the sake of another.

In the early modern era, Western Humanism was associated with progressivism because of its strong endorsement of universal human rights. In my opinion, the new progressivism is traditionalism. Traditional Christianity is alive and well in the southern hemisphere. And the young people in the north want tradition. Look at the hundreds of thousands of young people who kept vigil in St. Peter's Square when Pope John Paul II was dying. The young are not postmodern. The genius of Western humanism was its ability to spread the idea of human rights to the ends of the earth. That idea was rooted in Western religious traditions even though it resonates with the natural moral insights of people all over the world. So the call to a return to God does not require an attack on Western humanist traditions. Some religions attack those traditions, some don't.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

L. T. Z.: Thank you!

Geoffrey Galt Harpham

Geoffrey Galt Harpham has been president and director of the National Humanities Center since January 2003. Before that, he held teaching appointments at the University of Pennsylvania, Brandeis University, and Tulane University, where he was the Pierce Butler Professor of English. He has been awarded fellowships from the J. S. Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities (twice), and the American Council of Learned Societies. He is the author of eight books, most recently *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society*; *Language Alone: The Critical Fetish of Modernity*; and *The Character of Criticism*. Articles of his have appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, *Representations*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *London Review of Books*, *Raritan*, *PMLA*, *Salmagundi*, and many other journals.

B. POETICS, ART AND AESTHETICS

10. Cultural Critics and Modernist-Avant-garde: A Debate

Yubraj Aryal: How would you prefer to read modernity in western traditions particularly its avant-gardism with a cry for "MAKE IT NEW", its radical experimentation–its aesthetic politics?

Geoffrey Galt Harpham: This call to "make it new" is one of the most exciting things about modernist avant-garde art from 1880-1940, and indeed about the larger movement of modernity in general. The emphasis on experimentation, and on producing the art of the future, drew me to the study of such art nearly forty years ago, and has sustained my interest ever since. As a student, I found most interesting the newness of modernist art, but now I find even more revealing the stress on the act of making. Making something, rather than representing or copying something, seems to me the essence of modernity. I think now that modern art is characterized by its attempt to fabricate or create, to produce something that did not exist before. The desire to create drives the modernist project, and accounts for many of its more exotic productions.

Y. A.: Modernist High Art should not be understood as one of many cultural discourses, but art has its own varied–and intense discourses , says Marjorie Perloff, a famous literary critic of High Theory. Where would you disagree with her statement?

G. G. H.: I think that Marjorie Perloff is referring to what has been called the "qualified autonomy" of the discourse of art. This concept comes from later Marxist (or post-Marxist) discourse, which attempted to explain why art did not

merely "reflect" reality obediently, but also had a "transformative" effect on reality. The discourse on art should register art's "qualified autonomy" by recognizing that art has its own rules and conventions, and occupies its own sphere. I think this is very productive because it enables us to see how art can act as an agent of change.

Y. A.: Art should not be dictated by praxis. It must present social contents in "a symbolic politics of transgression as opposed to a dialectical politics of resistance." because art is not a banal history rather a creative myth. Are you not happy with this notion of art?

G. G. H.: Many people have found the concept of resistance to be very suggestive as a way of analyzing the relation of art to praxis. With this concept, you can see how art enters into a dialectical relation with the reality that it seems to question. What I would like to point out, however, is that while this notion of art may describe what some art actually does, it does not describe what art ought to do. Your question begins with an ethical statement: "Art should not be dictated by praxis." If we want to get at what art ought to do, we would, I think, be better off with a concept of art as "transgression." I am not suggesting that all art must be somehow sinful or wicked, or that it must deliberately shock and offend. I am simply saying that resistance does not necessarily accomplish anything, while transgression at least has a chance of exerting some force.

Y. A.: What is wrong with the modernist aesthetics like Kafkaesque? Would you find it regressive, retrograde and bourgeoisie eliticism? Is it not more revolutionary and more progressive because it vehemently resists capitalism in its radical yet depolicized aesthetics?

G. G. H.: Personally, I love Kafka, and consider him one of the most radical and transformative of all artists. He is not elitist in the slightest. His stories are all about ordinary people who find themselves suddenly living some metaphor of their actual lives. *The Trial* is a profound meditation on justice-in-the-world, "The Metamorphosis" is an astonishing revelation of the deep character of bourgeois life, "The Hunger Artist" is a kind of parable of art itself in terms that any circus-goer could understand. Kafka is, as you point out, both radical and de-politicized. I do not, however, think that he can be considered progressive, much less revolutionary, except in an artistic sense. His art is so pure that it has not been copied by anyone.

Y. A.: How would you view the modernist miniatures? Would you please explain with its history? Would you like to resist its present literary project to cross the disciplinary boarders between the language and the visual, between the narrative and the space?

G. G. H.: I'm not certain I understand the question. But I can say that one of the most interesting and productive projects in humanistic scholarship over the last generation (twenty years) has been the effort to work out the relations between language and the visual. This is a very ancient question—it is raised in classical Greek literature—but it remains alive today.

Y. A.: What can we conclude observing the geographies of the classical European modernist art in terms of colonialism and conquest? How did they create "the otherwise modern" spaces like Asia, Africa and Latin America?

G. G. H.: The most profound text in this regard is clearly Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, written in 1901. Here is a text written from within the most disgraceful episode of colonial violence that any European country had ever engaged in—and yet it is a thoroughly "modernist" work of art as well. I never cease to be amazed at how this work can

register old-fashioned moral outrage, and yet be so technically challenging, so innovative. I think that the "Africa" that is created in this work is both a real, identifiable country and also a vision of hell, a surreal landscape where there are no landmarks or signposts, where the European (Marlow) feels cut off from the world itself, drifting through the void.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

G. G. H.: It has been my pleasure.

Jerome McGann

Jerome McGann is the John Stewart Bryan University Professor, U. of Virginia. His interests range across the literature and culture of the Euro-American world of the past 250 years. Besides his scholarly works, he writes criticism that covets a serious ludic inflection. "The Alice Fallacy" and "A Dialogue on Dialogue" are exemplary in this regard, as is his parody of critical method." "Looney Tunes and Unheard Melodies: An Oulipian Colonescapade with a Critique of 'The Great-Ape Love-Song Corpus' and its Lexicon".

11. Theory of Textuality

Yubraj Aryal: What is the nature of literature and its functions characterized by poststructuralist revolution in the western tradition?

Jerome McGann: The nature of literature in this context is to expose the absurdity of the scholars and critics. Any literature that does not do this is simply academic self-advertising. The function of literature is therefore to declare that philosophy of literature is either decadent or comical or both.

This approach is necessary, in the context of the so-called "poststructuralist revolution", because that "revolution" is an academic fantasy. Of course there have been, and are, writings since 1970 that undermine this fantasy, as well as the academic industries that support it.

Y. A.: Would you not think this is an anarchist idea? Would you deny the humanist contents of literature?

J. M.: On the contrary, I think it a decidedly humanist idea. After all, it's this so-called "poststructuralst revolution" that has been promoting ideas like "the posthuman". And "anarchist" is just a bogeyword anyway. The danger to human being, to individuals and to the common good, has always come from "systems" of one kind or another. As Laura Riding once wrote, "Anarchism is not Enough"–but then, the "anarchism" she was talking about was an important ground feature of humane being.

And as to that, we could all do worse, these days, than to read again that remarkable book of hers–in my view, the most trenchant theoretical work of High Modernist thinking written in English.

Y. A.: What is the status of the subject in the cognitive understanding of literature?

J. M.: In that understanding, the status of the subject is difficult. In normal conditions, however, the subject is OK.

Y. A.: *What makes a work different from a text? How do you differ from Paul de Man regarding the status of a text? I mean what odds do you get with de Man?*

J. M.: Somebody or other, anybody, makes a work differ from a text, or doesn't. De Man makes a work different from a text, and so do I. But we make different differences. "Here comes everybody". Defining the differences–beyond those already made by different people–is somebody (anybody) else's business.

Given that kind of elementary understanding about human and critical differences, if you want to know what I think about current academic discussions of "text" and "work", I've written at length–in my view, at greater length than one ought to have to write–about those two keywords as they impinge on current scholarly thinking.

Y. A.: *You emphasize historical materiality over the de Manian stress on linguistic materiality. Are you not trying, in the words of Tary Eagleton, to bring aesthetic under "cognitive, ethical and political realms"? Are you not politicizing aesthetic?*

J. M.: Sometimes. So what? Does anyone think that "the aesthetic" is "not among the ideologies"? Marx, alas, imagined it wasn't. But as Our Lady of the Flowers told the judge at her trial: "We're already beyond that".

Y. A.: *I know you are an authority in your area. Let me ask what is your own method of reading a text?*

J. M.: Authority? Never trust it, and least of all–as Socrates warned–when it's your own. Method? On this topic I think Byron has the last word: "When a man talks of system, his cause is hopeless". So let's leave a little room for hope.

Y. A.: *How does the act of reading which places the text as a part of infinite labyrinths of intertexuality mark a shift from the work to text?*

J. M.: It doesn't. To think so is one of the silliest critical illusions of our ivory-tower time.

Y. A.: *As de Man points out there are two modes of reading– aesthetically aware and rhetorically aware–which one do you find compelling? Why?*

J. M.: There are as many modes of reading as there are events of reading. I think De Man must have said that to trick readers who study aesthetics and rhetoric. Why? Because his life's work was to confound the illusions of the critics.

Y. A.: *What constitute ambivalence, indeterminancy and fluctuation of meaning in a text? Would you explain the incompatibility of interpretive nuances of grammatical and rhetorical structures, and incompatibility of language and nature to make us see how the very incompatibilities occur in a text?*

J. M.: As Kathy Acker observes throughout *Empire of the Senseless*, it's not a question of "What", it's a question of "Who". Once one makes that linguistic transformation, all the problems of indeterminacy begin to fade away.

Y. A.: *How does rhetorical reading of a text differ from the grammatical one? Would you describe how each respective reading can be offered to the text? What are the limitations of each?*

J. M.: You ask three questions so here are three replies (in this kind of discussion, questions have replies, never answers) 1. Since the differences are not a priori but eventual, there is no answer to such a question–though as you see, one can reply to it. 2. If I did, the description would

be misleading. So I will only say that different readings should be offered to a text with great respect. Too often critics and readers are like the Angels in Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, reading texts "as if they were the only wise. [And] They do this with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning". So Blake reminds us that when we read Dante or Shakespeare, "any man of mechanical talents" can produce an indefinite number of interpretations: "But when he has done this, let him not say that he knows better than his master, for he only holds a candle in sunshine." 3. They have no limitations.

Y. A.: What is the text after all–"everything is text"? What are its textures and how can one–either a reader or author–insert himself/herself in the textures of history and time?

J. M.: 1. As Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou hast said it". 2. And as he (also) said to the Centurion, I say to the critic: "Sell all that you have, give to the poor, and come follow me."

Y. A.: Who is the author to the text and what relationship does he share with the text, reader, meaning and the social world around?

J. M.: Everyone and everything.

Y. A.: How does the nature of language help the text resist the closure?

J. M.: Easily. But sometimes people want to make things difficult for themselves and others. The difficulties can make for lots of fun.

Y. A.: What role can you attribute to the discourse and cultural practice and the role of language to form texture of our reality/truth and our identity as well?

J. M.: The problem with the question lies in the phrase "discourse and cultural practice". This is the jargon of the schools and its use promotes many illusions and fantasies in my academic world, as I've already suggested. But if we blow away the misty talk that has been choking us for years, I would say this: humanist scholars and educators have a single function–to preserve and pass on to the present and the future as much of our cultural inheritance as we can, and in as undamaged a form as we can. To do that well carries a corollary demand: that we preserve, protect, and defend the languages of our various world. This is the mission, the vocation, of the humane scholar and educator. "It's not rocket science", as one might say.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

J. M.: Thank you!
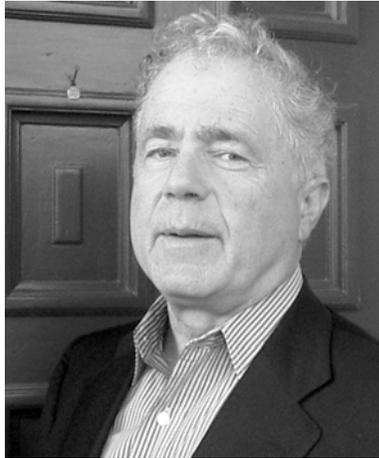
Charles Altieri

Charles Altieri is Rachel Andersen Stageberg Professor of English at UC Berkeley. He has taught at SUNY Buffalo and the University of Washington. He has written several books, the latest of which are *The Particulars of Rapture*, and *The Art of Modernist American Poetry* as well as many many essays.

12. Idealism and Twentieth Century Literary Theory

Yubraj Aryal: What is the state of liberal humanist ideals in twentieth century western humanistic expressions? How it has shaped the study of literary theory today?

Charles Altieri: This is too large a question to answer. Liberalism still dominates, although it comes under attack as incapable of dealing with disenchantment over the limitations of secular thinking. Humanism seems to be entirely dead, for decent reasons.

Y. A.: Is your idealism different from Kant and Hegel? On what grounds?

C. A.: I am not an idealist. But I am committed to working out aspects of mental life that materialist and empiricist thought tend to oversimplify. And I guess I believe in the ideal status of certain texts in the sense that it makes sense to see them as making demands on us rather than submitting to our preferred uses.

Y. A.: You say in your book Act and Quality "My version of action theory in other words, seeks to put Hegel back on his feet by eliminating the major elements which attracted Marx" Would you please let our readers to be acquaint with your version of action theory? Would you explain how it "seeks to put Hegel back on his feet by eliminating the major elements which attracted Marx"? What kind of future you want to save for idealism?

C. A.: I think ontological idealism was necessary to resist empiricism but is now indefensible. But I want to save a cultural idealism that gives texts authority to make demands and that recognizes the importance of texts and images as each affording certain labors with ideas that are

worth preserving even though they turn out to be incompatible with each other on the level of actions suggested. I think criticism of cultural products should be devoted to an idealized pluralism preserving for imagination as many distinctive achievements as possible irrespective of practical contrasts.

Y. A.: How would you absorb the idealism of Kant and Hegel to set the "criteria of seriousness and representativeness" towards others in your ethical goal to slam Wittgenstein and Derrida?

C. A.: Good question, but I love Wittgenstein. And slamming Derrida is no longer necessary–he becomes one of the perspectives that afford important possible ways of reading. I would emphasize how Hegel honors particular visions from contrary texts. And I would stress how Kant's distinction between approving and liking exemplifies a capacity for treating the self as if it were capable of identifying with works rather than having to appropriate them for narrow senses of the empirical person.

Y. A.: United States is destroying humanistic achievements in Iraq. As a literary theorist what would you assign the social mission for literature?

C. A.: I agree with your first sentence. I think one social mission of literary education is teaching respect for imaginative differences and the capacity to flesh out those differences in order to see how they might each create powerful and dense visions of values in specific ways of responding to the world.

Y. A.: Where do you find yourself in the constructivist-essentialist debate about human identity?

C. A.: I think such debates necessarily produce overgeneralized claims. Wittgenstein is the antidote to such

tendencies because he continually asks us to examine our tendencies to make large claims so that we can take the most concrete and perspicuous tack on questions.

Y. A.: Why manner matters in art?

C. A.: Manner matters in art because first art works stress how the world can be seen and how agents can act--they do not describe but enact manners of approaching the world. And by stressing manner one has a clear case for the importance of pluralism–we need to know and to respect how ways of acting can be envisioned and justified. Here aesthetic and practical reasons combine. I am writing a book on appreciation in order to elaborate this conjunction.

Y. A.: How do we apply your complex theory about emotions to practical criticism?

C. A.: Good question again. Put simply–everywhere traditional practical criticism talks about meaning. I would like to focus on how meanings are constructed to afford affective intensities. I would not change much except for an attention to the dynamics of meaning–to the actions meanings perform and the affects they express or reveal.

Y. A.: What is the intrinsic politics behind your emphasis on theory of affects? Can idealistic ethical mission for society be found in affective experiences of art? Your critics say no! How would you claim yes?

C. A.: I just think the more sensitive we are to people's capacities to feel and art's capacities to model feelings, the less likely we are to indulge in crude violence towards others and the more likely we are to appreciate either people's expressive actions or how the capacities for expression can be blocked and frustrated.

Y. A.: When you emphasize the performative quality of words, you are closer to Searle's performative ideal. How would you

see Derrida's inversion of Searle's performative ideal? Are there any incoherencies in Derrida's argument against Searle? Are you trying to resurface essentialism in human sciences which Derrida suspened? Is it good?

C. A.: Derrida simply does not understand Austin's self-imposed limitations but wants him to acknowledge the Nietzschean possibilities in the idea of performative acts. In my recent work I have been preferring the idea of demonstrative to the idea of performative because demonstratives are the constructions of examples that include expression on the one hand and pure practical modeling like showing how to ride a bike on the other. I think art combines those two functions. As I explain in an essay in *Critical Inquiry* the demonstrative focuses on what an author does to make manifest a plausible path of feeling and mode of working a medium in relationship to a problem the work poses.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

C. A.: Thank you!

Charles Bernstein

Charles Bernstein is Donald T. Regan Professor of English at University of Pennsylvania and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has published many books including the most recent one *Girly Man.*

13. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry Movement and Modernist Avant-Agarde

Yubraj Aryal: Since you are one of the founder members of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E and the movement related to it, let me ask you how does the movement mark a new shift in American poetry? And how does the movement go against the mainstream tradition in the American poetry? I would be happy if you begin from a brief introduction of language poetry movement for our readers.

Charles Bernstein: Language Poetry is a term that has come to stand for a rather raucous period in American poetry, from the mid-70s onward, in which a group of writers, mostly in New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., engaged in a large-scale collective effort to champion poetic invention both in our own work and the work of other English language poets of the 20th century. Because most of the established magazines, presses, and poetry organizations favored a different approach to poetry, we relied on our own resources, as far as publishing and presenting our work in performance. This was collective action without dogma, perhaps brought together as much by we didn't like as what we shared stylistically. And while from time to time someone would try to impose order or a neat history on our unruly and diffident practice, many of us took those interventions as an opportunity to define ourselves against just such labeling and schooling. There is no one history here and no one poetics.

In 1978, Bruce Andrews and I started *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E,* a forum for poetics and discussion, something we felt was crucial and also lacking, both in the mainstream and in the alternative poetry scenes, in which there was an antipathy to critical thinking bordering on anti-intellectualism. The poets of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, and there were dozens of us, were

interested in both an historical and an ideological approach to poetics and aesthetics and also a stand of dissent, both to prevailing poetry norms but also to U.S. government policies. We questioned all the "given" features of poetry, from voice and expression to clarity and exposition; and in the process, came up with many different, indeed contradictory, approaches to poetry and poetics. Our desire to link our poetry and poetics with the contemporary critical, philosophical, speculative, and political thinking–with a visceral connection to the civil rights movement, feminism, and the antiwar movement–has become a significant mark of our work, and one that has perhaps given rise to our various collective names, which have been both praised and condemned.

Y. A.: You have been neglected and unrecognized long by the mainstream tradition. But your language poetry movement has earned sporadic popularity. What discontent do you share with the traditionalists?

C. B.: I shared with my most immediate poetry comrades - Bruce Andrews, Ron Silliman, Lyn Hejinian, Leslie Scalapino, Susan Howe, Nick Piombino among others - a dissatisfaction with the Official Verse Culture of the 1970s and early 1980s, with its blandness and conformity, and with its high-handed rejection of the historical and contemporary particulars in poetry that most motivated us to write, collectively explored alternatives, going back to radical modernist innovations while at the same time championing the work we found most interesting in the immediately prior generation. We actively exchanged ideas about ideology, arts, politics, aesthetics, and philosophy, expressing our engagements through intensive small press publishing of books and magazines. Deep friendships developed in the course of these exchanges, and lots of disagreements, collective engagements, and concerted actions.

I am not sure what to say about what it "shared" with the traditionalist except perhaps to say that I am as much engaged with some threads of the poetry tradition as anyone else. Too often those who claim to speak for "traditional values" forget that radical innovation in form and content is a fundamental part of the literary tradition of the West, from Blake to Baudelaire, Swinburne to Mallarmé, Poe to Dickinson and Melville.

Y. A.: I really appreciate generative novelty of your poetry–in a way Marjorie Perloff does–but find no strong reason to counter marxist and cultural critics who attribute the kind of your avant-garde as regressive and retrogarde. How do you defend their objections?

C. B.: I am in the enviable position being attacked for being too Leftist by some and not Leftist enough by others. Poetry is not a form of political action and by itself won't change the world. But leftist politics that doesn't engage with the way language works to shape our perceptions of the world and our responses to it will be hoisted on its own positivist petards. Language is shot through with ideology; poetry can provide a means for that ideology come out of the closet.

The problem for politics, as much as for poetry, is how you define the real, how you describe the state of things. We see reality through metaphors and respond to those metaphors. No writing is innocent. Poetry marks the end of innocence for writing and the beginning of the imaginary.

Y. A.: But in the case of the spatial world like Nepal which has been still striving to free herself from the grip of feudalism, how your poetry can promise the dream of new social (maybe artistic) humanism?

C. B.: I often wonder what I have in common with some of my closest poetry friends. Over time, I see how much difference there was in the 1970s between the poetry

climates of New York and San Francisco. I have this no doubt perverse interest in accentuating differences as a way to find what might be common. Common ground scares me because it is so often imposed, either by the most control-driven people from within or the most paranoid, or maybe both. Or maybe better to say that we have in common is a willingness toward conversation with a resistance to conversion. For that reason I certainly can't say what value this work might have for you, except as a model for a poetry that is not universal, not the truth, not righteous. But open for exchange and for use.

Y. A.: *Then, how does language poetry absorb the basic tenets of poststructuralist theoretical orientation?*

C. B.: Please bear with my having to go back to this again: *Language Poetry does not exist.* L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E magazine published its first issue nearly 30 years ago; it was an interesting project but not one that defines the poetry of the time or that which comes after, including my own work. Our magazine, and some of the other magazines and presses of the time, represent a particular constellation of concerns in a shifting landscape. But one thing I stood against then, as now, was any set of "basic tenets" defining a poetry or poetics.

As for post-structuralism–that's a common view based on the fact that many people are more familiar with these cultural developments than they are with what was going on in poetry. In truth, you can say that our work was contemporary with those other developments but not derived from them. Although, in the long view, mutual interactions and cross-connections will be more apparent. The poets of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E often offered a very sharp critique of structuralism, post-structuralism and postmodernism; certainly, that was a significant part of my critical writing of the period. But all of shared much, if contrasted with

technorationality, religious fundamentalism, and market suprematism.

Y. A.: *Doesn't it become too much theory-laden? Mayn't one blame you a theoretician? Here I want to underscore that I am , however, the advocate of the theory and perfectly hold your claim that "theory is what theory does."*

C. B.: The danger is not being theoretical enough, of slipping into the assumptions of the mediocracy: the tried and true all over again. I often make the point that I prefer the terms philosophy, aesthetics, and poetics to theory. In that sense, I am not so much a theorist as a practitioner who reflects on his practice. Much of my poetics is pragmatic; none of it is systematic. This distinction between poetics and theory, though, would fall on deaf ears to those who are against "thinking" or against critical reflection, favoring instead what they claim to be unmediated personal expression. I won't get into a chicken-or-egg debate here about which comes first; poetics and poetry are mutually informing. But those who wish to deny the conceptual basis of their writing in favor of unmediated expression risk falling into a dogmatic rigidity about writing. I am especially interested in extreme forms of poetry, odd and eccentric forms, constructed procedures and procedural constructions. I never assume that the words I use represent a given world; I make the work anew with each word. Poetry is as much a product of delusion as illumination, illusion as reality.

Y. A. *There is often misunderstood relation of theory with Avant-garde of which you are one of the advocates? The misunderstanding is: Is Avant-garde work a theoretical (and critical) piece or a literary piece formed by creative imagination? When literature or art heavily becomes theoretical and complex, readers miss the chance of enjoying aesthetic pleasure, claim your critics. What would you say about it all? Should we need theory to express our creative*

impulse? Should we need theory to appreciate a work of art? My old illiterate grandmother does not know theory but wonderfully appreciates a willow she often hums. Is she a mediocre? Yes, of course, we now live in the postliterary age (except people like my grandmother).

C. B.: Theory is never more than an extension of practice. That's my motto; I'd have it monogrammed to my napkins, but I use paper. I have always resisted the word theory: I don't have theories, I have aesthetics and ethics. And I'm not interested in explaining anything, just continuing the conversation. I have an old-time sense that it's ideology we need to talk about not theory. Blake says "A Tear in an Intellectual thing." In other words, I find a good deal of conventional poetry, with it's commitment to theatricalizing emotion, is far too theoretical for me. I want "actual word stuff" (in Zukofsky's phrase) not representations of feelings; I want aesthesis not ideas; sensation not refried (reified) emotion.
I can't speak about your grandmother (mine was born in Russian and came to Brooklyn by herself when she was 9), but mediocrity surrounds us in the palaces of culture and the thrones of mass media; literacy is no protection. Smugness and condescension are the problem and you don't need no theories to smell that.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

C. B.: You're most welcome.

Johanna Drucker

Johanna Drucker is currently the Robertson Professor of Media Studies at the University of Virginia and Professor in the Department of English. In 2000, she helped establish the Speculative Computing Laboratory, a research group dedicated to exploring experimental projects in Humanities Computing. Her recent work focuses on aesthetics and digital media, particularly graphical communication and the expressive character of visual form. She is well known for her publications on the history of written forms, typography, design, and visual poetics. Her critical study, *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity* was published by the University of Chicago Press in Spring 2005. She has held faculty positions at the University of Texas (1986-88), Harvard University (1988-89), Columbia Uniersity (1989-1994), Yale University (1994-99), SUNY Purchase (1998-99), and the University of Virginia (1999 to the present).

Her scholarly books include: *Theorizing Modernism*, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art,* The *Alphabetic Labyrinth,* and *The Century of Artists' Books.*

14. Digital Aesthetics

Yubraj Aryal: What is digital aesthetics? How visual and literary are articulated in it?

Johanna Drucker: The specificity of digital media and artifacts provides some challenges for aesthetic theory. These challenges are first formal (what is the specificity of a digital object and/or experience), and social (how do the distinctions of production identities operative in traditional and modern art that have separated fine art and culture industries pertain to new media), and cultural (how is the cultural authority of computational methods served by aesthetic objects). A full critical reflection on all of these is out of the scope of this interview, but I'll sketch in broad outlines the fundamental issues that digital aesthetics raises. At stake is nothing less than an approach to knowledge–and an opportunity to rethink the values and status of aesthetic activity.

The features that make digital media distinct, formally, are its iterative, generative, and networked capabilities. Of course, digital media need not participate in all of these features, but these characteristics distinguish digital artifacts from traditional ones. Digital media are highly material, but the fungible quality of information stored as data creates the illusion of immateriality. This is a profound illusion–it erases the means and modes of production in a mythology of disembodied information. But digital information is always embodied, always inscribed in a trace of electrical or material charge. Understanding the concept of fungibility is key to grasping the formal characteristics of digital media. Data files have no necessary relation between the form of input and the form of output (thus the fungibility). So the difference between digital and traditional media is really the degree of stability each has with regard to

inscription of information. In a printed book, for instance, the inscription of information is relatively stable, but not by any means permanent. So the opposition material/immaterial as a way to characterize the difference between traditional and digital media is inaccurate. The difference is in degrees of stability with regard to material inscription.

In the modern period, the categories "the literary" or "visual art" in modernity are linked to the difference between mass production and the culture industries and those of high art. To a great extent, such distinctions depend on institutional settings and frames rather than on the inherent character of objects. Marcel Duchamp's readymades and Warhol's oeuvre make this very clear indeed. The digital environment, for all that it can carry brands that identify cultural institutions sanctioned to credential various works, is also a level environment. All material appears on the screen. The screen life of culture registers power in the sophistication of design and functionality, but lacks the conspicuous bricks and mortar visible display of cultural authority. Digital addresses do not have the same character as 5th Avenue or Park Avenue ones. But an .edu or .gov clearly brands something as authoritative in a different way from .com. But the inherent properties of screen display are the same in each case. The quality of a digital image can be just as high in an independent site as in a corporate or institutional one. The distinction between high art and cultural product is in the value or character of its ideas, not its material identity. The literary or visual status of a digital work depends upon its framework of encounter (ubu vs. Microsoft) in the digital environment just as surely as in the printed world. How does one know one is in the presence of poetry? Why does it matter? Who has something at stake in maintaining these distinctions?

In the cultural sphere, aesthetics helps familiarize and legitimize digital practices. The cultural authority of information received a boost from the aestheticization through which it became familiar. So digital works were one of the instruments of publicity that made information and software concepts that could circulate outside technical communities. This process began in the 1950s and by the late 1960s. The pioneering curatorial work of Jasia Reichardt was a milestone in the process of aesthetic familiarization that has continued to expand into our current digital media art industry. Digital art distinguishes itself from digital products (games, information design, other sites) only by the characteristic points of difference that mark aesthetic objects as distinct from other things or expressions. Here we return to the aesthetic as a category of knowledge based in sensory experience. Aesthetic work offers an alternative to instrumentalization and efficient functionality by resisting the smooth functioning, efficient operation, and totalized claims of *mathesis*. Aesthetic work has only one goal–to open the doors of perception in keeping with the long-held tenets of romanticism. Such an awareness need not perpetrate all the other tenets of the romantic tradition, though in our time the conviction that the world is broken and that the task of the artist is to put it right remains a charge to progressive art. Questioning the rightness and efficacy of such a conviction is essential if the aesthetic possibilities of works of art are to be themselves freed from the task of didacticism. Digital art exists within the very mainstream and apparatus that extends managed culture to an extreme of administered instrumentality. This necessarily increases the need and value of an alternative mode–aesthesis as a mode of knowledge conceived as subjective, partial, and situated rather than in alignment with the values and methods of administered culture.

Aesthetics is the field of philosophy concerned with sensory experience. Expanding this definition, aesthetics is understood as a form of knowledge that is grounded in

situated perception, embodied cognition, and the social and historical specificity of subjectivity. In other words, aesthetic knowledge is partial and always understood from an inner standing point. This sounds like common sense, but as an extended argument, aesthetic knowledge, or aesthesis, becomes a challenge to modes of knowledge production that are based on claims to objectivity, especially positivism. Knowledge based in positivist approaches carries tremendous cultural authority, even after the scathing 20th-century critiques (think of Nietzsche!), and the rise of postmodern and development of deconstruction. Positivist and logical systems are readily instrumentalized and thus naturalized in the bureaucratic systems of managed culture. Aesthetics, by contrast, when taken most seriously, is anti-systematic at its very core–or should be! In fact, systematizing aesthetics is a perversion of the fundamental approach to knowledge as based in subjectivity–by definition non-generalizable, located, specific, and partial.

I take literary and visual art expressions as instances of code (whether in material or digital form) that provoke a particular experience. The structure of aesthetic artifacts is based on the principle of non-reducible, non-self-identicality. This is not the same as complexity–an apparently simple form, like a Brancusi sculpture, embodies these qualities, even though it is not "complicated". Irreducibility has to do with the relations of idea to expression, not the number of parts in play. A richly aesthetic object is open ended in that relationship, at the conceptual and manifest levels, so we cannot readily categorize our experience of them or close it down into a finished "meaning". But the objects are provocative, they create an experience. The fact that texts, pictorial forms, visual and graphic or sculptural expressions follow codes and conventions has become all the more clear as a result of discussions about codework in the digital arena. But it would be naïve to imagine that "code" is an

exclusive property of digital work. Any poem, prose work, text is encoded. It is generated according to protocols that are algorithmic, even if these properties are not self-evident in the work. So, traditional and digital works are generative, but the rate of transformation is much faster in an electronic environment where the migration of information happens virtually instantly. Likewise, traditionally produced works are iterative, but their iterations take place in a much slower cycle of production and manifestation than in digital media. Finally, all objects are networked in their social systems of material production and meaning production. The links between a physical artifact and its production and reception may not be as immediately apparent as the links on a screen, but all human expressions are part of a lifecycle of systemic connections. Attention to these features in a digital environment of complex systems has made these properties conspicuously apparent in traditional media.

Y. A.: *Is there digital aesthetics since its 'thingness' cannot be 'fixated' in a "formal parameter"? If so what is its object?*

J. D.: Digital "things" are highly formalized, obviously, since they exist as data. As I stated above, the binary distinction of material/immaterial that is so often mindlessly applied to the difference of traditional and digital artifacts is simply wrong. The conceptual artists of the 1960s struggled to dematerialize art. In the process they made us aware of a very fundamental principle of art making–the distinction between the idea or algorithmic procedure that instigates a work and the manifestation or execution in a specific iteration. What was clear from that point onward was that the disconnect between provocation and instantiation contributes to the non-self-identicality of all of these elements and to the work of art as a whole. But without a material expression of some kind–an instruction, an utterance, a performance–even the most conceptual of conceptual works did not exist. Data structures are

extremely formal, and every iteration of a digital work is inscribed in the memory trace of the computational system in a highly explicit expression. Aesthetics is a property of experience and knowledge provoked by works structured or situated to maximize that provocation.

Y. A.: What is speculative aesthetics then? How does it differ from generative aesthetics? What role does human imagination play in speculative aesthetics? What are the humanistic contents of it?

J. D.: We adopted the term "speculative" to describe digital humanities projects with risky outcomes when we created SpecLab at the University of Virginia. We were working in an outstanding digital humanities community, where many practices that are now standard were being prototyped and developed. My colleague and partner in these undertakings, Jerome McGann, had been one of the early adopters of digital technology. His Rossetti Archive was conceived as a demonstration of the potential of digital tools for scholarly editing. Along Bethany Nowviskie, then a grad student, we created a number of experimental tools and environments for interpretative work–Temporal Modeling and Ivanhoe. Each of us pursued other projects independently. In my case, these are Subjective Meteorology and Artists Books Online. In a more restricted environment, the term "speculative" applies to computations in which outcomes are anticipated and calculated in advance, at critical junctions in the processing. These are calculated gambles on the final outcome, but are not fixed or determined, and may be overturned. So for us, the concept made sense. We pushed the edge of digital humanities by making use of aesthetic provocations that made data, particularly the visual play space of Temporal Modeling, so that we could prove that interpretative, subjective interpretation could be a primary mode of developing data, not a secondary mode of display. This is a crucial move within digital humanities, though scientists working with modeling had long been accustomed to generating new forms and/or testing theses in a visual input mode (playing with the arrangement of elements in a molecule, for instance, until the arrangement feels satisfactory according to aesthetic criteria and then trying to see what the properties of the newly configured compound might be).

Temporal Modeling and Subjective Meteorology shared a conviction that non-standard metrics, discontinuous space, and other features that are common in humanities work should be able to be created and also displayed digitally. For instance, would it be possible to create a visualization of anticipation or regret? How long a shadow is cast by a "foreshadowing" incident in a narrative? How do experiences get rewritten in the course of narrative's unfolding? Those were questions we were trying address in the design of Temporal Modeling. In Subjective Meteorology, I was using the language and metaphors of conventional meteorology to create a system for representing psychic states–even building predictive models. What if a burst of aggressive energy hits a cloud of melancholy right along a ridge of anxiety and high pressure? You can see that this is a very different kind of humanities project than corpus linguistics! Many eyebrows got raised in response to these projects, but we create proof of concept demonstrations or working models for these so I think we have succeeded in creating a new genre of digital humanities work. I've written these experiments and their theoretical frameworks and sources up in an extensive account that I hope will be published within the next year. Our theoretical discussions were rich and wide-ranging around these very basic principles of subjectivity, partial and situated knowledge and performative, provocative character of aesthetic expressions.

Y. A.: How do we experience what we experience in the digital media?

J. D.: The mediated character of experience becomes extreme in digital work. We are certainly embodied creatures, and situated within very real circumstances of culture and history. But our ability to identify with the Symbolic (in all the resonant ways that term has meaning within critical and theoretical discourses) becomes heighted in digital work. We can have an almost fully symbolic experience, a virtual experience, in digital worlds and become completely and totally addicted to the pleasures of symbolic manipulation. Nothing is so absorbing, if one is hooked into it, as the kind of Second Life mode. In the early days of MOOs and MUDs (Multi-player Online Object Oriented games played in language and code), students would go without food, sleep, and of course give up their classes, if they got fully addicted. This isn't a joke–and I even know people now who are working on twelve-step programs to deal with virtual life addictions! So though the physical condition of looking at a screen is still our major mode of interaction with the virtual world, it is the expansion of both the virtual symbolic and the integration of tacitle-motor-processing that is to be anticipated. I'm always trying to get the students to see what they are really doing–they think they are having conversations, communicating etc.–and I keep insisting they see themselves through the eyes of alien anthropologists who would see that the ONLY relationship they are having is with their machines! Of course I am being extreme, but the point needs to be made.

Y. A.: What are the criteria of aesthetic judgment in new aesthetics of digital culture? How does it defy the Kantian criteria of aesthetic judgment and the issues of mimesis debated in Platonic court?

J. D.: Illusions of illusions, in a hierarchy that can be transcended towards Idea, as Plato thought, are only further amplified in the digital world, of course, but once one understands the structure of Plato's cave as the fundamentally mediated condition of experience through symbolic expression, then the veils of maya have no limit in any case. We live illusion, some of which is consensual, some of which is individual, and yet manage within that, most miraculously, some degree of governance and self-governance through instruments of rationalization and control, contracts and agreements, and internalization of these rules of decorum through socialization. Far from aesthetics? Maybe. But the real cause of banishment by Plato of poets from the Republic was not because they were illusion peddlers, but because they controlled their own means of meaning-production within the social order–they could not be counted on to remain normative within the social symbolic system.

The one difference between traditional and digital media and aesthetic judgments comes from the tale of Xeuxis and Parrhasios–when the painters are challenging each other to see who can create the greater illusion. Of course the painter who gets the judges to believe that the curtain drawn over the canvas is real wins. But the point of this story in regard to digital environments is that the haptic was used to test the visual. This will be less and less possible as all senses become integrated into virtual environments and illusion becomes complete. But we do not access the "real" in our physical lives–we process certain selective stimuli through our sensory apparatus and our central nervous system into a composite in the brain. Keeping vigilant about the realities of labor, exploitation, profit, ecological damage–all of these things seem to be far more important in watching the illusion machines come to greater potency than worrying about any moral value with regard to truth and deception. A

moral hierarchy based on Platonic notions of the ideal and truth seem naïve and mechanistic. We live in the symbolic and sensory worlds, and nothing human exists outside of these worlds, but much that is not human and does not need us also inhabits our universe. Our task is to preserve the human sphere. To do that, we have to address realities–not the relative moral values of supposed realism.

Y. A.: How do we produce subjectivity, social institutions and identity in digital culture?

J. D.: My understanding of subjectivity comes from structural linguistics, psychoanalysis, and semiotics in both original and advanced or deconstructed forms. But I would extend this now to a familiarity with second-generation cognitive studies (Heinz von Foerster and Ernst von Glasersfeld, as well as other theorists of radical constructivism such a Humberto Maturana and Franceso Varela). Subjectivity has two main features–position and inflection. Position can be understood very mechanistically, as in Saussure's notions of a rigidly structured system in which subjects are interpellated only by their place in that finite system. But it can be understood–as the constituted entity of complex systems in which a co-dependent and emergent notion of identity replaces that of static entities. Inflection is the individuation and specificity of any instance of expression –inflected or marked by its medium, its reception, its transmission, and by the unaccountable factors of whim and taste. Structuralism could never account for taste, even in the most nuanced Bordieux-ian account, you can't say why one sister will prefer turquoise over pearls. The digital environment allows for identity and social subjectivity to be divorced from physical identity, of course, and that is a commonplace of digital media studies. But we perform our identities in any case, with many different personae according to our needs–the daughter, the lover, the teacher, the public speaker. The creation of a fully symbolic, virtual sphere of subject formation and performance has complex effects, and the work of those psychologists, sociologists, and media studies folks who take this as their research is filled with useful discussions of the ways accountability and individual responsibility get restructured in digital worlds. The work of Brenda Laurel, Henry Jenkins, and many others is extremely interesting. Since subjectivity is based in position and inflection in any social, cultural, or symbolic system, the extension of these into the world of cyberstudies adds a new dimension to the game, rather than changing the rules.

Y. A.: What are the new theories of language, signification and meaning in digital age?

J. D.: Metadata and computer languages make explicit what is implicit in natural languages–the performative dimension. Metadata *does* things with data as well as serving to describe the types of information in a database. Not all language is performative in the sense that John Austin described in *How to do things with Words*. But all language performs according to implicit codes and protocols–hence the long lineage of philosophers who attempted to discover the formal codes of natural language–or to discover codes that were more mathematical that could bring natural language and "thought" into line with formal language. I'm thinking of Descartes, Leibniz, Wilkins, and so on through George Boole, Rudolf Carnap, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and of course, Noam Chomsky. A holy grail, but a seductive one, the idea of an alignment of language, thought, and methods of precise calculation. I'm a latter day Wittegensteinian–which is to say, a poet–since I think instantiation and use are always specific, unique, and non-self-identitical. More and more, I find the idea of representation–and its premise of a stable relation of signifier to signified and sign to referent–utterly mechanistic, old-fashioned, and rigid. Signs are performative–situated in circumstances of use by human

beings in specific circumstances. These are all able to be read through the basic principles of what I call "Ideology 101": the more natural something seems to be, the more it is culturally constructed, and then, in whose interests is it to make something seem so natural that it passes as "just what is"? These two principles are inexhaustible, and analyzing those many features of the digital that pass as "just what is" can keep a person pretty busy.

Y. A.: What is sign/alphabet? Is it merely an arbitrary sign as Saussure says? What more? How is digital aesthetics informed with it?

J. D.: The wonderful tale of Donald Knuth is re-told in the essays of Douglas Hofstadter. Knuth is a mathematician and was intent on designing a font to use for setting his books, including his formulas, because the expense and the errors combined were overwhelming. He had the idea that he could discover the algorithmic identity of each letter of the alphabet–the essence of an A etc.–so that it could be manifest in any style, form, etc. from sans serif to serif and decorative fonts. Hofstadter has a great description of the imagined machine with its dials to be set for percentages of Stymie, Univers, Garamond, or blackletter. But of course this doesn't work–each alphabet is so distinctive that it is really a Saussurean system– letters have values within a finite set in which their distinct identity can be registered. What is wonderful about this encounter of alphabets and mathematics was that it showed again how sophisticated our visual capacities of discrimination and recognition are. The infinitely open-ended set of alphabetic forms makes letters more like chairs–no single algorithm defines the set of objects that can be called chairs. My fascination with the alphabet as a visual form remains because of all the ways it has served to provoke interpretation. The alphabet is a great example of a very rich aesthetic artifact that is not complex in its forms or structure, but in its associative and generative capacity.

Y. A.: What is the nature of knowledge, truth and authority in hyper digital culture?

J. D.: I know a surprising number of humanists who still think they are not digital! This is completely ridiculous, of course, and they do their daily business using Google, email, electronic searches, word processing, and imaging programs. The simple fact is that in our generation the entire cultural legacy is migrating into digital form. This is as radical a historical moment as that of early print culture which witnessed the migration of the legacy of manuscript culture into print. We are re-editing, omitted, transforming the materials of our cultural past. We risk losing fundamental ownership of the methods and strategies by which these materials will be made accessible if we do not, as humanists, participate actively in the creation of these digital archives. The history of knowledge is intimately bound to the history of forms of knowledge. The routine ignorance of the mediated condition in which we receive the texts with which we do our research and teaching shocks me. Thiis was true in print culture where the "any edition" approach to a text rendered the material artifact in which it was instantiated trivial and insignificant. We know this isn't the case-the material form in which we receive a work is part of its rhetorical force (put Genesis on an LED display marquee in Times Square and see how different it appears to be). So coming to terms with what is actually happening around us in a dramatic way is the first task of the humanists of our generation.

The truth-claims of digital media, as I've already said above, are granted credibility in part because of the cultural authority of computation. Quantitative, logical, and positivistic–these are the features that are taken as absolutes in western cultural approaches to knowledge.

Again, our task is to assert the validity of an approach based in situated, subjective experience (not impressions, self-references, and self-indulgence, but a recognition of the constructed position from which knowledge is produced). We have the critical tools of postmodern criticism and its exposure of the dialectical/reciprocal power relations within which knowledge and truth function. We have the tools of critical deconstruction, and the move from work to text, concepts of difference, and play, to take apart the truth claims of positivist methods. And we have the tools of complex systems theory and cognitive studies to use for analysis of the co-dependent, emergent character of value and identity within any specific set of conditions where knowledge is constituted. So we have the capability to direct our interpretative energies towards the counter move of text to work, the task of resituating knowledge within the many dimensions and systems of its production as a performative act. Interpretation is an act of intervention in a richly coded field of potential that provokes a reading. That act is what makes a work, but it doesn't exhaust it, it just begins the interpretative activity.

Y. A.: What is the nature and function of literature and art then?

J. D.: What they have always been–to transform experience into form, and then, to create the symbolic world of meaning-provocation-production. A current theory of the impulse behind cave paintings is that they were not (merely) magical rituals to increase the success of the hunt, but that they were pleasure-giving expressions in their own right. Or, as one anthropologist put it, "good to think" is as important as "good to eat" in these works. I think the pleasures of thought are massaged by aesthetic forms. The function of criticism is to help guide our reading and selections in a world of abundance.

Y. A.: Digital cultural has entrapped us in a different kind of determinism; that is what we call techno-determinism. Would you not agree? If so, what does it liberate in us which traditional [human] culture would not? What is the philosophy of digitality for life?

J. D.: Technology is opportunistic, not deterministic. New forms of technological infrastructure and media emerge where they can, and thus become the foundation of opportunities and possibilities that they enable. We are better off thinking in terms of an ecology of media than a technology. New possibilities thrive if conditions are not hostile, and technologies are adapted and changed according to circumstances. We see that in the different patterns of adoption of new gadgets and devices–they do not take off uniformly across all cultures or across all demographic groups. The future design of media will move increasingly towards customization, at least this will drive markets. I think within the humanities environment, our challenge is to begin to design for conditions of use, creating data structures that are re-purposable in the delivery, display, and operation. This is in part because of the cross-cultural specificity that information in a global era will have to address to meet the needs and dispositions of diverse cultural groups. But also because the over-stimulation level of constant communication, mediation, and reaction are creating a world brain we can't perceive or anticipate. I don't mean this in a spiritual, new-age weirdness sense, though I'm not averse to such a conception, but rather in the way the noosphere has been envisioned and described. We are components of that noosphere, as processing units we are constituted by and constitutive of that complex system. As human agents, however, we do have the ability to process sensorily and physically. I hope physical labor and tasks return to greater popularity, and that a manual/tactile interface to knowledge can be created that reintegrates what our bodies know more completely into the symbolic

processing we are so engaged with. We have to think a world-view that is sustainable, not just globally, but individually. But the technology won't do that–the peculiar fact is that neither technology and applied knowledge nor capital were partners in the social contract of the Enlightenment. The non-anthropocentric aspect of the world should give us pause and humility, as well as inspiring awe and a need for decisions about responsibility and limits. The drives of techno-capital exist independently from human beings in a profound sense, unless we act to tame our complicity with them. But this is just what many other people have been saying for decades. What I see, and believe, is that human beings may still preserve and foster a space for human things to be said, expressed, brought forth and for experience to flourish outside the programmatic life of the monoculture. That is the task for imagination expressed in the form of aesthetic works. The machines will not do this for us. Why would they?

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

J. D.: No, thank you for letting me have this opportunity! You are very kind.
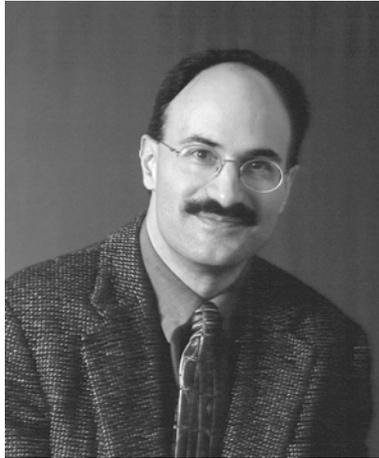
Jahan Ramazani

Jahan Ramazani is the Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English and Department Chair at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English*; *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *Yeats and the Poetry of Death*. He edited the most recent edition of *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* and, with Jon Stallworthy, *The Twentieth Century and After,* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. His current book project is on poetry and transnationalism. He is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, an NEH Fellowship, a Rhodes Scholarship, and the William Riley Parker Prize of the MLA.

15. Postcolonialism: Some Current Issues

Yubraj Aryal: In the mid 1980s, the decades of North American postmodernism, we witnessed the resurgence of a new debate about modernity in human sciences. After then a new sort of discourse of alternative modernities is produced in the humanities and social sciences. Why are these new narratives of alternative modernities required? Would they fulfill the need for geographic modernities?

Jahan Ramazani: The emphasis on multiple modernities follows in the wake of the poststructuralist pluralization of all different kinds of discourses: not feminism but feminisms, not modernism but modernisms, and so forth. This tendency, though sometimes taken to a parodic extreme, is generally useful insofar as it enables the recognition of heterogeneous and contending discourses within what was once constructed as a uniform area. The notion of alternative or multiple modernities helped to erode the perception that modernity is monolithically Western, to develop an understanding that modernities of various kinds emerge at different places and at different times. The discourse of modernity as a teleological progression from tradition to the unfettering of the shackles of the past tended to be Eurocentric and inadequately attentive to the various modernities taking shape across the world.

Y. A.: Are these geographic modernities forcefully imposed or are they the legitimate products of classical modernism?

J. R.: Neither. To see them as forcefully imposed is to assume a hegemonic and undifferentiated modernity that the West imperially asserts in different parts of the globe. To see them as the "legitimate products of classical modernism" is again to assume that Western modernism is pouring itself into non-Western containers. The problem here is that such a homogenizing, one-directional model underestimates the

extent to which local conditions, experiences, traditions, and modernities dialogically interact with, and transform, Western modernity. Nonwestern cultures have proven themselves powerfully capable of appropriating and transforming the tools and structures of classical modernism to meet local needs. What you call "classical modernism" can sometimes, perhaps surprisingly, serve counterhegemonic purposes in different parts of the world, where the work of a Euromodernist such as T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, or James Joyce can be strangely enabling for artists and intellectuals resisting locally hegemonic forces, which are themselves sometimes derivative of earlier (say, Victorian or Romantic) Western impositions, though they are also sometimes derivative of more local traditions.

Y. A.: Can the new geographies of modernism help us to understand the cultural globalization of recent days?

J. R.: Perhaps. Globalization is sometimes understood as the one-way, top-down, homogenizing transformation of the world by what Fredric Jameson calls a "singular modernity." It's no doubt the case that peoples in the formerly colonized world must find ways of resisting the obliteration of their cultural worlds–effacement by the violent neocolonial pressures of such economically driven globalization. But in my view, this view of globalization is inadequate for understanding the to-and-fro nuances of cultural globalization. Globalization can be understood as a simultaneously homogenizing and pluralizing process. Stuart Hall, James Clifford, Arjun Appadurai, and Kwame Anthony Appiah are among the theorists who have been trying to help us understand that a homogenizing globalization and a resistant diversification can occur simultaneously. As peoples of the formerly colonized world take up, transform, adapt, and remake both Euromodernism and their own local traditions (themselves often formed out of intricate knottings of discrepant cultural strands), new

hybrid forms of art, literature, and language emerge and develop that could not have been predicted in any of the cultural realms that are being interleaved.

Y. A.: Does the local interpretation of modernity allow us the greater themes of modernity? How should it be explained in the postcolonial world? Can we work together for "Modernity-at-large"?

J. R.: What is the alternative? Nativist retrenchment, which would itself inversely reflect the very modernity it is trying to hold at bay? Is sealing oneself in the nostalgic amber of supposedly premodern "traditions" really an alternative in our time, given how the technologies, capital and information flows, imagescapes, bureaucratic structures, and other aspects of global modernity are seeping into and interacting with and transforming local worlds?

Y. A.: How would you respond to the allegations–western intellectuals represented people of the nonwestern space as barbaric beasts in their rhetoric of other; did injustice to their history and cultural etc.–made by postcolonial theorists to the western intellectuals?

J. R.: I agree with these "allegations" by postcolonial theorists. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism has powerfully helped to reveal how western intellectuals colluded in the management, extension, and consolidation of imperial structures of domination in the non-western world. We also need to continue to remind ourselves just how much the West continues to define itself as the dialectical obverse of the barbarous other that it desperately needs in order to define its own civility. The work of western intellectuals such as Samuel Huntington–"The Clash of Civilizations"–and Bernard Lewis perpetuates these grossly distortive Orientalist ideologies.

That said, I believe that the concept of Orientalism is sometimes deployed in an insufficiently nuanced way that

involves the erasure of contradictions and complexities in western intellectual discourse. The view that the Euromodernists (Picasso, Eliot, Pound, etc.) were, for example, monolithically primitivist, that they merely colluded in the repressive representation of the Asian or African other, seems to me to elide the complex interplay of Orientalist and anti-Orientalist discourses and representational modes. In my view, it's through the jagged and collage-like assimilation of the non-West in these Western discourses that the non-West retains its pressure and presence as the (not completely absented) counterdiscourse, as the set of voices and languages and formal vocabularies that cannot be fully assimilated within the western discourse that encompasses them.

Y. A.: Shall they go on talking about colonialism today? Some say yes because there is still colonialism in different masks operated in the capitalist system; some say it is no longer relevant since colonialism is already ended and suggest to work for their national development rather than scolding the west; to go on scolding to the west for the things past is to 'disavow responsibility' for their nations. But postcolonial intellectuals hold that it is to assume "responsibility which has been denied once by the colonialists." Where do you find yourself in this debate? Do you think postcolonial theory is dead or at least has turned irrelevant today?

J. R.: I do not at all. The insistence and persistence of the colonial experience in the languages, cultures, and mentalities of post-colonized peoples demand the kind of historical emphasis that postcolonial studies can lend to how the grit, rupture, violence of the colonial past is there, always to be reckoned with. It's not that I think postcolonial writers should "scold" the west, should perversely nurse injuries and grievances. The Caribbean poet Derek Walcott is eloquent on the defeatism and narcissism of such victim psychology in the West Indies and elsewhere in the postcolonial world. But it seems to me a huge mistake to suppose one can ignore the continuing effects of colonialism's violent denigration of local cultures, values, and inheritances and hope to understand in post-colonies the ongoing struggles over identity, nationhood, the past, and so forth. Postcolonial writers of all kinds remind us over and over of the presence of the colonial past.

Y. A.: Can the nonwestern world forget the legacies of the colonialism?

J. R.: It would be absurd to try to. These legacies persist within the languages and cultural inheritances of postcolonial nations. The ongoing project of decolonizing the mind must go hand in hand with an understanding that such decolonization can never be complete, because of the ways in which colonialism violently inserted itself within people's histories, creating complex fissures and discrepancies in postcolonial psyches and self-understandings.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

J. R.: Thank you!

Daniel Herwitz

Daniel Herwitz has written widely in the aesthetics of modern and contemporary art, film, music and architecture. His first philosophical book, *Making Theory / Constructing Art* discusses work of Arthur Danto in relation to the theoretically driven practices of avant-garde art. Most recently he has edited *Action, Art, History: Engagements with Arthur Danto* with Michael Kelly and *The Don Giovanni Moment* with Lydia Goehr and submitted a manuscript on the aesthetics of film, stardom and celebrity to a publisher. Herwitz also works in the area of transitional justice: a decade living and working in South Africa led to book of essays, *Race and Reconciliation*, and he continues to write on questions of social policy. Herwitz earned a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

16. Race, South African Reconciliation and Aesthetics

Yubraj Aryal: Do you believe South African reconciliation (or any reconciliation today) conforms to Hegel's social philosophy of reconciliation?

Daniel Herwitz: Hegel speaks of reconciliation because history is over; Bishop Desmond Tutu because it is not. Hegel's idea of reconciliation presumes the end of history as its starting point. The project of reconciliation is for Hegel to show citizens that they are already reconciled to their social world, by showing them what reconciliation rightly consists in, and by showing them that their society is indeed a happy (enough) home, a home which is as good as it could possibly get, given the metaphysical shape of history and the nature of the human mind. Only at the end of history, when civil society, social morality, and culture are equitably in place, established and regulated in terms of law, can reconciliation between citizens and the state take place. One reconciles to the world because it is rationally demonstrable that it is as good as it gets, and this good enough to foster human autonomy and social connectedness. Hegel's philosophy aims to demonstrate that.

Reconciliation is possible for Hegel only at the end of history. This was to him good news, since he thought it had ended in his own time, culminated in his very lap. But history is not over, and will probably come to an end only when the great television producer in the sky decides to pull that TV serial called "Life" because the ratings have gone down too low. We live before the end of history, and Hegel says the point of thought before the end of history is to limn the world of the present and also to propose idealized images of unity and reconciliation, to think the ideal state of the future before it

arrives. Both projects will inevitably be flawed since the world thought has to work with before the end of history is always an incomplete one. Hegel's dialectic is that although eclipsed, thought drives history forward towards a better state. The future is brought about through a series of false images of it.

Reconciliation on the Hegelian model is a complete thing, not merely a matter of law, constitutions, human rights legislation, fair trials, but also of the culture to which one is asked to reconcile. A world can be a home in Hegel's sense only if there is a culture of the right and the good behind the apparatus of law, but also a world of art, ritual, religion and robust civil society. It is the coherence of this whole which is complete at, and only at, the end of history, and which allows reconciliation to be rationally demonstrable.

Before the end of history there is no such whole. Reconciliation may be at most partial, an important concept to retain from the Hegelian view, which must be prized apart and reinvented, for times like ours, when history flows on with the swiftness of a swift boat, into dark waters. Which parts of the concept are retained or rethought, for whom, and to what effect is or can be a central question, indeed predicament of our time. This is not simply an abstract question for theory but a political question for societies urgently in need of it. Reconciliation is not simply an abstract exercise: it is a concept which arises against the background of strife. Only when something really terrible between spouse and spouse has happened, something virtually irreparable, that the question of their reconciliation arises. Only when someone is so alienated from the American constitution, party politics, or the culture of mini-malls, talk radio and Reality TV, or to the results of recent American actions in the world, does the question of their reconciliation with this or that part of America arise. Only

when persons within a society have done such terrible things to one another than their strife might appear to be a permanent stain on their present and future relations does the concept arise for them.

This was the original insight religion brought to the story: that reconciliation between man and god is thought because of a permanent disruption, a separation at the point of the knife, a fall from the garden of Eden. If religion's view of reconciliation was transcendent: having to do with the arrival of some transfiguring God, its starting point was absolutely true of the motivation for that concept today. Reconciliation arises against the unbearable weight of division, violence, loss, not merely or primarily conceptual, but moral and physical, to spirit and person.

In our own time when political language turns to reconciliation it is to drive societies at moments of real or possible political transition. We speak of reconciliation as a route to something, not, contra Hegel, as a sign that the future has already transpired. We set up commissions of inquiry, pantomime gestures of reconciliation, articulate concepts of what reconciliation is, which however eclipsed, serve the dialectical function of driving change by inadequately proposing it, of bringing persons formerly at strife towards better social relationships. We speak in the name of a future which has definitely not come about. Sometimes we speak pragmatically ("What would it take for Shiite and Kurd to reconcile?", meaning agree to live together without violence). Other times we speak in a highly utopian voice.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission represented both the pragmatic and the utopian.

Y. A.: How are the dynamics of democratic change from a deeply racist regime being articulated in the art there?

D. H.: We go back to 1992, one year after the formal end of the Apartheid state. Nelson Mandela has just been released from jail. There is an 'interim government' in power to work out terms of transition, with the National Party, under De Klerk in the process of hammering out an arrangement with Nelson Mandela, representing the African National Congress. This is a moment when the delicate negotiations about the new democratic state might at any moment collapse. It is a moment of ongoing violence. The moment will lead, as it happens, to the Interim Constitution of 1994, mandating the first democratic elections of that year (with Mandela elected State President) and the Truth and Reconciliation Committees which began their work in 1996. The final constitution will be completed in 1996. But no one yet knows this, the air is heady with change and rife with uncertainty.

In this heady moment the art scene seemed to express the yearnings of a people to come into contact with the styles and lives of each other, to hear in each other's art the possibility of connection each with the other, to hear in that art the chord of liberation from the strictures of separation imposed by social life, racial and cultural ideology and political fact.

There was later the exploration of visual archives by which racism was articulated in the visual arts, which continue the practice of critically examining the creation of racial stereotypes through visual representations. Art practice here blends with museology and historical studies.

Y. A.: *Is racism still a problem for advanced societies like the United States? Does white racist consciousness persist there?*

D. H.: Absolutely yes. On the other hand the growing awareness of the importance of diversity in the workplace, in the military, in government and in all quarters of civil society is a positive sign of change.

Y. A.: *To what extend is racism to be found in the history of Western Philosophy? Consider Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche for example.*

D. H.: Let me answer about Nietzsche who rejected European racism as a cheap self-empowering device of the weak to lord it over the strong and creative, hating above all German racism, but whose work is entirely within the tradition of racialism. For Nietzsche the purity of human life may be traced back, philologically, to European sources in Aryan nobility, whose power of mind and action has been lost to his own time (the nineteenth century). With Nietzsche racialism (derivation of values in superior individuals) is critical to the criticism of his own time (as in: see how low we've sunk since our progenitors). And he is willing to castigate entire groups of people (the Jews, Christians) as debased.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

D. H.: Thank you.

Susan M. Schultz

Susan M. Schultz teaches modern and contemporary poetry, American literature, and creative writing (including workshops and directed readings in publication issues and creative writing pedagogy) at Uiversity of Hawai`i since 1990. Her critical works include *A Poetics of Impasse in Modern and Contemporary American Poetry* and *The Tribe of John: Ashbery and Contemporary Poetry* (edited), as well as essays on Denise Riley and adoption, Linh Dinh and disgust, Donald Rumsfeld and political poetry, and the poetries of Hawai`i, among others. Forthcoming is a collection co-edited with Annie Finch, *Multiformalisms*. Her poetry books are *Aleatory Allegories* and *And Then Something Happened* and *Memory Cards & Adoption Papers*. She edits *Tinfish Press*, which publishes an annual journal of experimental poetry from the Pacific, as well as a series of chapbooks and full-length volumes of poetry. In 1992 she was president of the Hawai`i Literary Arts Council.

17. Contemporary American Poetry

Yubraj Aryal: What are the major trends in contemporary American poetry?

Susan M. Schultz: When I started thinking seriously about this question in the early 1990s, I liked to divide the poetry world into camps: mainstream free verse, Language writing, ethnic writing, New Formalism, and so on. That made it easy to "teach the conflicts," as they say in my line of work. Over time, I've grown less attached to the conflicts and find myself drawn more to the various syntheses that have developed. The place I brood most about these trends is in the office of Tinfish Press, which I publish. It's here that I find and publish work that strays across these and other markers (like the ones between poetry and prose, or English and other languages like Pidgin, Tagalog, Samoan). The trend I note in my own publishing practice emerges when you mix the camps in the way a child mixes paints, where Language (or experimental) writing is embraced by "ethnic writers"; where various forms of formalism meet within the covers of the same book; where languages other than English appear with or without cribs. (The fact that one of our books is called CRIBS, by Yunte Huang, is appropriate.) These mixes are not chaotic, but are born of poetry's and poets' needs, especially in a world of crumbling colonialisms, a place of palimpsests rather than purities. That may not even be the dominant trend in American poetry across the board, but that is the one I'll be voting for in November!

Y. A: How does writing problematize and negotiate with the politics of time/history? How is writing influenced from the context of the one who lives in it?

S. M. S: There is no poetry outside of history. Even metaphysical poetry, Buddhist poetry, draws us into time, even as it seeks on "occasion" to draw us out of it. My poetry

has grown increasingly implicated in "current events," as we called them back in school, and my pedagogy is more and more about relations between history and literature. This is in part because my students don't know much history, but also because poets are always in conversation with their time, whether that time is contextualized as historical event, language, or literary history, or all of the above.

Y. A: Life creates meaning and meaning creates books. Would you say the reverse is also true?

S. M. S: I don't know that the equation can be reversed exactly, but I do think that life and books are always in conversation with one another. And who knows? I did have a series of experiences my last semester of teaching (American Literature Since 1950) when my life became entangled in the books we were reading. For example, while teaching *Catch-22*, I saw "the man in white" in an ambulance on my drive home; I heard from a civil rights worker from Alabama out of the blue while teaching Toni Morrison; I ended up talking to an immigration attorney working on behalf of a student from China, while teaching *China Men*. The parallels were neat, and a bit scary. Most of the time, however, I see the relationship as more fluid, less tangible. But the way I see the world clearly comes as much from the books I read as from life-meanings, as they might be called.

Y. A: Creative work is not necessarily about anything, but is something in itself. Is it possible to utterly decontextualize writing in this way?

S. M. S: No, I don't think so, although discussions of form and sound in poetry can be fruitful and interesting; but I don't think they go very far unless they're tethered to some notion of content as well—whether or not that content is in the text, or enacted by it outside the text, as it is in avant-garde art.

Y. A: What must/should the nature of subjectivity be in poetry?

S. M. S: I don't see this as a question of "should" or "must." Different poets are possessed of different subjectivities and operate according to different quotients of subjectivity and objectivity. I like a world in which there's both a Dickinson and a Williams, a Plath and a Reznikoff. And the world in which they reach similar effects and affects, albeit through different methods. Increasingly, however, I see the route to subjectivity in the reader as a letting go of it by the poet. I want my reader to feel, as well as to think, but abhor the poetry that obliges me to feel in a certain way—like Hollywood movies that turn up the music as you reach the climax, and then refuse to let it go. I can still hear the *Titanic* score, though I watched the movie a decade ago. Ick!

Y. A: How can exploratory procedures mediate historical consciousness?

S. M. S: By refusing explicitly to mediate it. By refusing the linearity of written history in favor of more loosely bound spirals of history as we experience it. I've been teaching Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's DICTEE to my graduate class on "Reading as a Poet." The collage method is one way to effect such unmediated mediation between events and our experiences of them.

Y. A: You mentioned a recent project called Dementia Blog. What is it?

S. M. S: I have a forthcoming book from Singing Horse Press in San Diego by that title. The project began as a six month long record of my mother's decline into dementia (along with the United States's decline under Bush et al). "The politics of time": that seems an apt descriptor of the project. I kept the blog form, where the writer composes in chronological order

but the reader reads backwards from the present into the past. The way in which that "backwards" reading scrambles notions of cause and effect, for example, formally enacts the way in which one "reads" the person with Alzheimer's. That process (or attempt, even) is so confusing and troubling, especially when the person is a family member. So, while the work is not procedural (the language does not itself get Alzheimer's), I hope that it contains within it some of the effects of the disease. The political turn in the book is crucial to me, too, as the current Administration's use of language and logic is almost literally "demented." There is a crucial difference, however, between the sufferer from dementia and the politician who deliberately distorts and confuses. In the one case there's illness, in the other moral turpitude.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

S. M. S: Thank you for asking them and good luck with your project!

ENLIGHTENMENT AND POSTENLIGHTENMENT

Allen W. Wood

Allen W. Wood is Ward W. and Priscilla B. Woods Professor at Stanford University. He has also taught at Cornell University (1968-1996) and Yale University (1996-2000), with visiting appointments at the University of Michigan (1973) and the University of California at San Diego (1986). Professor Wood is author of seven previous books, and editor or translator of eight others. He is co-general editor of the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*.

A. PHILOSOPHY
18. Enlightenment Philosophy

Yubraj Aryal: How would you assess enlightenment as one of the formative intellectual forces in western tradition?

Allen Wood: It is hard to overestimate the importance of the Enlightenment in the history of Europe, or even the history of the world, in the past two centuries. Virtually all the progressive ideas of modern Western culture were formed by it. And those ideas have also now become the focal point for the expression of nearly all progressive ideas throughout the world, even if in various non-European cultures those same ideas have their indigenous history independently of (or even in resistance to) European influence.

Y. A.: The gospel for humanism and empiricism is renaissance ethos. How these things have got expressed in enlightenment?

A. W: The terms 'humanism' and 'empiricism' (like the term 'democracy') are often used in vaguely positive senses, without any clear meaning. Empiricism as a determinate philosophical doctrine was certainly one creation of the Enlightenment, but it was only one strand in Enlightenment culture, and I do not think empiricism has been as progressive a force as some other elements in the Enlightenment tradition.

Y. A.: Can human elements be wholly expressed in reason?

A. W.: I take you to be asking here whether the ethical values we associate with modern Enlightenment culture can be regarded as grounded entirely in natural human reason, or whether they require belief in a religious tradition that appeals to supernatural sources and authorities that must supplement or even override what human reason tells us. If that is the question, then I am firmly convinced that

Enlightenment values can be grounded in reason. And I think that was for the most part the opinion of Enlightenment thinkers, even those who were religious believers. In fact, it was one of the most admirable characteristics of Enlightenment culture to view religion itself as a cultural force that must be grounded in reason, or at least subject to rational criticism. It is one of the most dangerous developments since the Enlightenment to view religious traditions not grounded in reason, and thought to be exempt from rational criticism, as necessary to the meaning of human life and the grounding of human values. This anti-Enlightenment tradition, whether in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu or other forms, is responsible for most of the threats to humanity that stalk the world today.

Y. A.: *On the one hand, there was enlightenment philosophy was enjoying its hey days in Europe and on the other, Europe was completely ravaged by war. Why this paradox? Enlightenment and war?*

A. W: Enlightenment ideas were of course the product of a certain determinate historical culture. But their content, and especially their value for us, is quite independent of what we ought to think of the culture that produced them. I do not think that European culture in the eighteenth century as especially admirable. War was one of its characteristic features, as you point out. So were white racism and European imperialism. For that matter, the eighteenth century was not only the period in which Enlightenment ideas emerged, but also a period of great irrationalistic religious ferment in Europe - it was not only the "age of reason" but also at the same time the age of pietism, Methodism, Hassidism and other anti-rational religious movements. Perhaps it was awareness of these movements, as well as the terrible religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that helped Enlightenment ideas to develop, by serving as object-lessons regarding what

humanity must avoid. It may seem paradoxical that an age that produces great progressive moral, social, scientific and religious ideas should have been an age of war, imperialism and religious fanaticism. But the more we reflect on this fact, the less paradoxical it should seem to us. Enlightenment ideas were devised in part as ways of opposing real anti-human forces.

Y. A.: *We have already begun to experience that too much rationalization has imprisoned us in the trap of reason. Then reason seems coercive social force to control over the weaklings. Nietzsche has already exposed the corruptions of reason and its impure origin. Reason is reasonable within limits; reason is not absolute. Would you still see the urgency to return to reason? Is 21 Century western civilization returning to reason?*

A. W: In responding to this question, much depends on having an accurate conception of 'reason'. Reason should not be reduced to mere means-ends calculation without any direction from values determining which ends are worthy of pursuit and which means are consistent with respect for human beings as rational beings. Rationality itself is a value, which merely instrumental conceptions of reason cannot properly account for. Certainly reason, like any ideal or value, is capable of being appealed to abusively by those who would pervert it into its opposite. But it is the best ideals that are most open to this abuse, since the respect people rightly feel for them makes false or sham appeals to them all the more persuasive. This is why it is important for us to distinguish the genuine Enlightenment ideals from the corruption of them, both in the eighteenth century and today. Reason, properly conceived, is the very opposite of a coercive force. The force of reason is the force of the best argument, the force of the evidence, and that is precisely the opposite of both deception and coercion. Nietzsche is a complex thinker, toward which my own attitude is highly

ambivalent. I think the best things about him are his perceptive psychological analyses of the way both 'reason' and other ideals have been subverted and abused. The side of Nietzsche that tells us to forget reason and follow instinct belongs to a tradition that led to Nazism in the early twentieth century and to postmodernism late in the twentieth century. Both are pernicious movements (though the practical effects of the former were much worse than those of the latter). Reason , whatever its limitations and abuses, is the only capacity we have to criticize itself or anything else. It is therefore the final ground of appeal. In that sense, reason certainly is 'absolute'. Perhaps the most dangerous thought it is possible to have is that there is something other than reason (by whatever name you dignify or hallow it) that is "higher than reason" or that ought to be exempt from criticism by reason. I would not say that the 21st century is a century of reason, but rather that like the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is characterized by the struggle between reason and anti-rational forces (including those forces that masquerade as 'rational' or appeal hypocritically to reason on behalf of its opposite).

Y. A.: Enlightenment is polemical toward religion, and primitivism in human mind. It is a crusade against them and thus is polemical and negative movement. How would you assess the statement?

A. W: In fact, most Enlightenment thinkers were not anti-religious, though most of them were anti-clerical (they distrusted the social influence of organized religion and its authorities) and they favored a religion that was allied with reason rather than opposed to it. It is a measure of what a terrible and evil force religion has become since the eighteenth century that the Enlightenment is seen as 'anti-religious'. For what is true is that any religion that is hostile to the ideals of the Enlightenment is a dangerous and evil force.

Y. A.: The last wave of enlightenment philosophers Rousseau, Kant, Smith, Jefferson and Goethe herald the impending death of reason. What in the then prevalent drive of reason did these philosophers disagree with? How did they go against the cult of reason? What forced them to do so?

A. W: I do not accept the proposition that any of the men you mention were opponents of reason or of Enlightenment values. But the Enlightenment was a complex movement, with more cross-currents than I have had time to discuss in answering your questions, and each of these thinkers were in favor of some strands of Enlightenment thinking while criticizing others. That is the only sense in which I would accept what you say here. But I don't think reason was ever a "cult" in the Enlightenment and cannot accept any characterization that uses the phrase "cult of reason."

Y. A.: What role does Enlightment play in post-enlightenment philosophical developments?

A. W: I think virtually all subsequent philosophical developments, even those that oppose the Enlightenment and its ideals, were products of it. Even the forms of irrationalism that oppose the Enlightenment have been shaped by having to react to it. These forms of irrationalism, including fascism and religious fundamentalism, are superstitions that have lost their innocence. 'Primitivism', to which you referred in a previous question, is a corrupt attempt to return to an imagined innocence that has been forever lost. (The attempt to return to innocence is always dishonest and corrupt.)

Y. A.: Why the attempt to return to innocence is corrupt?

A. W: Because innocence, once lost, is lost forever, the attempt to return to it is necessarily dishonest. The state you attain to is never really innocence. It is usually a state of self-deceptive flight, in which you are in denial about your

actual situation and in which the actions you take pretend to accomplish things that they do not actually accomplish. A great deal of harm often comes from this. Religious fundamentalism is one common form this harm can take.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

A. W: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to answer your questions.

Fred Beiser

Fred Beiser is Professor of philosophy at University of Syracuse. He has been a major contributor to work on the history of modern philosophy, especially the history of German philosophy (Kant and German idealism) and the English Enlightenment. His book *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* won the 1987 Thomas J. Wilson Prize for the Best First Book. He has won Thyssen and Humboldt research fellowships to study at the Free University of Berlin and was a 1994 Guggenheim Fellow. He received a 1999-2000 NEH Faculty Fellowship (at Indiana University), and he has won awards for his outstanding undergraduate teaching.

19. Philosophy of Romanticism

Y. A.: What is the metaphysics of romanticism? What are its limitations?

F. B.: I have argued in my *German Idealism* and *Romantic Imperative* that the romantic metaphysics was essentially organistic, i.e., it viewed the universe as a vast living organism, a "Macroanthropos", as Novalis put it. This seems very unplausible to us today, but it grew directly out of the philosophy of science toward the end of the eighteenth century when a) mechanistic views seemed increasingly implausible and b) the boundary between the physical and mental had been weakened by analyzing both in terms of living forces.

The classic expression of the romantic view of nature, which is given by Schelling, is that nature is visible spirit and that mind is invisible nature. He could claim this because the mental and physical–so it seemed at the time–were simply differing degrees of organization and development of living force (vis viva). This view is already anticipated in Leibniz, who became a hero for many of the early romantic Naturphilosophen.

Y. A.: What is wrong with the philosophy of atomistic individualism according to the romantics?

F. B.: The romantics go back to Aristotle's dictum that apart from the polis a human being is either a beast or a god. They think that it is the polis that, through education, gives us our identity as human beings. In other words, in the social and political sphere, the whole is prior to its parts and makes them possible. This means that the self-sufficient individual of social contract theory is an artificial abstraction, i.e., we take it apart from its place in the whole,

as if it had its identity apart from it, whereas in reality it is formed by the whole.

Y. A.: *How do you find yourself in the argument between universalistic liberals and romantic rightists on the nature of man?*

F. B.: This is something of a loaded question. As I argued in my *Enlightenment, Revolution & Romanticism*, the romantics (Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Schleiermacher, Schelling) did not deny that there were fundamental human rights, and their views were rather liberal well into the 1800s. When one talks about the romantic right one is referring to the later romantic movement–later Schlegel and Mueller–and the historical school of law (Eichheim and Savigny), which is not easily classifiable as romantic. No doubt, though, the romantics did support the important role of history in understanding conceptions of law and right, and to this extent they contributed to the historical school of law. But they would not have accepted the relativism associated with the historical school; they were still believers in universal and necessary values, which were a-historically valid even though located within history.

Y. A.: *Human elements are only found in non-reasoning aspects of life? What are the problems with reason?*

F. B.: This question is a blockbuster and so deep and broad I could spend the rest of my life answering it. So let me content myself, for the moment, with the romantic answer to this. For them, the paramount value is love, though they do not understand love as something irrational but as proto-rational, because they are children of Diotima and understand love as the desire for reunion with eternal reason. The centrality of love for them appears in this beautiful fragment from Novalis: "The heart is the key to world and life. One lives in this helpless condition to love. . . So Christ, from this standpoint, is the key to the world."

Y. A.: *Romantic tradition of the late eighteenth century influences postmodernism? How would you explain this?*

F. B.: I think it is true that post-modernism has its roots in the decline of rational authority in the late eighteenth century. I see post-modernism as an outlook largely conditioned by the loss of confidence in reason, a confidence characteristic of the Enlightenment.

Although I see the romantics as transitional figures who accepted some, and rejected other, aspects of the Enlightenment, they were still major figures in the critique of Enlightenment rationalism. This is most apparent in the early romantics' critique of the epistemological foundationalism of Fichte and Reinhold. They believed that there was no Archimedean standpoint from which all epistemological views could be justified.

Y. A.: *Where do you find yourself in the debate between Lovejoy and Wellek about the concept of romanticism?*

F. B.: This is a good question. I think that both of them are right. Lovejoy is correct that it is best to talk about romanticisms in the plural rather than Romanticism in the singular. This is because the term is used for so many different thinkers, who lived in different times and places. But suppose, then, that we take Lovejoy's advice and drop the use of the general term 'Romanticism' and agree that it does not designate something essential in all times and places. Suppose that we limit the objects of our enquiry to a select group of romantics and decide to talk about the views they have in common. It still makes sense to generalize about them, and we indeed have to, so that we do not miss the forest for the trees. Now if we take the early Jena and Berlin romantics as our select group–Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Novalis, Schelling–then we can find that they do have some views in common.

One of their central views is their organic metaphysics. So, at least for this group, I would agree with Wellek's views. We could generalize from there and go further, but the more we do so, the more hazardous the business becomes. Wellek could always say to Lovejoy: I am simply generalizing from the views of many individual thinkers; and to this class I give the name of romantic. In other words, one can give the term a meaning, and commits no fallacy. Lovejoy's argument holds only if one thinks that the term already has a meaning, a kind of essence, that holds behind the phenomena. There were scholars who held views like that, so Lovejoy's polemic still has its point.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

F. B.: Thank you!

Daniel Breazeale

Daniel Breazeale is Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University. He is the author of many scholarly articles on Kant, J. G. Fichte, German Idealism, and Nietzsche. He has translated one volume of Nietzsche's writings into English and edited another. He has translated four volumes of Fichte's writings into English and is the co-editor of nine volumes of essays on Fichte His own collection of essays, *Fichte and the Project of Transcendental Philosophy* is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

20. Reason & Unreason

Yubraj Aryal: Is opposite of reason irrational or supra-rational? But some people claim it is the latter because it can go beyond the limits of reason and inform us what reason is incapable. Would you contradict them?

Daniel Breazeale: I personally reject the notion of the "supra-rational" as incoherent. I think there are many things we do not understand–mysteries, if you will, but I would not call them "supra-rational" for that reason. I would certainly challenge the idea that the "supra=rational" can tell us what reason is incapable of.

Y. A.: I claim that essence of being human lies more on unreason and less on reason. Reason is incapable to liberate what is within human. Can reason fully express what is human in you?

D. B.: No. There is more to being human being rational. There is also, for example, being sensuous, being a creature of desire. If you wish to call this unreason, that is fine with me, but I would not call it "suprarational." It is often in conflict with reason, or rather, with the dictates of reason.

Y. A.: Reason cannot do justice to emotion and feeling. But the foundation of human ethical morality such as love, compassion, faith and charity are positive emotions. All the cruelty and barbarism are the imposition of a shrewd 'man'. Reason is invented by the shrewd man's self interest. Therefore reason is bad. Where are my premises wrong?

Your error, in my view, lies in the assumption that morality is based on love, composition, etc. Morality, in my view, is based on (practical) reason. I am a Kantian with respect to morality.

Y. A.: *How did reason bring crisis in high modernism? If you don't think reason is responsible for this crisis, what would you say why enlightenment project failed? Why two World Wars? Why different brands of logic collided in Pearl Harbor? In Nagasaki? Why the birth of anti-Hegelian philosophical outlook?*

D. B.: I reject the assumption that the enlightenment project failed and certainly do not blame reason for the ills you mention. Instead, I blame irrationality–such as the irrationality of racism, totalitarianism, ethnocentricism, etc. Hitler and Stalin were certainly NOT rationalists, at least not as I understand this term.

Y. A.: *Reason does not liberate human beings, but enslaves them. I can imagine your scholarship here also inclines to reject the assumption of my question but mine not. We are two extreme polarities in scholarship ha, ha, ha. . . How do you claim unreason enslaves us?*

D. B.: Because the only control we have over ourselves is "rational" control. Without it, we are, as Hume observed "slaves to our passions." I agree. Hume was pessimistic about the possibility of being guided by reason, but he certainly saw that we were "enslaved" by unreason. Thus you might say that he was a pessimist about the human condition.

Y. A.: *Please let us just guess: What would be the order of world if we have not tamed the 'Noble Savage', let us also called 'beast', in us?*

D. B.: There would be no human civilizations.

Y. A: *No, no, we probably would be on such an earth which would be just a replica of the paradise! Cruelty and barbarism would not be imposed in our civilization by any prosaic logic! Blakean vision would be our mode knowing*

and being. How exciting it would really be, I sometimes frantically crave for. I sometimes wish to go back to my mythic home. I cursed the birth of philosophy in ancient Greek as the most tragic event for the human civilization. I detest reason!*

D. B.: So? Interesting fact about you, I suppose. Frankly, I don't really care what you "detest". Your naïve, romantic fantasies about the "natural" life do not impress me in the least. Hobbes had it right about the state of nature.

Y. A.: *The goal of 'irrationalist' philosophers is to reach to the state of idealism like of rationalists. But the path is quite different: latter choose the path of reason whereas the former choose the path of unreason. Would you not agree?*

D. B.: I reject the premise. I do not think this their goal.

Y. A.: *As an advocate of rationalism you can reject, no problem! Let me come to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is looking the conditions of reason in ultra moral sense. Does he appear for you antihumanist?*

D. B.: No. Because there is nothing more human than to question authority, including moral authority.

Y. A.: *But he has dissolved the very foundation of enlightenment rationality (one of the important elements of humanist ideals) of which you are yourself an advocate?*

D. B.: True, he did. That is why Nietzsche ends in nihilism and despair. A tragic humanism, if you will.

Y. A.: *What is the status of truth in Nietzschean philosophy? What are some inconsistencies and incoherencies in his notion of truth?*

D. B.: I think Nietzsche has no coherent concept of truth. He is several incompatible views of the same, but no coherent theory (very "irrational" I suppose!)

Y. A.: Nietzsche says, "we men are more humane…"–that is to say, the essence of humanity is expressed by those who reject previous views of humanity and strive to become "super human." To be human all is to go beyond being human. But I claim going beyond human opens to the possibility either to be God (like Christ who redeemed humanity at the cost of himself) or Evil (like Hitler who is capable to killed 60000 Jews). Nietzsche erased the possibility to seek value within being human. He hates being human. But I love my humanness. I do not wish to be either God or Devil. I am human, that is enough. Nietzsche is anti-humanist for me. Do you contradict me?

D. B.: No, I do not. I agree with you on this point.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

D. B.: My pleasure. I wish you happiness, success, and peace of mind.

Richard Dien Winfield

Richard Dien Winfield is Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy at the University of Georgia, where he has taught since 1982. Winfield is the author of *Reason and Justice*, *The Just Economy*, *Overcoming Foundations: Studies in Systematic Philosophy*, *Freedom and Modernity*, *Law in Civil Society*, *Systematic Aesthetics*, *tylistics: Rethinking the Artforms After Hegel*, *The Just Family*, Autonomy *and Normativity: Investigations of Truth, Right and Beauty*, *The Just State: Rethinking Self-Government*, *From Concept to Objectivity: Thinking Through Hegel's Subjective Logic*, and *Modernity, Religion, and the War on Terror*.

21. Philosophy of History: Hegelian and Anti-Hegelian

Yubraj Aryal: How do the themes of temporality and eternity get expressed in Hegelian philosophy of history?

Richard Dien Winfield: Critics and apologists alike have falsely maintained that Hegel has a descriptive philosophy of history, conceiving a priori. How historical development must necessarily proceed. If that were the case, Hegel's views on history would be of little value, for there can be no descriptive philosophy of history precisely because history is the development of convention, which, being a product of concomitant willing, can always be other than it is. All the great philosophers have recognized that convention cannot be described a priori and, accordingly, they have never attempted to conceive a priori what the state, society, family, or any other convention is. Instead, from Plato to the present, philosophers of any stature have addressed what the state, society, and the household should be. To the extent that ethics can triumph over nihilism, philosophy can provide prescriptive theories of convention, producing the conceptions of the just institutions that have perennially occupied the great philosophers. In this connection, once philosophy has conceived what institutions ought to be, it can consider a priori what must occur for those institutions to come into being. This *normative* philosophy of history does not present a conception of what must happen, but rather a conception of how the institutions of justice can arise. Hegel conceives normativity to reside in self-determination because anything other than freedom is determined by something else and thereby resting on a foundation. Foundational justification is problematic because it identifies normative validity with being determined by a privileged foundation, which makes it impossible for the foundation to possess the

validity it confers. To be valid, the privileged foundation would have to found itself, but this would eliminate the constitutive distinction between prior foundation and what derives legitimacy from it. Only what is self-determined escapes this dilemma. For this reason, Hegel develops ethics as a philosophy of right, where right consists in the reality of self-determination. Because self-determined willing determines both who and what is willed, it cannot be a function of the self, whose atomistic volition must always presuppose, rather than determine, the natural agency of choice. Self-determined willing must reside instead in structures of interaction within which participants can give themselves mutually related /artificial/ agencies, determined by the volitions whereby they exercise the different forms of rights.

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel develops the structures of right, showing how each involves a different type of free agency with its own specific lawful rights and duties, forming together a self-sufficient totality of institutions of freedom crowned by self-government.

Significantly, it is only after Hegel has finished determining the structures of property rights, moral interaction, emancipated household community, social freedom (civil society), and self-government that he turns to consider the normative history of freedom. This comes at the end of the *Philosophy of Right* because only after all the institutions of freedom have been conceived can one consider what must occur for them to arise. That normative history of freedom has as its starting point the givenness of nature and the plurality of rational agents, whereas it has as its terminus the totality of the institutions of freedom. What lies at stake is conceiving how that terminus can be arrived at. That it be arrived at is always contingent because natural and conventional calamities can always bar the way to or destroy established institutions of freedom. Moreover, the normative history of freedom is not a specifically /human/ affair. It applies more generally to any context in which there are rational agents, who may well be other than *homo sapiens*, as science fiction has had no trouble imagining. Indeed, not only may that history run its course in other galaxies far far away, but it may reoccur after the institutions of right have crumbled for one reason or another. In this respect, the history of freedom may occur in time, but it is equally timeless, presenting a perennial imperative facing rational agents whenever and wherever they dwell.

Hegel's most well-known discussion of history consists of the student transcriptions of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which he delivered at various points in his teaching career. What most commentators have ignored, including Marx and Comte, is that Hegel announces prominently at the outset that he will take as an empirical assumption that modern times have seen the emergence, albeit fragmentary and incomplete, of the institutions of freedom. Hence, given that assumption, he can now look back at recorded history and interpret it as a history of the emergence of the structures of right. This enterprise is not an exercise of pure philosophy, but instead an interpretation of empirically recorded history in light of the concepts of the philosophy of right. The history in question has an end, namely the emergence of institutions of freedom in modern times, which is a contingent empirical fact that Hegel will accept as such. That end has a prescriptive necessity, but no descriptive necessity. That is, history need not have resulted in modernity, but given that it did, we can look back and interpret it as a process providing the genesis of freedom. In this way, Hegel undertakes a non-metaphysical prescriptive interpretation of history.

Y. A.: Is Hegel emphasizing process of becoming or state of being in his philosophy of history? How does Hegelian philosophy conceive modernist notion of time?

R. D. W.: Hegel's prescriptive philosophy of history emphasizes the becoming of political emancipation because freedom achieves its totality in a system presided over by institutions of self-government, that themselves depend upon the existence of a civil society, an emancipated household, recognition of moral autonomy, and universal property rights. Only institutions of self-government provide a self-sustaining reality of freedom, in which pre-political as well as political freedoms are systematically upheld. The upholding of the pre-political rights of owners, moral subjects, family members, and members of civil society is not an external imposition on politics, subverting the sovereign autonomy of political association. Rather, political association cannot maintain its own self-governing freedom unless it simultaneously secures the property, moral, family, and social rights of its citizens. Individuals cannot interact as self-governing citizens, exercising equal political opportunity unless they are all recognized in the first place as property owners. Otherwise, some are subject to enslavement, preventing them from exercising any other rights. Similarly, unless individuals recognize one another as morally autonomous they can hardly interact as autonomous citizens, whose purposes and intentions can be paid heed. By the same token, unless the family is emancipated, eliminating hierarchies rooted in gender and sexual orientation, family members can hardly participate as equals in society or in politics. And unless civil society guarantees equal social opportunity to all its members, relations of social oppression will hinder their equal political opportunity. For this reason, Hegel is right to point out (in exposing the futility of Napoleon's decreeing a modern constitution for Spain) that one cannot achieve political

emancipation simply by drawing up the appropriate constitution. Political freedom cannot be exercised unless the household and society have already been transformed so as to allow individuals to exercise equal political opportunity. As Hegel emphasizes, this involves not only the demarcation of kinship from social relations and the demarcation of civil society and the state, but simultaneously a cultural religious reformation that privatizes religion, making possible a secular space in which individuals can freely determine themselves without being subject to holy servitude.

Accordingly, the history of freedom, which is a history of the emergence of self-government, is not just a political history, but necessarily a history of how pre-political spheres of life and culture become compatible with political emancipation.

Y. A.: How does Hegel regard history as the self-realization of spirit? What is spirit? What is its goal? How is it self-contained? How does it reach to the state of self-realization? How history is the progress of freedom?

R. D. W.: Spirit is rational agency and rational agency is essentially free.

Reason, unlike sensibility, is autonomous, which is why conceptual determination is required to get at reality as it is determined in its own right. Only by arriving at the concept of some factor can that factor be grasped as it is in itself, since solely conceptual determination is self-developing, rather than determined by something else. That is why philosophy is the freest of all sciences and forfeits its constitutive avocation to conceive the truth when it submits to any dogma, instead of calling all assumptions into question and achieving the complete self-responsibility that only rational autonomy can secure.

All philosophers have implicitly recognized the connection between freedom and rational agency, but Hegel is the most radical in seeking to operate without any presuppositions and develop reason in its self-developing freedom. The prescriptive history of freedom can be said to comprise the self-realization of spirit to the extent that it addresses the process whereby rational agency constitutes a world of convention, a second nature, in accord with freedom, that is, in accord with the "essence" of rational agency. Properly speaking, rational agency has no "essence", if by essence one means a *given* nature.

Rational agency is what it determines itself to be, which is why it realizes itself only as the *result* of the development in which the reality of freedom comes into being.

Y. A.: Do you think nature of reality manifests itself in the Hegelian scheme of dialectics? Are there any limitations of the dialectics?

R. D. W.: Although Engels, Mao, and their latter day followers lay claim to schemes of dialectics, Hegel realizes that logic cannot have any predetermined scheme. Logic is the thinking of thinking and for this reason, subject and object, or method and subject matter, cannot be distinguished in logical investigation. All non-logical sciences, by contrast, use their thinking to conceive something else. Consequently, non-logical sciences must presuppose their method, which is not what they are investigating, and equally take for granted the given determination of their subject matter, since without a predetermined content, they have nothing non-logical to investigate. For this reason, non-logical sciences are doubly conditioned and cannot claim to have any unconditioned truth. Such sciences always make appeal to givens, which are taken for granted. In this respect, they all operate under the same sort of cognition that Hegel ascribes to the

opposition of consciousness, which distinguishes subject and object and therefore always takes its knowledge claims to refer to something independently given. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel offers an immanent critique of the standpoint of knowing that remains bound to the opposition of consciousness, showing how it cannot sustain its own claims and how it is driven to undermine its own constitutive distinction between subject and object. Logical science necessarily begins upon the overcoming of the opposition of consciousness, for logic is a thinking of thinking, where subject and object are indistinguishable. For this reason, logic cannot begin with any predetermined method, for "method" and "subject matter" coincide and are yet to be developed at the outset of logical investigation. If logic began with any predetermination of method or of the content of logic, it would beg its own question, for what thought is would already be answered. Instead, logic must begin without any presupposed method or subject matter. Beginning in this presuppositionless manner is equally necessary if philosophy is to operate without assumptions and conceive truth without qualification. Accordingly, Hegel characterizes the initial investigation of philosophy as a science of logic. This science of logic begins with no determinate content nor any determinate form.

It is instead self-determining, arriving at its subject matter and method as a result of its self-constituting development. Hence, logic has no "dialectical method" in the sense of some preestablished formal scheme that is always operative. If it did, logical method would be different from the content of logic, which contradicts the distinctive nature of logic and philosophy.

The Science of Logic provides a theory of determinacy but not a theory of non-logical reality. Determinacy cannot be accounted for by any theory that takes something for

granted, for that reliance upon some given determinacy would beg the question. Only a theory that takes nothing for granted can account for determinacy and Hegel provides such an account in T*he Science of Log*ic. Conceiving non-logical determinacy, however, involves more than logic, and this is something Hegel addresses in moving from *The Science of Logic* to *The Philosophy of Nature*. There he attempts to provide a non-metaphysical, non-transcendental account of real determinacy by following out how determinacy gets further qualified through its own development.

Y. A.: What is the reaction of anti-Hegelians like Vico, Nietzsche and Spengler to the Hegelian philosophy of history?

R. D. W.: None of these thinkers has the slightest idea that Hegel develops a *prescriptive* philosophy of history. Nor do they have the slightest inkling that Hegel pursues a presuppositionless foundation-free systematic philosophy.

Y. A.: What is Nietzsche's eternal return? What naturalistic epistemological concept of truth is articulated in Nietzsche's genealogy? What should be the nature of historical studies for him? Why?

R. D. W.: Unlike Hegel, who recognizes that rationality and freedom are indissolubly linked, Nietzsche regards "rationality" to be inherently conditioned such that reason can never achieve autonomous self-justification. On this account, all attempts to establish normativity always depend upon arbitrary assumptions. Consequently, whenever truth claims or ethical norms are advocated, the advocate is advancing purportedly universally valid values that actually have their source in nothing but the will of whoever is putting them forward.

Since normative claims demand universal validity, they amount to a power play, where some will is attempting to impose on all its particular values, which are really rooted in nothing but its own volition. This is the crux of Nietzsche's diagnosis of rational agency as nothing but "will to power". Since all value positing is conditioned by the particular agency that is at play, all that is left to do is to unveil and deconstruct the conditioning will to power that underlies all value systems. History, on Nietzsche's account, them becomes a genealogy of value positing, where particular agents put forward norms that fit their given, conditioned character. Nietzsche, of course, cannot account for the universal validity of his own diagnosis of rational agency as will to power, nor legitimate the values he himself endorses. Nietzsche claims that the undisguised assertion of the will to power has the advantage of being consistent, avoiding the hypocrisy of claiming universal validity for what is only a play for power. Yet consistency hardly justifies the Fascist assertion of the particular against the universal, for which post-modernism gives ideological support.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

R. D. W.: Thank You.
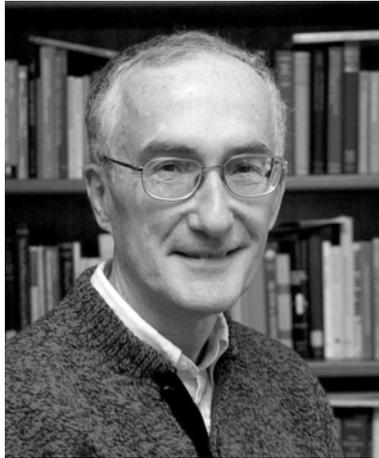
George Allan

George Allan has published three books exploring the ontological foundations for social value: *The Importances of the Past: A Meditation on the Authority of Tradition, The Realizations of the Future: An Inquiry into the Authority of Praxis* and *The Patterns of the Present: Interpreting the Authority of Form*. Allan has published two books on philosophical and educational issues regarding the liberal arts: *Rethinking College Education*, and *Higher Education in the Making: Pragmatism, Whitehead, and the Canon*. He is co-editor of two books: *Nature, Truth, and Value: Exploring the Thinking of Frederick Ferré* (with Merle Allshouse), and *A Different Three Rs for Education* (with Malcolm Evans). Allan has also published over seventy articles in metaphysics, social philosophy, philosophy of history, education, and philosophy of education, usually from a process or pragmatic perspective.

22. Myth and History

Yubraj Aryal: How religion and history manifold together in human civilization?

George Allan: "Religion" and "history" are both ambiguous words. They can refer to human practices or to theories about those practices.

Religious practices include rituals, stories, institutional structures, authoritative persons, beliefs about ultimate realities, and distinctive propositional formulations of those beliefs. Religious theories are interpretations of these practices, either by those who are members of the religious community being interpreted (e.g., systematic theology) or by those who stand outside that community (e.g., philosophy of religion).

Historical practices, lived history, are the events in which humans create communities of varying kinds and duration, and the beliefs and actions they undertake in consort with or in opposition to those of other humans in their communities or in other ones. Civilizations are sophisticated forms of human historical practices. Theories about history, written or oral history, are accounts of these practices, which can range from stories about some of these events to elaborately abstract theories about the developmental or recurrent patterns into which they can be organized.

With regard to practices, religions are among the institutions that comprise a civilization. Their function is typically conservative, instilling habits of belief and action that reinforce those of the wider civilization: normative rules for what to do and think, ideal ends by which the worth of one's purposes are assessed and the quality of one's deeds and attitudes are judged. Religious leaders are thus often also political leaders, or one kind of leadership is closely

subordinated to the other. However, the function of religion can be transformative rather than conservative. The normative ideals affirmed by religions can be at odds with the actual practices of a society's political leaders, with the religious leaders condemning those practices and calling on the political leaders, or the people more generally, to amend their ways. Significant alternations in civilizational practices–reforms, revolutions, collapses into barbarism, transitions to new civilizations–are typically the result of a shift in religious practices from their standard conservative role to a prophetic transformative one.

With regard to theories, religions often claim that the foundational norms of a civilization are religious in origin, and the founders either religious figures–saviors, saints, demigods–or political figures acting under a mandate from an ultimate reality–culture heroes, ancestors, prophets. Historical accounts of the emergence of a civilization are typically forced to appropriate such religious claims because the origins of the civilization are more ancient than any verifiable records. Historians, however, may debunk such religious claims, substituting an alternative secular account, or opening the way for different religious claims to contest those of the established religion. Among historians who find patterns in these events, some argue that the core of any civilization is a set of normative beliefs that are religious in origin, that civilizations over time forget or repudiate that core, and that this loss of the core leads to their collapse.

Y. A.: What is the difference between history and myth? Can myth be rational? What is myth-'particular content or persistent thinking'?

G. A.: Oral and written histories and myths are both accounts of the past, stories about what once happened. They can be told for their own sake, to satisfy our curiosity or entertain us, but their primary function is to tell us who we are: where we came from, how we got to be where we are now and who we are now, and what to expect in the future. Histories and myths tell us about the meaning of things and our place within that meaning. For this to be so, these stories must be taken as referring to objective realities. It will not do, as historical relativists and their contemporary postmodernist counterparts claim, to see these stories as merely stories, webs of meaning that are linked to other webs, stories that link to other stories, but that have no foundation in the way things truly are. They cannot be merely how a group understands itself, merely a master narrative that privileges that group at the expense of other groups and that within the group subordinates most of its members to the interests of an elite. These stories must be able to get behind the linguistic web to the realities about which it offers a likely account.

One way to distinguish myth from history is to say that the former is a self-serving cultural story whereas history is a story about things as they really are. It would be more accurate to say that even the most humanly concocted myth survives because it has some link to the way things really are, and that even the most rigorously scientific history is an interpretation that only partially describes the reality it is about. Using Peirce's semiotic distinction between "iconic" and "indexical" reference, it can be further argued that the function of a myth and of any general narrative history is less to offer an accurate description of the events comprising the history of a group, the trajectory of its reality, than it is about leading the listener/reader to participate in that reality. A myth need not be true iconically to be true indexically.

If "rational" means providing explanations in terms of logically or mathematically precise and consistent covering laws, then myths are not rational and, as most philosophers of explanation in history would argue, neither is history.

However, if "rational" means deploying symbols that provide a replicable means for gaining access to a reality independent of those symbols, and if those symbols and the relationship they claim to establish is testable and open to correction, then myth-making and history-writing are rational endeavors.

Y. A.: *Do you repent to the loss of sensibility in you? What does Viconian-Nietzschean crave to return to mythic heritage hark back? Do you worry about that we have become too much human/rational?*

G. A.: Vico and Nietzsche are not latter day Rousseaueans, yearning for a lost golden age. Vico's philosophy of history discerns a pattern of development that begins with forms of human understanding and expression that are emotive and imaginative, poetic/mythic. He then traces the ways in which this beginning is deepened as it makes possible the development of societal institutions that eventuate in the high cultural forms of scientific rational discourse. This is a process by which prehumans become human, by which they gain the breadth of understanding, prediction, and control that permits human civilized existence. But the price of this development is the loss of the sensitivity to reality that the emotional forms of expression permit, and so the high culture collapses and the cycle with respect to its general pattern recurs–endlessly. The poetic/mythic stage is not better than the rational; it is just a different stage, any one of which has its positive and negative features. The dilemma is that humans cannot have it both ways: no stage is durable because no stage is self-sufficient, none is fully the way things are.

The best twentieth-century expression of this Viconian view is found in Susanne Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key*. She argues that symbols in primitive societies are primarily "presentational": they use images and gestures to evoke meaning, including eventually linguistic symbols. A myth is a story that uses words to evoke what gestures evoke is liturgical rituals or artistic images: significant meaning. To use Pierce's distinction again, the function of these symbols is indexical, bringing the participant into a living relationship with the reality to which they refer. As a society becomes civilized, these indexical symbols become increasingly iconic; in Langer's terms, the symbols become "discursive." Science perfects discursive symbol use, increasing knowledge of reality but at a relatively superficial level. The participation in that reality, in its foundational core of meanings in particular, is lost. Knowledge and meaning come to be seen as at odds, and the loss of the latter weakens a sense of the significance of the former. The form of life rooted in a sense of fundamental meaning, having been weakened by the switch in interest from presentational to discursive symbols, falters; the civilization collapses.

Nietzsche's philosophy does not fit easily with that of Vico (or Langer), despite his notion of the eternal return of the same. However, he definitely does not privilege the mythic or primitive. The blond beast type of person is celebrated for his vitality, his embrace of the world of flesh and feeling and robust success, but he lacks reflective intelligence. The priestly type lacks vitality, his nature distorted by a resentment rooted in his weakness, his enslavement by the strong, but it is the priest who has learned to think, to scheme, to plan ahead. The superman combines both virtues: intelligence for the sake of life-affirming creative achievement.

Y. A.: *When we talk about myth, the idea of unconscious becomes important. What is the psychological function of mythic archetypes?*

G. A.: I'm skeptical of Jung's argument for mythic archetypes, for the claim that there are innate or Kantian

structures of the mind, ones independent of history and evolution. I'm even more skeptical that there is an unconscious where they reside and from which they influence our conscious ways of thinking, our ways of interpreting experience. I agree, however, that there is more to reality than we are able to apprehend, but I think the reason for this has to do with the limitations of cultural worldviews. I would relocate the unconscious from a collective mind (that smells too much of Cartesian dualism) to the objective reality we seek to interpret through our culturally derived concepts--our frameworks of understanding; our worldviews. These interpretive semiotic conceptual systems are finite: points of view. They necessarily leave things out in order to fashion a consistent and coherent system. Our cultural worldview is thus a powerful instrument for dealing with the world, a source of meaning and understanding. But it is also a set of blinders, cutting us off from all that has been ignored, pushed into a vague background, or denied by the reigning worldview.

Myth is one of the ways by which we are able to see around the blinders, to go beyond the standard horizon, to tap realities that have been there all along but that we could not see until our eyes were trained to see differently than we have been accustomed to seeing. Whitehead argues that "poetry" and "philosophy" are the ways by which this transcendence of the boundaries of the intelligible occurs. Poetry is his synecdoche for the arts more generally: new linguistic metaphors, new visual or auditory images, new speculative hypothesis–these lure or force us to alter our point of view. These tentative but powerful dislocations are the seeds from which new systemic understandings can eventuate.

Y. A.: What is the source of archetypes? How did the first human possess them in mind?

G. A.: I've answered this question by my response to the last one. The source of what Jung called archetypes is the nature of things, which is always a resource far richer that any system by which we attempt to make it intelligible, by which we attempt to pin down the difference between truth and fantasy, meaning and nonsense, value and worthlessness. We are born with the capacity to access this reality, and grow up learning how to access a limited portion of it through the culturally approved assumptions we learn in our everyday experience and are taught by our cultural mentors. Through semiotic methods that invite the play of imagination, we can resituate ourselves and so transform our grasp of things. The foundational structures of whatever the new perspective is that we come to inhabit, is probably what Jung's archetypes are: fundamental structures that come from beyond our accustomed control, with transformative consequences.

Y. A.: Would you tell me the social nature of those archetypes? How do these archetypes influence our understanding of the world?

G. A.: My response should be obvious from what I've already said, but let me expand a bit on what I take to be the social nature of "archetypes," i.e., of the structural character of the transformative perspectives we discover or into which we are thrust. Insofar as the cultural framework we have inherited works, we have no reason to explore alternatives. As Dewey says, we may get by quite well acting in an habitual way, in accord with a point of view we can take for granted. It's when that way of dealing with things breaks down, proves inadequate, that it becomes important to find an alternative. A situation is problematic because we do not know what the proper response should be. Or rather, the proper response isn't working and we need to find an alternative. We need a new approach, and we devise a working hypothesis regarding what that approach might be,

which we then test. If it doesn't work, we try to devise a better hypothesis; if it works, we stop thinking about the character of our point of view, find its new approach increasingly familiar, eventually respond by habit in this new way. Until the time comes when it doesn't work and we must once again begin to think.

Apply this Deweyan analysis at a civilizational level. Beliefs about the nature of things form the taken for granted background for a civilization. They are embedded in the beliefs its members take as self-evident and in the institutional structures and practices they assume are how anyone goes about living one's daily life. These general habitual practices are shared by everyone, despite considerable differences in the details of how they instantiate them in their individual ways of thinking and acting. Difference, even deviance, is tolerated insofar as it seems to be merely a specific version of the general pattern. And likewise, a person may act out of character and be chastised for doing so, but that person is thought to have made a correctable error that does not call into question his or her character. However, these general practices may grow slowly less and less effective as organizing principles (normative conditions, governing rules) for the civilization. The inadequacies may no longer be explained as due to individual error or local abnormalities, may no longer be corrected by tinkering with the details of the system: amending a law, adjusting an institution, clarifying a belief. The breakdown then becomes widespread throughout the civilization. What was taken for granted is called into question, what was self-evident seems now obscure or odd. Consensus gives way to divisiveness, plurality to polarity. Everyone's old habits no longer suffice. New ideas and new institutions now become interesting, well worth considering, desperately needed. A breakdown in a civilization's effectiveness is thus a virus that spreads throughout that civilized world, so that both those who defend the old order and those who demand a new order reflect that breakdown. And when new practices begin to emerge that seem to do what the old had not been able to do, a new consensus grows, a new paradigm begins to be established. In this way, either a new civilization rises from the ashes of the old, or the old undergoes significant reform and enters a new era in its long history. These widespread changes might be interpreted as the consequences of hitherto unacknowledged features of a human collective unconscious coming to consciousness, but my claim is that the shift is temporal not archetypal, a matter of a change in the fundamental cultural framework of understanding brought about by its pragmatic inadequacy, its inability to deal with changing historical conditions.

Y. A.: How can we associate 'modern' with 'myth'? How does a modern 'man' participate in the myth-making process of history?

G. A.: I'm arguing that myth-making is the creation of symbols the function of which is indexical, leading the person who interprets those symbols to engage the reality they interpret, and that myths, especially the need for new myths, become important at those times when there is a breakdown in the established indexical symbols. If we have been living out our lives within a system of meanings that we are confident tie us to ultimate realities, to the foundational aspects of the very nature of things, and if those meaning-guaranteeing symbols are breaking down, cutting us off from what is fundamentally important, then we will be desperate in our search for some new indexical symbols, or for very ancient ones long ignored or denigrated, that it is claimed can do what the familiar ones once did but no longer are doing.

The modern age has been rife with the breakdown of established meaning-giving cultural symbols and so it has

been rife with new social movements parading under the banner of a new cultural myth. Think of the early Christian myth, in the transition from Roman Republic to Empire, of a dying and rising god. Think of all the other myths of Jasper's Axial Age that became the seeds of new higher religions. But think also of the European colonialist myth of the White Man's Burden, the American myth of Manifest Destiny, the Marxist myth of the classless society, the Capitalist myth of the End of History. Unfortunately, these latter myths have not been rational in the sense I described above: they have been closed to criticism, testability, reformulation. They have exploited the power of the mythic symbol's indexical access to powerful meanings that transcend the customary, but have done so for customary reasons of narrow parochial gain and individual self-interest. They have been demonic: pointing not to a deeper wider more adequate reality but to a narrower and hence more inadequate one. What is needed are myth-makers who are able to evoke meanings that are cosmopolitan rather than parochial, global rather than local– that are open and rational rather than closed and irrational.

Y. A.: How does Cassirer's notion of myth differ from Sir James G. Frazer? How does Cassirer picture the form and function of myth?

G. A.: For Cassirer, myth is one of the primary modes of symbol-making, one of the forms by which humans interpret reality meaningfully. Much of what I have said earlier is akin to Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, except that Cassirer orders the kinds of form into a progression from myth–in which figures and images are enmeshed in the concretely material and encountered unreflectively as important realities–to science, in which figures and images are abstract and are reflectively understood as interpretive symbols not concrete realities. For Cassirer, the movement from mythic to scientific forms is a process of the liberation of spirit, from a bondage to material things to control of them. There is an Hegelian flavor to this progressivist notion, except that for Cassirer the more primitive symbolic forms have their own intrinsic integrity and importance; they are not dialectically surpassed by the development of scientific symbolic forms. But unlike Langer, Cassirer does not think science is dependent on myth, that its abstractions cut it off from the deeper realities to which myth gives access. He argues that science grasps reality more profoundly than does myth because it knows its symbols are human creations, each of which in their unique ways interpret the world objectively.

Frazer, at the end of *The Golden Bough*, talks about an historical shift from magical/mythic through religious to scientific forms of understanding. He see this shift, however, as contingent. That science now dominates does not mean it will continue to do so, either because a yet different form will emerge or because magical or religious forms will undergo a resurgence. Frazer's importance, I think, is that he takes the magical/mythic forms seriously and explicates one aspect of their historical expression in great detail even though he finds its claims unbelievable.

Y. A.: Friedrich Schlegel and Victor Hugo are keeping themselves at distance from Jungian psychology and trying to associate art with myth. Would you tell me how a modern poet is myth-maker according to Schlegel? What role myth deserves in modern literature and art?

G. A.: I have nothing to say about Schlegel and Hugo, but I would agree that art and myth are intimately associated. Cassirer disassociates them: in art, unlike in myth, the created material images point beyond the material and do so purposely, so that the symbolic forms of artistic creation are midway between mythic and scientific forms with regard to their capacity to liberate the human spirit. For Langer both the plastic arts and the verbal arts use presentational

symbols able to evoke depths of meaning to which discursive symbols give no access. The verbal arts are especially important because their development from mythic narrative to poetic epic is a process of increasingly conceptual power. Ideas are expressed in these symbolic modes that lay the groundwork for the development of philosophy and then of science. But Langer agrees with Vico, against Cassirer, in seeing this development as sowing the dragon's teeth of its eventual collapse, so that the historical pattern is recursive rather than progressive.

Y. A.: We know Cassirer's definition of myth is scientific which Blake contradicts because myth is the province of unreason that can never be approached by scientific inquiry. Would you contradict me?

G. A.: Blake is a post-Kantian Romantic. He has created a false dichotomy between reason and feeling, then he has associated unfeeling reason with science, emotionally rich unreason with the arts. Science and reason, following Kant, are said to give us only knowledge of appearances, whereas– going beyond Kant–artistically expressed feelings for Blake give us intuitions of the things in themselves. This is nonsense.

Vico, Langer, Cassirer and others reject this dichotomy. There are different symbolic forms by which we can grasp reality, one kind of which is artistic, another kind of which is scientific. All of them give us access to the nature of things, but they all do so only partially and hence inadequately. Mythic expression cannot be reduced to scientific expression, as though a myth could be reformulated without remainder in scientific terms, translated from the one form into the other. Not at all, or if so then in the sense that all translations from one language to another fail to capture fully in the new form the meaning expressed in the old. Nor is reason or feeling the province of one of the forms of

symbolic expression; poetizing involves reasoning as much as scientific thinking, and both engage the feelings.

Y. A.: Let me ask you a bit long question. How do you compare the theories of history proposed by Vico, Spengler, and Yeats with myth history of Blake and Berdyaev?

G. A.: Vico and Spengler both argue that all civilizations have the same life history: they all follow the same pattern from rise to fall. The details of the pattern these philosophers discern are different, but the general movement is from an origin in which things are inchoate but dynamically vital, which the give rise to a thriving and increasingly complex society, which next develops increased systematic organizational structures that replace the dynamism with rigidity, which leads to decadence and divisiveness, ending in collapse.

Vico's three "ages" or stages of a civilization's life–the age of gods, the age of heroes, the age of men–are applied by means of a chart in *The New Science* to seven civilizations: Hebrew, Chaldean, Scythian, Phoenician, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman. The distinctive character of each age is reflected in the various elements of a society: the style of its citizens (creative, noble, reasonable), its customs, natural law, form of government, language, character, jurisprudence, source of authority, kind of reason. So one could compare the Hebrew and Greek forms of language during their differing age of heroes. Both would give precedence to coats or arms, blazonings on shields, and other emblematic signs, but of course those used by Joshua's army at Jericho would be specifically different from those used by Agamemnon's army at Troy. In short, Vico has one general pattern repeating itself but each time in a different mode. The *recurso* is of general pattern not distinctive mode.

Spengler is thus very similar. He has only two major stages, those of Culture and of Civilization, the former creative and

developmental, the latter static. Spengler typically describes each stage as twofold, so one gets childhood and youth, springtime and summer, associated with Culture; adulthood and old age, autumn and winter, with Civilization. This general pattern is traced by each of the culture-civilizations that have appeared on the world-historical scene, each a unique mode by which the pattern unfolds, constituting its "soul" and associated "prime symbol." All aspects of a culture-civilization are expressed in the distinctive way determined by its prime symbol, from architecture and government to painting and music. Spengler is concerned primarily with undertaking a "comparative morphology" of three of these: the Classical-Apollinian, Western-Faustian, and Arabian-Magian, but he mentions such others as Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, Bantu. In short, Spengler also sees one general pattern repeating itself again and again in history, but each time in a differing mode. All are "organisms," but each its own unique creature.

Vico and Spengler (and I would add Ibn Khaldûn) differ from Joachim of Fiore, Hegel, Kant in his late writings, Lessing, Comte, the Social Darwinists, and other progressivists by containing the historical pattern within a civilization. The pattern is repeated in various historical epochs but there is no overall pattern to history. Their view is cyclical in this sense, rather than linear. What happens to the Greeks has no relevance to what happens to the Chinese. There may be various cultural and economic influences, to be sure, but each civilization has its own internally determined mode of expression and in this sense each is self-contained.

Toynbee combines both the cyclical and linear patterns. Each of his twenty-one civilizations traces the same general pattern of genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration, a pattern with considerable specificity in each of these phases. For instance, the pattern of challenge and response in the genesis of a civilization continues throughout the growth phase with each successful response giving rise to a new and more complex challenges, until a response is unsuccessful and the civilization begins its long slide into disintegration. However, a civilization need not go through all these stages–civilizations are aborted or arrested–and it could continue indefinitely to meet the new challenges with which it is faced. Toynbee's pattern is very flexible; it becomes most rigid only with respect to the three and a half beat rhythm of rout-rally-rout-rally-rout-rally-rout through which civilizational disintegration necessarily goes. Also Toynbee's civilizations are often "apparented," a new civilization arising from the ashes of an old one, its creative minority having come into existence as a marginalized group that had withdrawn, physically or spiritually, from the old civilization during its decline.

I do not know enough about the views of Yeats, Blake, and Berdyaev on these matters to have anything to say about them.

Y. A.: How do you associate myth with memory?

G. A.: There are two possible answers, depending on how memory is understood. First, in a Platonic mode of thinking, the mind come furnished with ideas that are both a priori and universal. Through a process of "recollection" such as the one through which Socrates leads Meno's slave boy, those ideas can be recovered. We did not know that we knew such things, until we are taught how to retrieve them. Jung, whose views I have been disparaging, is a modern Platonist in this sense: the human unconscious is furnished with archetypes that need to be retrieved from the unconscious, made conscious as mythic images, their emotional power and universality thereby released and available to guide us toward fulfilled, fully dimensional, lives.

Second, in an Aristotelian mode of thinking, the furniture of our mind derives from our interactions with external

realities, which we then organize intelligibly by abstracting their formal features and generalizing them. Langer, whose views I have been applauding, argues that presentational symbols are such abstractions but unlike discursive symbols they are able to establish a relation between symbol user and reality symbolized that provides the symbol user with a sense of worth, of participating in the stable important salvific ultimate presences at the core of the nature of things. Mythic symbols aid us in recalling aspects of our experience that otherwise we could not handle, much less comprehend, aspects that terrify us or overwhelm us (the *mysterium*, the *tremendum*).

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

G. A.: Thank you.

William L. McBride

William L. McBride is Arthur G. Hansen Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Purdue University , where he has taught since 1973. He is also current Secretary General of FISP, the International Federation of Philosophical Societies. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1964. Co-founder and first director of the North American Sartre Society and past president of the North American Society for Social Philosophy, he has edited or written some 20 books, including *Sartre's Political Theory*, *Philosophical Reflections on the Changes in Eastern Europe*, and *From Yugoslav Praxis to Global Pathos: Anti-Hegemonic Post-Post-Marxist Essays*, and has published more than 100 articles.

23. Existentialism

Yubraj Aryal: Would you please tell what factors are responsible to prepare the ground to the rise of existential philosophy in Europe?

William L. McBride: There were many, of course, in its coming to prominence in the mid-20th century. There was the promise of Husserl's philosophy to give philosophy and philosophers new tools to come to grips with more concrete matters, especially concerning values and the meaning of life, than had been possible from within the dominant systems (now mostly forgotten!) of the preceding decades. But soon Husserl's own reluctance actually to deal with such matters or even, until the last few years of his life, with history led first Heidegger and then Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and others to make the move from Husserlian phenomenology to existential phenomenology. Further impetus was provided by the extreme displacement brought about by World War II–the feelings of despair and disillusionment with traditional ways of thinking and the wish to assert the reality and supreme importance of human freedom. Existentialism in its various forms, including the religious existentialisms of Gabriel Marcel and others, was seen as at once confronting the temptation of despair and yet holding out real hope (despite what some critics of Sartre claimed) and making a new beginning.

Y. A.: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche? These two philosophers mainly influence the existential philosophical development. Would you envisage their respective contribution to the existential philosophy?

W. L. M.: Of course they were both very important, though both lived before the word "existentialism" was known or used. Heidegger and Sartre both mention them often, and even more often use some of their most basic categories,

particularly Kierkegaard's category of "anguish" or "dread". Sartre, although himself an atheist while Kierkegaard had of course been a profoundly religious thinker, wrote a very thoughtful and unusual tribute to him as the "singular universal", an individual who unswervingly worked out and defended his own views in independence of conventional ways of thinking, for a UNESCO conference commemorating the centenary of his death. Jaspers wrote at length about the special qualities of both of them and their many similarities despite their opposite views concerning the existence of a God. Heidegger regarded Nietzsche as the last, and in some ways the most attractive, in a long line of Western philosophers in the tradition of metaphysics with which Heidegger, with much assistance from radical criticisms first introduced by Nietzsche himself, sought to break. Moreover, Nietzsche's deep conviction that Western civilization was at a point of crisis that had come to a head with the so-called "death of God" seemed very foresighted and accurate to the survivors of the Second World War– despite Hitler's very dishonest and failed attempt to present him as having been a precursor of Nazism.

Y. A.: Existentialist credo "Existence precedes Essence" sounds anti-humanist because the assertion really destroys not only the image of 'Man' but also his sense of morality. Existentialist demolished the humanist ideals of liberal sciences and plunged the western civilization in wrong path. Would you agree? But contrarily, Sartre asserts existentialism is humanism. Would you go along with him? Why? Why not?

W. L. M.: As you may well imagine, I cannot agree about the destruction either of the "image of man" or of the sense of morality. What is denied by this slogan–for it is just a slogan, which needs to be filled out and explained in order to have any value for us–is only the idea that there is a single, eternal image of man to which we are expected to conform once we have ascertained just what it is. By stressing existence over essence, on the contrary, existentialism insists on the primary importance of human freedom AND responsibility, which also implies a deepened sense of morality rather than the destruction of the moral sense. It says that we are forced to make our own moral judgments and choices constantly, not simply to conform blindly to imposed moral principles from outside, and this in effect constitutes a more stringent sense of morality than the traditional ones.

As to the claim that existentialism is a humanism, the title that as you are indicating Sartre gave to a popular lecture that was then printed and eventually sold millions of copies, it is important to remember, first, that Sartre later regretted having authorized its publication–he had been told that it would only be sold in a very limited edition–as well as some of the oversimplifications of his own thought that it contains (I do not mean, on the other hand, that he ever entirely repudiated it.). In other works, both earlier (in particular, *Nausea*) and later (in particular, a long passage in *The Family Idiot*) Sartre distinguishes among different types of humanism espoused at different times in modern Western history, and criticizes some of them especially for taking an overly "rosy" view of human beings. I agree with him that one must be very careful, when endorsing "humanism" in some form, as he and I both do, to make it clear just what the form that we support really means and what it does NOT mean. I also agree with Heidegger, in his *Letter on Humanism*, that his own philosophy, with its emphasis on the need to return to an awareness of "Being", is much less human-centered than is Sartre's, and between the two of them I favor Sartre's approach in this respect.

Y. A.: What is the nature of existential emotion? It seems that existentialism gets its roots on the fissures of Romanticism's

radical separation from subject to object. What that radical separation influences the existential self?

W. L. M.: In *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus attempted to distinguish his philosophy of the absurd from existentialism by arguing that, on the whole, many of those regarded as existentialists, despite a conception of the world as absurd (meaning full of contingency and not operating in accordance with strict logic) that was similar to his, ultimately claimed to have found "ways out", most often through religion. His best example was his first one, Kierkegaard's so-called "leap of faith". The true absurdist, for Camus, is one who, while possibly having some nostalgia for traditional Gods and religion, still refuses to accept any such "leaps" and lives on despite their absence. But in fact Sartre's version of existentialism, as well as the versions of many other existentialist thinkers, is really quite similar to Camus' at this basic level. And in fact many commentators, forgetting that Camus made the distinction I have mentioned, also refer to him as an existentialist; in the final analysis, the word "absurdist" has not enjoyed much popularity or even been used very often by comparison with "existentialism".

As for nihilism, that was the name of an entire philosophical and (especially) literary movement of the late Nineteenth Century, perhaps most popular in Russia, and of course it also refers more generally to an attitude of repulsion toward the world that accepts the idea that nothing is, or could be, truly worthwhile. Some commentators regard Nietzsche, because of his call to get rid of all the old values and "tables of law", as a nihilist; but this is simply incorrect. Nietzsche in fact diagnosed nihilism as an increasingly common point of view among his contemporaries and hence as a symptom of an historical crisis in Western civilization, but not at all as a *solution to* that crisis. All the existentialists of whom I can think offer some positive prescriptions for action, hence

cannot be regarded as nihilists in any literal sense of the word.

Y. A.: Why 'man' is responsible to his action? What are the limitations of my choice? I am not given freedom other than to choose; not to choose is not my choice. Then it is not choice!

W. L. M.: At least within the tradition of Western philosophy, either there is predestination by God or there is at least some measure of free will for individual human beings. Many religious thinkers have tried to wrestle with the apparently contradictory claims that God is omnipotent and omniscient, and yet that He leaves us free to choose, hence responsible for our actions (within the various limits imposed by such factors as human mortality, our situations in time and place, etc.). For Sartre and other existentialists, choice and freedom mean essentially the same thing, so by definition we cannot be free not to choose. Several of them have explicitly addressed this issue that you raise by pointing out that a decision "not to take any action" in a certain situation is nevertheless a decision. They are certainly right on this point, it seems to me.

Y. A.: A paradox! "Man is condemned to be free." If I read it reversibly "Man is blessed to be free," how elevating it would be the image of 'man'! Would you not feel so? Therefore, one may refute Sartre claiming that existentialism is anti-humanism. Your view, please?

W. L. M.: Your objection, as I analyze it, is essentially a terminological one. If I may be very "picky" for a moment about your proposed alternative, to say that we are "blessed" in some respect or other may be thought to imply an Agent Who is blessing us–a God. This does not necessarily, it seems to me, either enhance or diminish humanism. On the other hand, the Sartrean language that you are citing is not, to my mind, the opposite of your proposal. To say that we are "condemned" to be free may involve some exaggeration with

respect to certain joyous situations in which the more fotunate humans sometimes find themselves, but it is meant to emphasize the many situations in which someone wishes that he did not have to choose; Sartre's example of what stance to take with respect to a war (join the army, leave the country, commit suicide, etc.), with respect to which no possible choice is a happy one, strikes me as a good example. So Sartre's language is not intended to diminish human dignity or importance–quite the contrary–but it brings out the fact that the human condition is often a difficult one, very challenging for the individual; the fact that humans deal freely with these challenges and frequently overcome them is a tribute to humanity, not a diminution of it.

Y. A.: What is authentic existence? How does it conform to what sort of moral law? How does a 'man' affirm existential value of his life?

W. L. M.: This question, or rather these three questions, are simply too hard to deal with adequately in a brief interview such as this one. "Authenticity" is a very perplexing and ultimately ambiguous concept, but at least in the existentialist tradition, and probably for many others as well, what it means begins with the idea of understanding one's situation as lucidly as possible. Its opposite is "bad faith", which means lying to oneself about just who one is, and usually denying the reality of one's freedom. As far as the notion of "moral law" is concerned, I return to one notion that I mentioned earlier, namely, that for this tradition there is *no* such law imposed from outside, which we need only to discover and then obey: rather, acting morally means recognizing this fact and then going on to act in such a way as to realize one's own possibilities as fully as possible, with openness and generosity. It also means, therefore, as the word "generosity" implies, acting so as to enhance others' awareness of their own freedom and, ultimately, to enhance others' actual freedom and dignity as much as feasible. By

doing so one will, to use the words of your final question, affirm the existential value not only of one's own life, but also that of the lives of others.

Y. A.: Existentialism attacks Hegelian scheme of rational thought. It takes resort on the philosophy of' irrational'. Albert Camus repudiates reason calling it 'absurd reason'. Heidegger too points out that enlightenment modernity is wrong. What do really force them to see the world 'irrational'?

W. L. M.: To disagree with Hegel's system, which most contemporary philosophers of all schools do, is not equivalent to accepting "a philosophy of the irrational." The key to answering this question of yours is to recognize that there are many different meanings of "reason" and "rationality". Even Camus, while insisting on the ultimate impossibility of finding any sufficient reason(s) to explain the universe, hence the *non*-rationality of the universe as a whole, is far from being an advocate of *ir*rationality; even less is this the case with other existentialist thinkers. One way of thinking of this is to resort to a distinction made in his later writings by John Rawls, for whom on the whole I do not share the enormous enthusiasm felt by many of my colleagues, but who nevertheless is helpful in this respect: the distinction between the "rational" and the "reasonable". One of the difficulties with the dominant thinkers of the Enlightenment that many besides the existentialists have recognized is their extreme confidence that they knew exactly what was "rational"; this resulted in a very narrow and exclusive conception of "reason", one in which calculation (as, e.g., in Bentham's "utilitarian calculus") had a central role. For them and their heirs, all other ways of thinking are simply irrational. But the world is richer and more ambiguous than they maintained, and to assert this is far from exalting "irrationality".

Y. A.: Karl Jaspers attacks Kierkegaard and Nietzsche saying they misdirect the course of philosophy by falling into "a shell of solitude"; he reinforces the importance of will to communicate that alone gives value to the existence. What does Jaspers intend to accomplish by replacing will to power (Nietzsche) and will to faith (Kierkegaard) with will to communicate?

W. L. M.: I am no specialist concerning Jaspers, although I would argue that his early studies of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were on balance more admiring of them, despite shortcomings that he saw in their respective philosophies, than your question makes it seem. While to me, at least, the idea of the "will to power" is one of the weaker aspects of Nietzsche's thought–an idea to which he came late in his active career, and of which he was undeservedly proud–and not worthwhile trying to defend, Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" is much more interesting, certainly subject to criticism but much more difficult simply to dismiss. And Jaspers sees much of positive value in religious faith, even though as you imply his approach to it is very different from Kierkegaard's. The point about the need for communication suggests the deeper, and very common, criticism of both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as well as of many of the existentialists of the 20th century, that their thought is too individualistic, not sufficently cognizant of the fundamental reality of human community–which of course suggests the value and necessity of communication. Actually, there is more attention paid to this aspect of reality by both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard than this criticism recognizes, and at least in his later work Sartre moves away from whatever individualistic tendencies he may have shown in his earlier work. As for Heidegger, language plays a really important role in his philosophy almost from the beginning, although of course he approaches it very differently from Jaspers. So the accusation concerning the "shell of solitude" is exaggerated and of only limited validity with respect to any of these thinkers, and I am very happy to have had the opportunity to communicate this observation (and so many others) to you and to your readers.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

W. L. M.: The pleasure is mine.

David Rosenthal

David Rosenthal is the author of numerous articles in philosophy of mind, many on consciousness including several that address Freud's writing. He has also worked in philosophy of language and ancient and early modern philosophy. His recent book, *Consciousness and Mind* brings together some of his most significant papers on consciousness, which put forth and develop his well-known higher-order-thought theory of consciousness. The book also advances his homomorphism theory of mental qualities and addresses such topics as the unity of consciousness, the connection between consciousness and speech, and the role of self-interpretation in consciousness.

Rosenthal is currently working on a book that examines whether there is any significant function that results from thoughts, perceptions, and other mental states' occurring consciously, as against their simply occurring without being conscious. The book also explains why perceptions and thoughts do very often occur consciously. This explanation makes no appeal to added functionality that may result from those states' being conscious, and so proceeds independently of any evolutionary selection pressures.

24. Freud and Unconscious

Y. A.: Would you see any kinship of Freud with the forerunners of philosophy of irrational like Goethe, Blake, Schopenhauer etc.? I mean do they have influence over Freud?

D. R.: Freud was exceptionally literate and read widely among these figures. But I myself doubt that they had any very direct influence on Freud's thinking. It's well-known that Freud attended Franz Brentano's lectures on psychology, and I think it's very likely that those lectures were a significant influence on Freud's thinking.

It is true, however, that the seemingly irrational aspects of human psychology were much in the air in the late 19th century, and that doubtless did affect Freud's thinking in as general way.

But I believe that the ostensibly irrational aspects of the unconscious mind that Freud discussed were made intelligible by his theorizing chiefly by Freud's uncovering the ways in which those unconscious mental processes are actually rational. So I believe that the irrationalist tenor of the authors you cite doubtless had influence more on Freud's tendency to describe the unconscious processes he studied as being irrational than in his substantive understanding of how those processes actually operate.

Y. A.: He is scientifically approaching 'irrational' forces in mind, isn't it?

D. R.: Freud did hold that human psychology involves the seemingly irrational desires of the "id." But it's reasonable to see those desires as being irrational only by the measure of the superego and ego. The superego presents the demands of authority and civilized social life; the instinctual demands of

the id, by not taking those things into account, seem irrational.

In another respect, Freud's thinking about unconscious mental processes is solidly based on ascribing rationality to unconscious as well as to conscious processes. Slips of the tongue, neurotic symptoms, and dreams are all interpreted in terms of rationality, i.e., in terms of what unconscious beliefs and desires we need to ascribe for those things to be rational.

The irrational that Freud considers is, I believe, only relative to social demands. Freud's theoretical departure from received views was not to embrace the irrational as such, but to recognize that human psychology involves various distinct, though interacting psychological systems.

Y. A.: What is the status of perception and consciousness in Freudian theory of unconscious?

D. R.: Freud held that the qualitative aspect of mental functioning cannot occur without being conscious, though we sometimes misinterpret its significance. Perceiving has both conceptual content and qualitative character; so Freud would have denied that perceiving, in its qualitative aspect, can occur without being conscious.

But Freud would have insisted that the conceptual component of perceiving can be unconscious, and that perceiving can in consequence be subject to a range of misinterpretations.

Y. A.: Whether unconscious is nature-in-us or culture-in-us? Did not it exist in us in the prehistoric era? Where does Jung resemble/differ from Freud to the nature of unconscious?

D. R.: There are two distinct issues here. One is whether unconscious mental functioning would have occurred independently of culture. Freud held that thoughts, desires,

and other so-called intentional states occur in the first instance without being conscious. So the nonconscious occurrence of these states is independent of culture.

Things are different when one turns to the repression of such states that results in the special psychodynamic interactions that Freud took himself to have discovered. Freud held that language results in a kind of distancing of ourselves from nature. Without language, he thought, humans would not have come to develop, in addition to the id, a superego. And, since the ego develops from the interaction of id and superego, language is needed also for the development of the ego. The repression Freud discusses itself results in turn from conflicts among these three mental agencies. So the kind of unconscious mental functioning that's due to repression would not, on Freud's view, occur without language, and hence not without a measure of culture.

Jung has a view of the so-called collective unconscious--the functioning of social groups in ways analogous with the mental functioning of individuals that results from conflicts between their conscious and unconscious mental processes. It's difficult to know how much of Jung's thinking here is metaphorical; I'm inclined to think that it was to a very great extent.

Y. A.: Let me talk about Oedipus complex. Would you have projected your mother's figure in your wife? What is wrong with Freud in concept of human relationship? Is he parochialist? I incline to love my mother more than father because her body is weak than my father; because my father exploits her with certain prerogative endowed him by patriarchy (somebody may love for other reasons), not or less because her Lawrencian body sexually attracts me. Wouldn't you see so?

D. R.: One can approach this clusters of issues independently of Freud's theorizing, and find his conclusions

perplexing or even offensive. I believe that that is the wrong way to see his views. As with any theorist, one must take his conclusions in the context of the theoretical reasoning that leads to them, and not as detached from that reasoning. My answer will be in that spirit.

There is a closeness of infants and toddlers with parental figures, which involves quasi-erotic feelings–feelings that can involve arousal of the sexual organs. This closeness is, according to both Freud and most thinkers, very important in early human emotional development, as indeed in the early development of many other mammals.

Consider, then, the closeness that occurs between mother and very young son. If that is threatened by the young son's fears, prompted by a father's jealousy or envy of the close mother-son bond, the son is likely to have some impairment in close relations with other women. That's neither strange nor difficult to understand.

It is worth mentioning, moreover, that this has nothing to do with other respects in which patriarchy or other social norms may also influence one's relationships with one's mother and father and, later on in adulthood, with women and men whose personalities evoke in various ways the kinds of emotionally charged interactions one had with one's parents.

In addition, it's no particular news from Freud that one can discern resemblances of personality between the women men are attracted to and those men's mothers, and between the men women are attracted to and those women's fathers. This commonplace can be seen, e.g., in the novels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Y. A.: What are the sources of instinct?

D. R.: I suppose you're asking about instincts as Freud understood them, in the context of his theory of instincts in psychological functioning. Freud took those instincts to be part of our biological heritage, and that seems to be a reasonable assumption. Sex drives, e.g., are doubtless part of our genetically determined biological makeup, as does the aggressive behavior that seems to figure in the destructive death instinct. These urges are found in some form in most mammals, as well as many nonmammalian species.

Y. A.: The aim of all life is death. How does life wish to return to the inorganic state of a life?

Freud posited a death wish or destructive instinct in developing his theory of native instincts. The desire to return to an inorganic state is best understood as metaphorical for destruction–in the relevant case, self-destruction. The death instinct plays a role in Freud's theory of instincts in understanding masochism, for example. A destructive instinct can, if not balanced by the productive, life instinct, lead to the reshaping of sexual impulses in a masochistic way.

Y. A.: What is dream for Freud? Is Freud giving the status of truth to the dream?

D. R.: Dreams, on Freud's view, are expressions of repressed thoughts and desires–thoughts and desires that, because of painful associations, fears, or social and parental pressures, we keep from being conscious. Still, these thoughts and desires need to receive some expression, just as ordinary conscious thoughts and desires do. So dreams function, in Freud's words, as the royal road to the unconscious; as expressions of unconscious mental processes, dreams allow us to infer the nature of the processes.

A thought or desire's being conscious results in its being acknowledged and, hence incorporated into one's mental functioning, and that by itself constitutes a kind of

expression of those of our thoughts and desires which are conscious.

Dreams can therefore be seen as a way to understand what thoughts and desires occur in a person without being consciously acknowledged. Working back from dreams, one can determine what unconscious thoughts and desires a person has, much as one can determine thoughts and desires from ordinary behavior.

Y. A.: What does Freud say about the origin of culture? How does he associate the development of civilization with the development of libidinal?

D. R.: Freud thinks that libidinous energies must be channeled into the social and productive processes that give rise to and sustain civilization, in a process he calls sublimation. Again, I think there's nothing all that deep or surprising in this. Athletes sometimes channel sexual energy into their athletic endeavors; it's a commonplace that one has only so much energy, and that if one doesn't find a sexual release one will look for alternative ways to express and expend energy. When sexual relations are ordered in a way that does not allow for ready release of sexual energy, one is likely to release in other, socially relevant ways.

Y. A.: What are discontents of civilization? How are they originated? How are we paying the price to be a civilized being?

D. R.: The discontents of civilization that Freud speaks of have to do with an analogue he sees in civilized social groups of the conflict in individuals between the desires of the I'd (the pleasure principle) and the countermanding social demands of the superego to restrain those desires (the reality principle). A simplified version of these discontents consists simply in the way civilization restrains individual

desires, but Freud's theory is more nuanced and complex. According to Freud, there's no way to avoid that conflict at the level of social organization.

This analogy of Freud's between individual psychodynamics and social organization is reminiscent of Plato's extrapolating from a similar tripartite view of the soul to an analogous tripartite view of the polis, or state.

Y. A.: Many of philosophers locate space and time as two forms in human mind. How the structure of space and time finds corollary to the structure of unconscious?

D. R.: Kant held that time is the inner form of sensing and space the outer form, ideas that were very influential on the young Einstein. I don't think, however, that these views of Kant have been very widely adopted by philosophers past Kant's immediate successors. What's plausible about Kant's idea about time is that we understand time in terms of a succession of experiences of distinct events. But the experiences of events need not be conscious experiences. And there is some evidence that humans fix the occurrence of events not by way of conscious sensations, but by way of an earlier, nonconscious sensation.

Moreover, it's clear that spatial relations can be discerned nonconsciously, i.e., by way of sensations and perceptions that fail to reach consciousness.

Y. A.: How did Freudian psychology become a potential force of modernity?

D. R.: Freud's views of human psychodynamic functioning provide a framework built on folk-psychological concepts and a commonsense understanding of human psychological functioning that promises to expand our understanding of rational thought and desire beyond the folk-psychological

arena–both into hitherto undiscussed areas of human functioning, such as sexuality and neurosis, and into our understanding of politics and social organization.

In contrast to Marx, the other great influence of the last 150 years in human thinking about human life, Freud based his thinking on individual psychodynamics. Marxian thinking starts with economic and other group dynamics, and seems to many to give second place to individual psychological functioning. Freud therefore filled a felt need to understand both individual psychology social organization without giving short shrift to the individual. This was crucial in Freud's coming to be, in W. H. Auden's useful phrase, "a climate of opinion."

It's often thought that the importance of Freud's thinking was to make room for the study and acceptance of nonconscious mentality. I think it's more accuratre to say that he developed a way to understand nonconscious mental functioning on the model of conscious mental functioning, thereby making it readily intelligible.

Y. A.: What is the signification of Freud in twentieth century cognitive science?

D. R.: Freud's theorizing about unconscious mental functioning is a useful reminder in the context of current cognitive science that there is much that occurs mentally but not consciously. Cognitive science has constantly posited cognitive processes and states that are not conscious, much as Freud posited in connection with the psychodynamic processes that yield both normal emotional development and neurotic symptoms. So Freud's work constitutes a model for such unconscious posits.

Still, the significance of Freud's work for cognitive science is somewhat limited. This is in part because the mental phenomena being explained are so different. But there is another reason for that limited significance. The important unconscious posits that figure in Freud's theorizing are due to the mechanism of repression. By contrast, the unconscious mental phenomena that cognitive science posits simply occur without being conscious, independent of any special mechanism, such as repression.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

D. R.: Thank you!

Tyrus Miller

Tyrus Miller is Professor of Literature and Provost of Cowell College at University of California at Santa Cruz. He is the author of *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the World Wars* and *Singular Examples: Artistic Politics of the Neo-Avantgarde* (forthcoming).

B. POETICS, ART AND AESTHETICS

25. Marxism, Poetics, Art and Aesthetics

Yubraj Aryal: What space has been occupied by Marxism in the recent American academia? Are Marx and Engels still read in the United States?

Tyrus Miller: It's probably first useful to distinguish between Marxism as a particular ideology of socialist states and movements, on the one hand, and Marxism as a general method of cultural and social analysis. Although there is a history of Marxist politics in the United States, and there was a resurgence of activist interest in Marxism with the wave of political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, this has been in decline since the 1980s. Marxism, however, has not disappeared so much as it has become broadly diffused in a range of humanities and social science disciplines in the universities, detached, in large part, from its immediate activist implications or the direct political links to a movement or state that it once had. There are probably many more academics who would profess to utilize Marxist theory or "historical materialism" in studying literature, popular culture, anthropology, sociology, etc., than would claim to be attempting to build a socialist society or to serve a socialist movement.

Marxism–especially the less orthodox versions that take inspiration from its most original thinkers from Georg Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, and Walter Benjamin to Louis Althusser, Theodor Adorno, and Fredric Jameson–offers academics a way of linking culture, social structures, and history in a coherent and unifying framework. Moreover, Marxism from its inception has an intrinsic feature that has assisted its influence in present-day academia: its

interdisciplinary scope. Marx himself was a great auto-didact, who brought together in a unique interdisciplinary mixture the study of philosophy, politics, economics, history, even literature and art to some extent. Many figures in the Marxist tradition show a similar interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary scope: Gramsci was a trained philologist and linguist as well as an original political thinker; Lukács was a major literary critic as well as philosopher; Adorno was an avant-garde composer, musicologist, empirical psychologist, sociologist, and philosopher. In their own reflections on how Marxism might inform their studies, these thinkers offer present-day academics practical models of how to bring together disciplinary knowledges in mutually illuminating ways.

Marx, and to a lesser extent Engels, are still read in the United States, but primarily in a historical light rather than as theoretical authorities. I don't believe you would find in many quarters reference to Marx and Engels as gospel authority, as was characteristic of the quotations from Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, etc., in the writings of communist bloc writers in the most diverse fields. However, the influence of Marxism today resides most likely less in the works of Marx and Engels and more in the so-called "Western Marxist" and "New Left" thinkers of the twentieth-century: Lukács, Gramsci, Sartre, the Frankfurt School, and so on.

Y. A.: Marxism is a potential force of modernity. How would you assess the claim at least from your study of 1930s, a decade when Marxism was in upsurge; when social forces of mass politics and new media challenged the cultural foundations of the modernist movement?

T. M.: If I've understood your question correctly, I would say that Marxism and modernism (or avant-garde) were parallel and often complementary phenomena. Both responded critically to the condition of capitalist modernity–that

uprooting and dissolution of traditional structures of society, authority, and culture under the influence of industrialism. In the broadest sense, Marx can be understood as a "modernist" thinker. As he memorably said in *The Communist Manifesto*, "All that is solid melts into air," and this made it, in his view, incumbent for the working class to invent a radically new order of culture, politics, and moral values. Is this really so different as Ezra Pound's imperative to "Make it new," or Virginia Woolf's view that "In or about 1910, human nature changed"? Both Marx and the great modernist writers were animated by that dual sense of anxiety about the loss of traditional boundaries and exhilaration at the task of inventing something completely new (or at least free of conventional restrictions). Moreover, despite the anti-avantgarde cultural politics of the official communist world–imposed, as you suggest, by Stalin in the 1930s–there are also many instances in which avant-garde artists identified themselves with a strain of political vanguardism, whether explicitly Marxist, or more anarchist and utopian. It is true that the utopianism and anarchistic streak of rebellious artists has often come into conflict with the pragmatic goals of practical Marxist movements, not to mention the cynical bureaucratic manipulations of official communist politics. But it would be historically inaccurate and oversimplifying to conclude that Marxism and modernism are therefore intrinsically opposed.

Y. A.: Let me take you to the Marxist view on literature, art and aesthetics. How would you relate Marxist aesthetics (please focus on Brecht-Lukács debate on aesthetics) with its general theory? How does Marxian aesthetic share with Hegelian aesthetic consciousness of totality?

T. M.: As you note in mentioning an important debate, there is not so much a single "Marxist aesthetic," as there is a network of arguments and debates. However, I think that it is possible to distinguish between two major strains of

Marxist aesthetics, roughly aligned with the positions Lukács and Brecht took in the 1930s. I'll call these, in shorthand, "exemplary" and "activist." The first view puts the emphasis on the work of art or literature as a representative historical and political "microcosm," which allows us to understand human agency and human action in a narratively or imagistically clarified form; in turn, we can carry this understanding out into our larger lives and apply the lessons and examples learned there. For Lukács, he found this model social world in the realist and historical novel of the 19th century, especially those of Walter Scott, Balzac, and Tolstoy. The emphasis, however, falls on the work of art as a fictional context of instructive examples and as a space in which, by observing literary characters and their actions, we can derive lessons that inform our social activities. The second view, represented by Brecht, also puts the emphasis on educating social agents, but sees the work of art in more instrumental terms: as a pedagogical and agitational tool. In the artistic tendency that Brecht represented–connected to agitational literature and documentary–the work of art should communicate social facts and offer commentaries on them, including ideological arguments about their political implications. Both aesthetics presupposed that fostering political change in the direction of socialism was the ultimate goal, but they held different views of the relation of artistic form to the artwork's educative function. For Lukács, this educative process couldn't take place if the "world" of the artwork was not well-formed and thoroughly articulated in fictive, artistic terms; for Brecht, artistic form should take shape according to the educative tasks and audience of the work. To put it otherwise, Lukács saw in the well-formed artwork a kind of microcosm of the Hegelian totality; Brecht was satisfied to see the work as an instrument and a fragment of that totality, which resided for him exclusively in the social world, not in the artwork itself.

I should also mention here a third strain of Marxist aesthetics that falls neither into the Lukács or the Brecht position, strictly speaking. That is the Frankfurt School orientation, including Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and more recently Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt. Although there are great differences among these different thinkers, they share a focus on the concept of *experience*, which is affected by social and technological change in modern society. They tend to see the artwork as a critical perspective on which the shortcomings of collective experience in contemporary society can be comprehended, and, often, as a model of an alternative experience that would be fuller, more intense, and freer. In a sense, this justifies the search, by modernist and avant-garde artists, for new expressive forms and new contents. These are not just formalistic exercises, but attempts to model experience in fresh, alternative, even utopian ways. Notably, these thinkers have close relations to artistic practice: Benjamin was a gifted literary writer and translator; Adorno was a trained classical composer; Kluge is a major author and filmmaker The experiential possibilities of modernist art stand in close relation to their theoretical views.

Y. A.: How does Marxist interpretation of art interlink the idea of illusion and reality with the idea of ideology? Should aesthetic be so heavily informed by ideology? How far does aesthetics speak to, and of socio-historical conditions? In what way? Why not in otherwise way?

T. M.: In the more official versions of Marxism, the notions of base and superstructure were often applied in crude ways, to suggest that artworks were "just" ideology, "mere reflections" of the real economic conditions. "Fiction" or "the aesthetic" came to be synonyms for illusion, ideological error, flight from reality, or passivity. However, in the more sophisticated theories that are important here, Marxist aesthetics attempts to account for the specific material

nature of art (as practice, institution, and set of artifacts) and the effects it can have on individuals and society. Artworks and art practices have, as it were, an internal logic and consistency, but they also have social functions and effects. The best Marxist aesthetics keeps both these dimensions in view, and in fact, accounts for their relationship: how, say, the structure of a work helps or hinders it from carrying out its social function. An art work shouldn't be reduced merely to a cipher of an ideology; since, however, one of the social functions a work can carry out is ideological expression, this possibility should neither be ignored or treated as if it were somehow irrelevant to the "true" aesthetic nature of the artwork. Art and ideology are a complex compound, and the task of Marxist aesthetics is live up to the complexity of that relation.

As for the bigger picture of aesthetics in relation to socio-historical conditions, it is worth mentioning that "art" and "aesthetics" may not always designate equal domains. "Aesthetics"–particularly in our time–may comprehend a much larger domain of experience than experiences related to art: for example, our aesthetic feelings play a big role in things like consumer and lifestyle choices. No one would attempt to claim, I think, that my new kitchen appliance or my new t-shirt is a work of art, despite the fact that Jeff Koons has displayed toasters as art objects in museums and T-shirts are made from Barbara Kruger art texts; and nevertheless, my non-art appliances and t-shirt have been designed to shape and please my taste, and I exercise aesthetic judgment in choosing, say, the red one over the blue one. We perhaps underestimate how much our acceptance and even enjoyment of consumer design aesthetics has broader social effects–helping to maintain and expand a social order based on global consumerism.

Y. A.: *If we study the "European Realism" seen by Lukács in Tolstov, Chekhov, Maupassant, Gorky etc. in their fictional*

works, it seems that they were employing, at least implicitly, a "reflectionist" mimetic concept of art. How do their realist works offer moral support for the kind of revolution that Marxism feels to be a historical necessity? Putting differently, how would you assess Marxism and realism in European social literary history?

T. M.: As I mentioned earlier, Lukács saw the realist novel as a kind of model society in miniature, where it was possible to see characters relating to social situations in ways that were more comprehensible than in everyday life. Realist novels–however massive and complex, like Tostoy's *War and Peace*–have discernable boundaries and limits that allow the novelist to organize relations between characters in terms of coherent narratives. We can wrap our minds around them much more easily than we can in the essentially more amorphous and boundless space of our real lives. Lukács thus thought that with respect to the domain of character and action that the realist novel could play a role analogous to that of social and political theory: taming the empirical messiness and complexity of social phenomena, in order to allow human individuals and collectives to gain mastery over their shared world. Hence, on these interesting and intelligent grounds, he was able to make the somewhat implausible argument that the 19th-century novel was a crucial instrument in the historical movement of the working class.

Y. A.: *Marxist reflectionist ideas of literature and art assume a direct correlation of material structure and representation. Such ideas are implicitly rejected by the modernist writers who explore the stream of consciousness, surrealist fancies, psychological depths, and existential emotions. One might, following Adorno, see their relation to mimetic realism as "negative." To what extent do you find modernist writers justified in their critique of mimetic*

realism, and to what extent is Marxism justified in its criticism of modernist anti-realism?

T. M.: One can't answer this with a straightforward either-or response, ie. either Marxism or modernism is correct. The dialogue of Marxism and modernism is more complex. Clearly, there were many aspects of modernist and avant-garde writing that led in the direction of politically and morally problematic views of human action, belief, and society, including asocial views of the psyche, the cult of violence, various primitivist and atavistic fantasies, and the legitimation of authoritarian politics on both the right and left of the political spectrum. However, this doesn't of itself invalidate the insights of modernism or make legitimate an overly schematic, reflectionist theory of knowledge. The reflectionist view was never sufficiently nuanced to provide Marxism with either a credible social epistemology or a sensitive theory of literature and art, nor was this aesthetic derived from it capable of comprehending a large portion of the most important writers and works of art of the twentieth century. Insofar as modernism spurred some thinkers–Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno as advocates of modernism, Georg Lukács as an intelligent critical opponent–to develop Marxism in more flexible, critical ways, then modernism was not just artistically important, but socially and theoretically as well.

Y. A.: *What relationship does Marxism have with formalism? In other words, how does Marxism treat the concept of "'Form'"? How does such concept elucidate the meaning of "dialectical" criticism? Please focus on Adorno, Althusser, Benjamin, Lukacs and Sartre.*

T. M.: Formalism has a lot of different meanings in the history of modern aesthetics, and too often in the Marxist context, it was simply a term of denunciation against any artistic deviation or play of imagination not disciplined to the party line. In the 1930s in the U.S.S.R., to be called a formalist was a sinister prelude to removal from public life and even disappearance into Stalin's secret prisons and gulags. However, formalism also has certain more precise meanings as well. One sense has to do with the role that specific properties of the medium and artistic material play in shaping the structure and sensual properties of the work. This figural space in which material and meaning dialectically interact–dynamically and through contradiction and conflict–offers a precise sense of artistic "form" in a Marxist understanding. The best Marxist critics, in my view, recognized that this dialectical space of form was a key index to the historical forces shaping the work of art and one of the most important ways in which art articulates its social message and brings about social effects in its viewers (or listeners or readers, etc.). Therefore, though few of them–with the partial exception of Adorno–would have understood or described themselves as "formalists," they were nonetheless attentive, detailed, and sophisticated interpreters of "form," in the sense in which I've defined it.

Y. A.: *Individual psychology and collective consciousness often do not conform to the socio-material interaction. Would you not agree?*

T. M.: Yes, I definitely agree. Again, I find the Frankfurt School helpful, because of their sophisticated engagement with psychoanalysis and theories of language. Walter Benjamin, for example, explored the analogy of dreams as a model for understanding how material conditions and cultural expressions relate. Just as in the dreaming body, physical stimuli such as blood pressure and digestion may be translated in the dream into images and narratives having nothing to do with their physical "cause," so too the connection of "base" and "superstructure" is not one of

causation or mirroring, but rather "expression" and "figuration." We might say that the *non-conformity* of culture and consciousness to given material conditions is precisely what interests the Frankfurt School; it is this that offers the possibility of contradiction, resistance, newness, and change.

Y. A.: Let me come down to postmodernism and Marxism. Postmodernism encompasses poststructuralist and cultural studies. Please tell me first, what setback poststructuralism gave to Marxism? It is often said that post-structuralism is a European weapon against Marxism? Do you believe postmodernism a regressive inclination of the west? Second, what legacy does cultural studies receive from Marxism?

T. M.: I think it is a bit confusing to lump together poststructuralism, cultural studies, and postmodernism. Post-structuralism derived from a fairly specific, mostly French intellectual development, in which several very brilliant thinkers brought together theories of language and anthropology developed within the structuralist paradigm with the radical thought of three thinkers in particular: Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Nietzsche. It is, however, correct to see in this theoretical tendency a rejection of Marxism and the presentation of a left-wing, anarchist-leaning, and aesthetically avant-garde *alternative* to Marxism. Although neither Marxism nor post-structuralism have been left intact by the changes in the world since the 1960s, and especially since the fall of the official communist bloc after 1989, together they represent two very powerful, but conflictual frameworks for understanding society and culture.

Cultural studies has a fairly organic connection with Marxism, since it was especially inspired by the historical and critical studies of three important British Marxists: Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Eric Hobsbawm. There are now many diversified tendencies in cultural studies, but the basic lines, in my view, remain indebted to Marxism, including its continuing use of a concept of class to explain cultural differences and its orientation towards culture produced and consumed by popular strata of society. There is nothing intrinsically "postmodernist" about cultural studies views, although cultural studies methods may be used to study such paradigmatically "postmodernist" cultural artifacts such as advertising, video games, reality shows, and so on.

Postmodernism, however, represented an important challenge to Marxism from another direction. Here I'm not speaking of postmodernism narrowly as a literary or artistic style, but as a wholescale discrediting of a range of comprehensive theories of history, including that totalizing, Hegelian-derived theory of "historical materialism" that canonical Marxism put forward as its banner. The idea that History was one great story of mankind, that it was heading in a single identifiable direction (progress or regress), that certain key identifiable agents (classes) were its main motive forces, and so on, was found by postmodernists to be no longer credible for a number of reasons. This included the rising complexity and differentiation of contemporary societies; the encounter with multiple, only partially commensurable histories coexisting in a global space; and considerations about linguistic and narrative representation that make the idea of history more problematically relative than previous generations of historians and historical theorists had appreciated. I do not think postmodernism is merely a regressive inclination of the West, but is rather a new reflexivity about itself that includes an acknowledgement that the West cannot define, on its own, "world history" or even "Western history." Rather, it must

construct far more tentative, changing, and dialogic views of itself, as it accounts for the contributions and criticisms of other agents in the global arena. Some may lament this as, in Spengler's famous words, the "decline of the West." I prefer to see it as a major readjustment that is necessary and that can have positive benefits for knowledge and improved global exchange of views.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

T. M.: Thank you!

PRESOCRATIC TO RENAISSANCE

Tony Preus

Tony Preus is Professor of Philosophy and Master of College-in-the-Woods at Binghamton University. He earned his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University. His books include *Science and Philosophy in Aristotle's Biology*, *Aristotle and Michael of Ephesus on the Movement and Progression of Animals*, and most recently *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Greek Philosophy*. He has also edited five volumes of *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, three with John Anton. His many articles and reviews range across various topics, mainly in ancient philosophy. Currently he is working primarily on ancient political philosophy. Professor Preus is Secretary of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy and Series Editor of the State University of New York Press series in Ancient Greek Philosophy.

A. PHILOSOPHY

26. Pre-Socratic Philosophy

Yubraj Aryal: What is Greek in cultural expression–artistic and intellectual–about ancient Greece?

Tony Preus: Classical Hellenic civilization developed in the context of a larger Mediterranean and what we would call "Near Eastern" cultural milieu. The artistic and intellectual developments that we think of as typically "Greek" were often adapted from earlier productions of Egyptian, Phoenician, Babylonian, Persian, or other cultures. Still, there are certainly features of Hellenic culture that make its products instantly recognizable in comparison with the features of other Eastern Mediterranean cultures.

The ancient Hellenes shared a language, and from the time of Homer they shared a written literature. To some extent they shared religious beliefs and cultural events such as the Olympic and Delian Games, and they tended to think themselves as different from their non-Hellenic neighbors. Their cultural productions–artistic and intellectual–were in many cases explicitly *designed* to demonstrate their uniqueness in comparison to their neighbors, and certainly the classical Hellenes believed themselves to be clearly superior in all important respects to those who lived around them.

One of the ways that the Hellenes were different from at least some of their neighbors was in the degree of participation in the cultural life of the state, the percentage of the population who contributed to the artistic and intellectual life of the community. Together with the tendency toward democratization of cultural life came increased creative freedom, room for experimentation with new forms and new ideas. That freedom was combined with

a pursuit of excellence, a kind of competition among the participants in cultural life to be the very best, to produce the very best. There was an expectation that what one contributed to the culture would be judged by the community, and rewarded in accordance with its perceived excellence. We see that competitive tendency already in the Homeric epics; the classical athletic competitions are emblematic, but not alone: the classical dramas and comedies were produced for annual competitions among playwrights and performers, the Sophists taught young men how to win verbal disputations in the public arena, Athens constructed the buildings on the Acropolis in order to demonstrate that Athens was the best.

The other "high cultures" in the region tended to be centered on a unifying monarch (the Pharaoh, the Persian "Great King") and a unified religious fervor; the Hellenes, for a couple of centuries at least, rejected that degree of centralization of cultural life, and that led to a tremendously creative period. I don't think that it's necessary to recount all those cultural developments in detail; they are well known.

By the way, the word "Greek" derives from a group of Hellenes who lived in southern Italy, among the first Hellenes encountered by the Romans, who then proceeded to call all Hellenes "Greeks" (Graeci).

Y. A.: How does the debate between Heracletian flux and Parmedean changelessness shape the Greek worldview?

T. P.: Your question betrays a Hegelian bias–I'm sure that most of the ancient Greek philosophers would have found the question rather puzzling, since they would not necessarily have situated their considerations in that dialectic, and non-philosophers would simply have responded, in most cases, "it doesn't."

Some of Parmenides' immediate successors were persuaded that they had to accommodate a changelessness of being; Empedocles and Anaxagoras did that by positing changeless material elements, and the Atomists seriously grasped the Eleatic position but adapted it by asserting that Being is indefinitely many.

Some were persuaded by Heraclitus, for example some of the Hippocratic medical writers, and Plato's teacher Cratylus, but it was not until the Stoics that Heraclitus was regarded as a major inspiration of a philosophical movement, and the Stoics would not have thought Heraclitus and Parmenides to be in serious conflict with each other.

The idea of a dialectic between Parmenides and Heraclitus stems perhaps originally from the arguments Gorgias intended to show the absurdity of all philosophy; Plato was the first to make it a major theme in some of his mature dialogues–the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Timaeus*, for example. Plato does address what he sees as a tension between flux and permanence; the *Timaeus* provides a partially Pythagorean solution. Aristotle seems to have thought that the original arguments of Parmenides and Heraclitus were perhaps based on logical errors, and in any case that his metaphysical analysis subsumed within it whatever was valid in those positions, as also the contributions of the other earlier philosophers.

Y. A.: The Hellenic world with its outstanding flowering of culture really deserves a perennial foundation of western systems of thought developed/still developing on western civilization. What is still Hellenic in western traditions?

T. P.: The early Greek philosophers developed the idea of nature (*physis*), the idea that people can understand the world by means of investigation. From physics to biology to psychology to astronomy (all Greek words, by the way), the

ancient Greeks moved forward empirical study of a wide range of aspects of the universe. That modern science might find that they sometimes made mistakes is not as important as the fact that they made the attempt to learn as much as they could. "The gods have not revealed all things to people from the beginning, but by seeking they find out better over time," as Xenophanes puts it.

Scientific investigation was very much enhanced by the attempt to move from qualitative judgments to quantitative; that stems, initially at least, from Pythagorean initiatives.

Classical thinkers also contributed a great deal to the theoretical understanding of social, political, and ethical practices and goals. While these areas were also studied in East Asia, for example, independently of Hellenic concepts, for the "Western" world and its progeny the language of analysis includes "democracy" and "oligarchy," "tyranny" and "despotism," and "ethics" itself, all Greek words, as well as concepts like "community," "justice," "virtue," "intention," "constitution," "liberty," and so on, Latin words translated directly from the Greek. All of these words carry baggage that goes back to classical civilization.

One could write many volumes in answer to this question, certainly. In a sense, to answer the question adequately would require some way of distinguishing the many strands that have come together to form modern civilization, and those strands would vary significantly across different nations and ethnic groups. My students in the University come from all over the world; they share a desire for academic success, which already puts them within a shared universe in which many other people do not share, but in other respects they may have wildly varying expectations about what it means to be an educated person, to share in what we call "high culture."

Classical Greek civilization contributed very significantly to the idea of education, to the idea of an organization of knowledge and investigation that is open to growth and expansion, not focused on a limited dogma or single text. The act of matriculating in a university is, whether one realizes it or not, an act of commitment to those ideals. "All human beings naturally desire to know," as Aristotle says, and the person who commits to life-long learning has placed the satisfaction of that desire very high in the order of priorities. That commitment is of course shared by many cultures, including some with little debt to the ancient Greeks, but for us in the modern world, and especially those of us teaching in modern universities, the classical articulation of the meaning of education is regulatory and inescapable.

Y. A.: To what extent did the early Greek philosophers based their worldview on archetypal principles or theory of forms?

T. P.: I think that we need to give Plato the credit for developing the "theory of forms"; consequently, I'd want to be a little careful about ascribing "archetypal" principles to pre-Platonic philosophers. In fact the word "archetype" is a Neoplatonic term, and its use implies a Neoplatonic perspective or mode of interpretation.

Of course, if we interpret pre-Platonic philosophy from a Platonic or Neoplatonic perspective, we will definitely find "archetypal principles" at work. Aristotle, the student of Plato, tended to interpret earlier thinkers in terms of their ways of understanding being and the world; Aristotle assumed that they must have had some basic beginning points, *archai*, or principles. Since he seems to have supposed that they were all trying to come up with *his* way of understanding the world, the "principles" he finds are suspiciously similar to those upon which his own philosophical position is based, just not put together well enough or developed sufficiently. Thus Aristotle looks for

theories of matter in the earlier thinkers (never mind that he had pretty much invented the concept of matter himself), form (which he finds in a "defective" way in the Pythagoreans and Plato, especially), source of movement and change, and teleological modes of understanding (perhaps anticipated in Anaxagoras and Plato, especially).

If we look at the remaining fragments of the earliest Greek philosophers themselves, we do find some leading concepts– the idea of nature (*physis*) certainly, the *logos* of Heraclitus, the mind (*nous*) of Anaxagoras, the IS of Parmenides. I would hesitate to call these concepts "archetypal" since I don't automatically share a Neoplatonic interpretive standpoint.

One might reasonably argue that Plato's theory of Forms posits the forms as archetypes; the characterization of the Forms as paradigms or regulatory examples, imitated by the phenomena, could well by understood by saying that the Forms are "archetypal principles," and in fact that is the language used by Plotinus and Proclus in talking about this part of Plato's philosophy. So in a sense, "archetypal principles" and of course the Theory of Forms were first proposed by Plato and continued to be associated with his name throughout antiquity.

Y. A.: *Would you let me be in picture what was the historical context in which Hellenic philosophical currents were floating on the surface of ancient Greek traditions?*

T. P.: The period immediately before the time of Thales and Anaximander was marked by a significant growth in Hellenic commercial trade throughout the Mediterranean basin, from the Black Sea to the shores of Spain, from the south of France to Egypt. Trade led to the establishment of permanent colonies, most notably in Sicily and southern Italy. Miletus, the home of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, was the center of this very widespread commercial expansion in the mid sixth century BCE.

At the same time the Persian empire was expanding in all directions, and during the second half of the 6th century Miletus and the rest of the Ionian coast came under their control. Although a Hellenic intellectual life continued under Persian rule (we note especially Heraclitus of Ephesus, and a little later Anaxagoras of Clazomenae and Diogenes of Apollonia), many leading Hellenes left for new opportunities in the Sicily and southern Italy–Xenophanes of Colophon is a particularly noteworthy example.

The "western" Hellenic states obviously offered a great deal of opportunity for all sorts of intellectual experimentation–it was here that Pythagoras established his community, that Parmenides and Zeno developed the Eleatic ontology, that Empedocles wrote his visionary poems.

During the first quarter of the fifth century the Persians attempted to extend their dominion over the Hellenes living in Europe with results that are well known–I need only mention the names of a few of the battles that have formed part of the mythology of western civilization ever since: Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis. Athens took what we might call opportunistic advantage of these successes to form the Delian League and to become the political and cultural center of Hellenic life during the middle half of the fifth century BCE.

As a prosperous state with significantly expanded participation in government, Athens in the mid-5th century provided an opportunity for teachers who could persuade prospective students that they could provide the skills to gain political power by way of rhetoric. Gorgias of Leontini (in Sicily) and Protagoras of Abdera (in northern Greece)

seem to have led the way to advanced education for prospective political leaders; many others followed.

In the latter part of the fifth century, the centrality of Athens as a center of power was seriously diminished by the Peloponnesian War, but home-grown philosopher–Socrates and Plato–had, in the long run, the effect of making Athens an intellectual center with a prestige that lasted for a thousand years.

Following the conquests of Alexander, other cities became cultural and educational centers, partly in imitation of Athens, partly as a consequence of their own unique cultural opportunities. Alexandria of Egypt was famous as a center of scientific investigation; Rhodes, Pergamum, Apamea, Rome, and eventually Constantinople were also among the locations that eventually participated in the development of highly educated citizens of the ancient world.

I don't want to get carried away too much on this question, so I'll stop there.

Y. A.: *What inspired the Greeks to inquire deep so as to try to understand the nature and origin of things? How did their modes of inquiry rest on physical explanation rather than spiritual, in a sense, historical than mythical? Really queer!*

T. P.: Your "Really queer!" tells me a lot about where you're coming from since those of us who have been deeply influenced by Hellenic philosophy find the spiritual and mythical approaches "really queer"; they seem to us not to go anywhere. But on to the questions . . . .

As I mentioned earlier, at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says, "All human beings naturally desire to understand." From his perspective, all the human civilizations that he knew about had developed some structure of understanding, partially based on experience

and reason, partially mythological. He especially gave credit to the Egyptians and Persians for their inquiries. I think it's fair to say that by the time of Aristotle there was a well-established philosophical tradition that generally (not always) favored physical and historical explanations over spiritual and mythical, to use your language.

But it was not always thus. Certainly from the beginnings of Hellenic philosophy until the time of Socrates one finds a lively mixture of rationalism and spiritualism, of logos and mythos. Pythagoras, whose school gets credit for developing a mathematical approach to understanding the universe, was primarily known at the beginning for introducing the idea of transmigration of the soul to the Greek world and for establishing a religious community of people who wished to escape the cycle of rebirth. Although Empedocles established the theory of the four material elements and gave many careful empirical analyses of physical phenomena, he was also a passionate preacher for a pathway of salvation of the soul from imprisonment in the body. Even Parmenides, perhaps the most rigidly "logical" of the Presocratic philosophers, begins his poem by recounting a mystical journey to the Goddess who is given credit for everything that he writes.

Myth was certainly an integral part of classical philosophy. Protagoras, who claimed that he had nothing to say about the gods because the subject is too large and life is too short, nevertheless is plausibly represented in Plato's *Protagoras* giving a mythological account of how feelings of justice and shame came to be imprinted in the human psyche. Relentlessly rationalistic Socrates is represented by Plato as telling several myths in the course of the dialogues, notably myths representing the punishment and rewards that await human souls after death.

It would probably be most accurate to say that classical Hellenic thinkers were prepared to use both physical and spiritual approaches, both history and myth, in attempting to develop their understandings of the world. What is truly remarkable about the Mediterranean world in the millennium from around 500 BCE until around 500 CE was the degree of intellectual freedom accorded to all ways of thinking, whether scientific or religious, mystical or rational. We have been focusing on the philosophical tradition in the beginning of that period, but we must remember that at the same time as Xenophanes was denouncing anthropomorphic representations of deities, the Orphic movement and other mystery religions were making many enthusiastic converts; while Hippocratic medical writers were giving amazingly precise histories of diseases not well understood until many centuries later, thousands of ill people were sleeping in temples of Asclepius hoping for a curative dream. We focus on the scientific and rational aspects of the classical Greek experience because, frankly, that is the part that proved in the long run to be most effective.

Another way to answer the question is this:

At least three interconnected sources of inspiration might be distinguished:

a) Starting in the eighth century BCE, the Greeks were expanding their world in terms of trade with other peoples. They came into contact with Egypt, Babylonia, the cultures of Asia Minor (i.e., what is today Turkey), Persia, Scythia (southern Russia), Phoenicians and Carthaginians, the peoples of what is today southern Italy and Sicily, southern France, Mediterranean Spain, and others. In most cases, they came prepared to learn from these other peoples, and at any rate gave up being closed in on their own culture to a significant extent.

b) The old (somewhat feudal) systems of government were breaking down in the same time-frame and new approaches to government were arising, mainly due to new military technologies, but also due to the rise of a newly wealthy merchant class alongside the traditional landed "aristocracy". Since the old system of government had allied itself very closely with religious practices the political revolution also involved a religious revolution.

c) Technological developments certainly fueled new ways of looking at the world. In some cases the technologies were borrowed from other cultures, but in many cases the Greeks made serious advances of their own, inspired both by mercantile and by military advantages of such developments. Serious technological advances contributed strongly to the development of the idea of "nature", perhaps the most typical and fundamental of classical Hellenic ideas.

.

*Y. A.: Anaxagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles and Anaxgoras try to define what is **is**. Would you please explain how their respective views on the nature of **is** i. e. ontological status of being of beings or **isness** of **is** or **thingness** of thing? What is **isnot** for each of them?*

It's not exactly true that Parmenides, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras "try to define 'is'". Parmenides' Goddess, to be sure, does offer an account of "IS":

IS is ungenerated, undestroyed

whole, unshaken, perfect, complete,

neither *was* nor *will be*, is now, all simultaneous,

one continuous

and then proceeds to defend each of those descriptions with argument. It's not clear that a non-circular definition of "is" is possible, although surely Parmenides was not worried about that:

it does not matter to me where I begin, for I will come there again.

As for "is not," Parmenides says:

IT IS NOT is neither sayable nor thinkable.

Anaxagoras and Empedocles, judging from the surviving fragments of their writings, were most impressed by Parmenides' argument that whatever truly is, is neither generated nor destroyed. They were not as persuaded that what is, is one and not many. Thus Empedocles characterizes the four elements as ungenerated and undestroyed, and everything else that exists is simply a "mixture" of the elements. Anaxagoras has a very large number (perhaps indefinitely many) basic materials that are neither created nor destroyed; more complex things result from the varied separations and combinations of those basic materials. Neither one (again judging from the surviving fragments) has much to say about "the isness of is" or "what is not." I suspect that they accepted the characterizations of Parmenides, except of course for the number of permanent "beings" in the world.

It seems to have been Gorgias who called attention again to the dialectic of "is" and "is not" with his spoof on the book of Melissus, a follower of the Eleatic mode of philosophizing. Melissus had argued, among other things, that "Being Exists," that Being is the entire object of knowledge, and is the referent for all language. All of those theses are of course present in Parmenides, but Melissus seems to have offered a somewhat more extensive argument for each step. Gorgias

uses dialectical techniques to argue the "Nothing exists," and "Nothing can be known," and "Nothing can be communicated in speech." Apparently Gorgias concluded from these considerations that philosophy is a lot of nonsense, and proceeded to devote himself to imparting rhetorical skills to his students.

A serious re-examination of the dialectic of IS and IS-NOT was undertaken by Plato in his *Sophist*, but that takes us away from the ambit of the pre-Platonic philosophers of course.

Y. A.: How are their ontological inquiries on the nature of 'being' articulated in the modern philosophy?

T. P.: You should probably ask a specialist in contemporary metaphysics that question. In my experience, contemporary metaphysicians do not normally go further back than Plato and/or Aristotle for a historical starting point for their considerations.

The English poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, is credited with claiming that everyone is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. Both Plato and Aristotle would have disagreed with that assessment, since both of them would have said that for a start there are also Democriteans. Modern metaphysical theory can certainly be traced back, in many ways, to those three philosophers, though one would want to look at this question from the perspective of individual metaphysicians I guess.

A good deal of modern philosophy includes a revolt *against* metaphysics; Hume is a good example of that perspective, and in the twentieth century the Humean perspective was taken up by A. J. Ayer. On the "continental" side of things one might mention the stand-point of Heidegger which I take

to be explicitly anti-metaphysical at the same time as it actually *does* metaphysics.

Y. A.: *How would the ancient Greeks conceive life in the universe? What moral principle would sustain them together in the universe?*

T. P.: Life in the universe

The majority of the ancient Greek philosophers conceived of the entire universe as a living being. Anaximenes and Diogenes of Apollonia, for example, thought of air as the principle of life, and believed that the universe is filled with air, and thus is ultimately a unified living being. Xenophanes and many others after him thought of God as the mind, and soul, of the universe. In the cosmic cycle of Empedocles, the period of the dominance of Love results in greater and greater organic unity of all living things until the entire universe, it seems, is one organic living thing; on the other hand, the dominance of Strife results in the separation of the elements from each other, and the disappearance of organic life.

The existence of life in the universe was problematized primarily by the atomist philosophy; if the atoms are not alive, how does life come to be? We don't know how Democritus solved that problem–judging by Aristotle's discussion of Democritus in the first book of the *De Anima*, he didn't. But the Epicureans clearly believed that life is an "emergent" phenomenon, consequent upon the complexity of some arrangements of atoms, and disappearing when those arrangements are destroyed (thus we have nothing to fear about what will happen to us after we are dead, because we will not exist at that time).

Traditional Greek religion supposed that individual souls continued to exist to the extent that they would experience rewards and punishments in Hades after death. The Epicurean "gospel" indicates that the average Greek was more afraid of the punishments than anticipating rewards; Socrates, with his confidence about joining "good men and the gods" after death must have seemed very odd to those who were terrified of what would happen after death.

In the Pythagorean line of philosophy (actually including Empedocles) there seems to be a double account of life in the universe: on the one hand, there is a cosmic life, a world soul–this idea is well-developed in Plato's *Timaeus*, on the basis of Pythagorean sources–and on the other, there are individual immortal souls which transmigrate from one bodily existence (human or animal) to the next. According to the Pythagorean way of thinking, rewards and punishment exist in terms of the next bodily life one receives in accordance with one's merits.

From the Aristotelian perspective, there are cosmic minds, and ultimately one cosmic mind, so the universe as a whole is (permanently) alive in a sense, and species of living things continue as persistent representatives of individualized life, but individual persons are generated and perish. To the extent that the active intellect is present in them during their lives, that capacity appears to reassimilate to the universal active intellect, or at least that seems to be one way of reading what Aristotle says on this matter. For Aristotle, individual human, animal, or plant life is the actualization of the potentialities present in organized matter.

Moral principle:

From the very beginning of ancient Greek philosophy there is a strong tendency to regard Justice (*dikē*) as a cosmic regulatory principle. In this respect Greek thought seems to join hands with other eastern Mediterranean traditions – the

Egyptian Ma'at, Hebrew Tsedek, Persian Yazad are similarly cosmic regulatory principles. In *Works and Days*, Hesiod emphasizes the "Justice of Zeus"; Anaximander speaks of things that come to be that "pay the penalty for their injustice." While Heraclitus says, "To God all things are beautiful and good and just, but humans have supposed some things to be just and others unjust", and "It is necessary to know that war is common and justice is strife and that all things happen in accordance with strife and necessity", he also says that the "People must for the law as they fight for the city wall" (B44) and "*ethos anthropoi daimon*", 'a person's character is his destiny' might be a translation. When Parmenides goes to see the Goddess, "Justice" holds the keys to the gate that he must penetrate to see her.

To be sure, some of the Sophists called into question the validity of an assumption of a cosmic justice– Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic* Book I is notorious for that, and we also recall Antiphon and the student of Gorgias, Callicles, in Plato's *Gorgias*–but not all the Sophists were agreed on that point. Protagoras is represented by Plato as asserting that people have an innate sense of "justice and shame," and other Sophists, notably the one known as "Anonymous Iamblichi" (a Sophist whose name is unknown, but is cited by Iamblichus) who argues strongly that law (*nomos*) has a foundation in nature (*physis*).

Plato's defense of the idea that Justice is the unity of all the virtues in his *Republic* is of course justly famous; Aristotle too says that there is a "natural justice" that has the same force everywhere and does not depend on what people think; for him this is connected to the idea that there is one "constitution" which "everywhere by nature the best."

Y. A.: What was the set of hierarchical orders of 'beings' in the Greek system of thought: (Supernatural Force > God > Man > Animal).

T. P.: The word "hierarchical" comes from the Greek word for "high priest"; the root metaphor here is an organizing principle like that of Pope–Archbishop–Bishop–Priest– Lay Person. While that sort of organizing principle is by no means absent from Greek thought, it could be argued that a great deal of the genius of Hellenic culture lies in a certain resistance to or rejection of hierarchical ways of thinking. Two ways in which that anti-hierarchical thought pattern reveals itself are a) material reductionism, and b) Hellenic democratic political organization.

None of the Presocratic philosophers has a clearly "hierarchical" ontology, I think. Possibly one could find traces in Heraclitus or Empedocles, but even there the hierarchy is rudimentary and exiguous. In the atomism of Democritus one finds an ontology as anti-hierarchical as one could possibly find: what really exists are atoms and the void. Full stop. In its Epicurean expression, the gods are understood as phantasms with no authority over human life, and certainly there are no priests with authority over individuals.

In a sense, democracy is the political expression of atomism: each individual citizen is equal to every other, and no one has established or permanent authority over any other citizen. Yes, one could argue that the treatment of women and slaves in Greek democratic states was in some way hierarchical, from our perspective at least, but those practices were ultimately inconsistent with the ideals of those states.

Perhaps one might find a few rudimentary steps toward, or concessions to, a notion of "hierarchical orders of being" in

Plato and Aristotle. For example, in the Sun-Line-Cave passage in the *Republic* there are as it were four levels of "being" corresponding to the four levels of cognition: the shadows on the wall of the cave, apprehended by guesswork; the models carried back and forth in front of the fire, apprehended by faith; the reflections of items in the "real" world, apprehended by reasoning; and the real things themselves, grasped by intuitive mind. Actually that is a hierarchy of imitations of being.

In Aristotle, since the primary real entity is the individual living thing or individual species, one may point to sense of being that are parasitic on that primary sense: for example, there are several layers of complexity of the material components of the entity–organs, tissues, elements or elementary powers–and layers of generality of classes to which the individual belongs–species and genera, from a biological point of view, or family, social group, state, from a political point of view. There is a distinction between being as entity and being in the other categories, and being as actuality and as potentiality. One might perhaps see those as a move toward a hierarchical analysis of some kind.

If we try to read this sort of analysis back into the pre-Platonic philosophers it's pretty hard to find much textual support for hierarchical structures of beings. There's a good reason for that–most of the earlier philosophers assumed in one way or another the *unity* of being, and at first glance hierarchical structures seem to argue for a *multiplicity* of beings.

To return to your sample hierarchy, one might say that the structure of Plato's *Republic* is politically hierarchical, with the Philosopher Ruler at the top, then the Guardians, then the productive class. But even here, Plato dissociates himself from the root sense of "hierarchy" in the sense that the Philosopher Ruler is not seen as *theocratic*, not represented

as responding to the directives of a supernatural being. I think that the fundamental characteristic of a truly *hierarchical* political structure is represented in your sample, that authority of human rulers is claimed to be derived from, and obedient to, divine rulers–the gods, or God. Plato does *not* claim that sort of hierarchical authority–the authority of the philosopher ruler is derived from knowledge of the Forms, a knowledge which is in principle open to everyone, and once gained gives every knower equal authority.

A passage in Aristotle indicates the range, and the limits, of hierarchical thinking in the Hellenic period of philosophy:

"We must consider also in which of two ways the nature of the universe contains the good or the highest good, whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. Probably in both ways, as an army does. For the good is found both in the order and in the leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order, but it depends on him. And all things are ordered together somehow, but not all alike,–both fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is not such that one thing has nothing to do with another, but they are connected. For all are ordered together to one end. (But it is as in a house, where the freemen are least at liberty to act as they will, but all things or most things are already ordained for them, while the slaves and the beasts do little for the common good, and for the most part life at random; for this is the sort of principle that constitutes the nature of each.)."

Aristotle's models here are not priestly organization (anyhow priests were not organized hierarchically in his cultural location or time) but a) military organization and b) household organization. Perhaps in talking about cosmological models in classical Hellenic civilization we should avoid the word "hierarchical" and adopt the words

"strategic" and "economic", if we follow the lead of Aristotle in this passage.

Aristotle's analysis of household organization is subtle and nuanced. He resists a rigidly patriarchal structure–one that would fit well into a hierarchical model–and instead says that the rule in a household is "constitutional" (we would say "democratic") among siblings, "aristocratic" between husband and wife, and "royal" in relation to slaves. And in the ideal state, households participate "constitutionally" in the life of the entire community. This is still *anti-hierarchical*, so far as free citizens are concerned. Aristotle explicitly rejects the idea, ascribed by him to Plato, that all rulers are despots, and vary only in terms of how many subjects they have.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

T. P.: Thank you
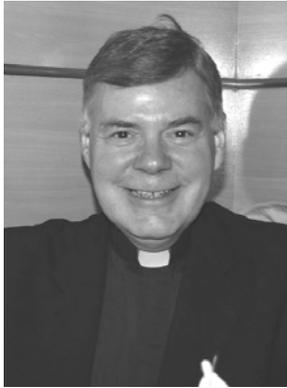
Gary Michael Gurtler, S.J.

Gary Michael Gurtler, S.J. is Professor of philosophy at Boston College and author of *Plotinus: the Experience of Unity*. He has also edited many books related to ancient Greek philosophy. He is also elected President of the Board of Directors of the *International Society for Neoplatonic Studies,* 29 June 2006; Chairman 22 October 2005.

27. Neo-Platonism

Yubraj Aryal: What is at the heart of Neo-Platonism? Would you please begin with some information about its origin and originator?

Gary Michael Gurtler: Neo-Platonism continues the recovery of Platonism begun with middle Platonism. Plotinus (AD 203-270) is the first and most influential of the Neo-Platonists. His intent, as indicated in many of his treatises, is to clarify what Plato means in his dialogues, although he clearly admits where he differs from the Platonic text, where it is confusing, and where he goes beyond it. Neo-Platonism continues with Porphyry (AD 234-305?), Iamblichus (c. AD 245-325), and Proclus (AD 412-485), who combined the philosophy of Plotinus with the *Chaldean Oracles* and orphism in increasingly more complex versions of the system.

Y. A.: How does neo-Platonism revive Platonism and what aspects does it criticize? Is there any Aristotelian influence on Neo-Platonism? What is that?

G. M. G.: Plotinus, like most of his contemporaries, does not see Plato and Aristotle as in conflict, but as concentrating on different aspects of reality. Thus, for Plotinus, Plato is clearer and more articulate about the nature of the intelligible world, while Aristotle is centered on the sensible world and articulates the categories needed to understand it. Plotinus often uses Aristotle's philosophical terminology to explain what Plato expresses in the more literary style of his dialogues. Thus, he explains Plato's forms and their relation to sensible instances by using Aristotle's notions of act and potency. This is actually quite original, since Aristotle uses act and potency to explain horizontal change in the sensible cosmos, while Plotinus reformulates act and

potency to understand the vertical relation between a higher reality and its lower production or generation. This is one example of the many ways Plotinus uses both Plato and Aristotle to construct a philosophical system that is rooted in classical Greek thought, and attempts at the same time to make it consistent and draw out its consequences. Some of the fundamental ideas that Plotinus clarifies are infinity, transcendence, omnipresence, matter, corporeality, immateriality, and the attributes of God, philosophically considered.

Y. A.: *Since Neo-Platonism originated at the boarder between East and West, are there any influences from Eastern philosophy that Neo-Platonism absorbed? Would you explain this synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy in it?*

G. M. G.: While Plotinus was educated in Egypt, there is no indication that he had any direct knowledge of Indian or Chinese systems of thought. He knows of India and is curious enough to join the expedition of the Roman emperor, Gordian, to India in the year 242, but that ended suddenly and without any possibility for Plotinus to come into contact with the great Asian systems of thought. After that expedition fell apart, Plotinus made his way to Rome, at first teaching but not writing (244-253) and then writing up his lectures with increasing productivity (253-269). There is no evidence in his text of any direct knowledge of the great Indian systems, Hindu or Buddhist. Parallels may be found, but are rooted in the common capacity of the human mind to understand the world and the relation of the human and the divine.

Y. A.: *How does Neo-Platonic philosophy conceive of reality in terms of the three hierarchical levels, the One, intellect and soul? What is the role and nature of the One as the ontological center of this hierarchical system? What is the One, a supernatural force of the universe or God? What is*

Soul for Plotinus? Does it have personality? If not, does it exist then?

G. M. G.: Plotinus generally begins his philosophical reflections with the human situation in the sensible cosmos and what is needed to make sense of that situation. Soul is the first step in this understanding, giving external unity to the sensible world and internal unity to the human being as capable of knowing it. Unlike Modern Western philosophy, for example, in Descartes and Kant, Plotinus holds that the sensible world could not be perceived at all unless it were already to some degree unified, which is the work of the world soul and the stellar souls that order the cosmos. He also examines how the human soul makes possible our discursive, scientific knowledge of the sensible world, given that the soul is itself a unity and is thus able to unify the scattered multiplicity of information that comes to it through the senses.

His account of this knowledge and the categories that apply to sensible experience and reasoning are clearly derived from Aristotle, especially concerning the faculties of the soul and the logic of human language. His understanding of the soul as the source of unity for experience has its roots in Plato, but in significant ways goes beyond anything Plato explicitly says. The unity of the soul is grounded ultimately in the One, and this is where Plotinus places what is more currently called the self or person. We exist or function on multiple levels, as the unity of empirical experience, as the soul and intellect in which such unity is rooted and finally as in mystical union with the One. Since intellect is still differentiated as subject and object, the unity of the self must go beyond this duality of subject and object and so Plotinus roots the self in the One as source of all and as unifying all.

Plotinus uses Plato in analyzing the ascent from the sensible to the intelligible. The realm of the intelligible combines Aristotle's divine mind with Plato's world of forms in his own original synthesis. The Aristotelian divine mind, which had only thought itself, becomes the place for Plato's forms, which are then shown as principles of life, intelligence and being. By using Aristotle, Plotinus emphasizes the unity of the intelligible world and, by using Plato, its diversity in the multiplicity of the forms. As Aristotle's categories ground his analysis of sensible experience, so Plato's genera from the *Sophist* are the basis for his understanding the nature of the intelligible and its relation to the sensible. In particular, the 'otherness' of the *Sophist* becomes not only the form correlate to 'sameness,' but the fundamental principle for understanding everything other than the One.

Otherness, thus, becomes the principle of multiplicity, related to motion and matter and extending from the initial inchoate state of intellect itself to the matter of the sensible cosmos, which is pure potentiality and as such non-existence and identified with evil. It is here that Plotinus draws out the distinctions between the corporeal, always subject to division spatially and temporally, and the incorporeal, where such division is excluded. For soul and intellect, this means that our language about them, as derived from sense experience, always needs to be corrected. Thus souls and intellects are many and one without the separation that the sensible involves. The infinite applied to them means first that they are not cut off from one another and second that they are powers that are never exhausted. Plotinus uses particularly human activities to illustrate this. For example, the power of speech is infinite in that it is not exhausted by any particular language nor by the innumerable number of languages that exist or could exist. In addition, this relationship is precisely where Plotinus changes Aristotle's notion of act and potency. The power of speech, for example,

is necessarily in act, giving rise to many languages as potential expressions of the power. The relationship of the power to its instances is non reciprocal: They depend on it but it does not depend on them. The instances, however, are related reciprocally, for any language can be translated into another. This reciprocal level is the original context for Aristotle's notion of act and potency.

Since intellect is the duality of being and knowing, it cannot be ultimate, which brings Plotinus to the One. This has roots in Plato, the Good beyond being of the *Republic* and the dialectical discussions of unity in the *Parmenides*, but Plotinus draws out the implications of these passages, aware that his is doing something not in Plato and the other Greek philosophers and is articulating what will be known in medieval thought as negative theology. Plotinus also articulates for the first time in the West the divine attributes: simplicity, unity, omnipresence, and God as beyond thought and being.

Y. A.: Is Neo-Platonism polemical doctrine of mediaeval Europe or is it a movement for enlightenment and liberation rooted in Greek Legacy? What impact does neo-Platonism give to the philosophical development in the renaissance? We are in new millennium. How would you prefer to read the three Neo-Platonic hypostases today? How it is read at philosophy departments in the United Sates?

G. M. G.: Plotinus' Neo-Platonism is the means by which late Classical and Medieval thinkers continue the Greek tradition. Classical and Medieval philosophy is characterized by a sense of the limitations of human knowledge, in which it is possible to articulate an understanding of reality and also recognize that no human articulation can ever be exhaustive, but can only point toward the real with the constant need for refinement. Renaissance thought explicitly exploits this Neo-Platonic element, especially with its rediscovery of all of

Plato's dialogues and the *Enneads* of Plotinus. Modern thinkers, such as Descartes and Kant, present a different and in my judgment more polemical approach to philosophy, looking for absolute certainty, in Descartes' terms, or an objective and universally valid proposition, in Kant's. Since this modern approach, in the guise of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, is still dominant in most departments in the United States, Plotinus and Neo-Platonism are often written off as obscure and muddled. In this new millennium, however, this approach presents a way in which the Western tradition itself can be recovered more authentically and provides an opportunity for that dialogue between cultures that Plotinus himself attempted but was never able to realize.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

G. M. G.: Thank you!

Bruce Smith

Bruce Smith earned his Ph.D. from University of Rochester. He has also taught in Georgetown University and Middlebury College. Smith studies the literature and culture of early modern England, including Shakespeare, gender, sexuality, acoustic ecology and historical phenomenology. Among his six published books, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* won the 2000 Roland H. Bainton Prize for Literature. He is the recipient of the several honors and awards such as

USC Distinguished Professor; British Academy-Huntington Library Research Fellowship; Guggenheim Fellowship; Distinguished Scholar Award, University of Rochester; Honorable Mention, John Ben Snow Prize; Roland Bainton Prize for Literature; International Globe Fellowship; Huntington Library Research Fellowship, Mellon Research Fellowship and National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship.

28. Renaissance/Early Modern Philosophy

Yubraj Aryal: Would you please simply begin from tracing the origin and characteristics of renaissance philosophical outlook? What social and civic specificities influence such viewpoint?

Bruce Smith: Like all philosophies, Renaissance philosophy was not the purely intellectual pursuit it might seem to be but a mechanism or thought-scheme for marking sense of a particular set of social, economic, political, and psychological circumstances. Renaissance philosophy served to help the men and women of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries find their places in a rapidly changing political and social world. As such, Renaissance philosophy stressed the centrality of mankind in the physical world and stressed the qualities that humankind was supposed to share with "lower" forms of existence (plants and animals) as well as with "higher" forms of existence (angels and God). These intellectual reference points had been provided by Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome. Renaissance philosophical thus negotiated chronological time as well as physical space.

Y. A.: Renaissance is often considered as the greatest cultural transformation–"an age to itself and a transition"–of western world. What really interests you about the age?

B. S.: Its syncretism, its capacity to take over propositions from a variety of philosophical systems (ancient and Christian) and to combine those propositions in ways that did not necessarily add up to a coherent system.

Y. A.: There are two contradictory views on renaissance? One assumes renaissance simply a cultural progress of medievalism while another holds it as a pessimism and

nostalgia for the bygone classical age, a cultural back leap, therefore a discontinuity from it. Which view you choose to be held? Why? However, we cannot claim one is better or worse than the other, isn't it?

B. S.: The lack of coherence that I mentioned in my latest response informs my answer here. Both pessimistic estimates of human potential and optimistic estimates were available to Renaissance thinkers. Different schools of ancient philosophy and of Christian philosophy offered varying positions along a continuum. I personally find myself fascinated by the muddled middle, if I can put it that way: by philosophical writers who would actually prefer to embrace an optimistic view of human possibility but who temper that impulse with skepticism. I find personally distasteful and intellectually narrow the writers who take a totally pessimistic view of human potential. As a genial skeptic, Michel de Montaigne remains my intellectual hero.

Y. A.: *Much the same question. Renaissance is revival of classics, therefore, it is not futurist. Do you agree? Isn't it problematic?*

The groundedness of Renaissance philosophy, Renaissance literature, and Renaissance visual art in the Greek and Roman past is actually very superficial. Although antiquity provided the plot materials and the visual subjects, the "take" on these materials and subjects was thoroughly contemporary. Renaissance writers and artists indulged various forms of nostalgia for the past, but their reference points remained very much situated in the present.

Y. A. *What is medievalism about renaissance philosophy?*

B. S.: In my view, primarily the need for a unitary deity as the guarantor of meaning.

Y. A.: *The shift of vector from God to Human, Divine to Nature has its significant impact on the progress of history of renaissance ideas. Would you explain how does the shift actually influence the history of ideas in the post-renaissance period?*

B. S.: The focus that I mentioned earlier on humankind as the center of creation, positioned halfway between beasts and divinity, did not really change in the seventeenth century, when modern science emerged as an institution of inquiry about the natural world. What changed was the necessary reference to the realm of existence "above" humankind. Humankind and human intelligence remained the central reference point, but the gaze of the inquirer was turned in one direction only, toward objects in the natural world, without any logically necessary reference to objects in the supernatural world.

Y. A.: *The birth of naturalistic philosophy has its inherent legacy in renaissance worldview. Would you explain how?*

B. S.: Let me just reiterate my response to the latest question. Naturalistic philosophy assumes the same human inquirer, with the same capacities of mind. It merely restricts the vision of that inquirer and limits it to objects in the visible, measurable natural world.

Y. A.: *Let me come to the recent practice of cultural reading on renaissance. What does early modern signify for renaissance? What is the 'political unconscious' of the early modern?*

B. S.: "Early modern" as an alternative to "Renaissance" stresses the links forward from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the links toward us) rather than the links backward (the links toward the cultures of Greece and Rome). What gets lost in this shift to the modern or post-

modern present is the primary orientation of Renaissance artists to their own intellectual and artistic heritage.

Y. A.: The cultural critics see reformation movement in renaissance led by Martin Luther nothing more than purist Judaic attempt against the Hellenized Christian impulse of renaissance, going back to Hellenistic age. A radical alternative perspective, isn't it?

B. S.: This is a loaded question, presupposing that I will agree, and I can't really do so. It seems to me (especially as someone raised in Protestant Christianity) that reformers like Luther were genuinely committed to re-forming existing religious practices and bringing them into line with the original principles of Christianity. More extreme reformers, like John Calvin, might be seen as proceeding for narrow Judaic principles. But not Martin Luther.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

B. S.: Thank you!

Andrea Nightingale

Andrea Nightingale is a Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature at Stanford University. Her works include: *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Constructs of Philosophy* and *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context*.

29. Greco-Roman Poetics, Art and Aesthetics

Yubraj Aryal: What does Plato think of art and aesthetics? What leads him to devalue art?

Andrea Nightingale: Plato deals primarily with poetry, though he does make some analogies with the visual arts. In Plato's day, the notion of "aesthetics" had not yet entered into Western culture–that came later. Still, Plato's attacks on poetry, and his discussions on beauty, do contribute to the many debates that emerged later in the field of aesthetics.

In Classical Greek culture, poetry was performed in a huge number of venues–panhellenic religious festivals, primary schools for children, private parties and symposia, and many other public places. Every Greek individual heard and saw poetic performances. Poetry thus had a similar impact on the Greeks that television has on American culture. Although poetic texts did not generally advance a single political agenda, poetry did have a massive impact on social and political ideologies. Up to the end of the fifth century BCE, Greece was an oral culture. Although some people did learn to read and write, the technology of writing did not fully take hold until the fourth century BCE (note that writing did not eclipse or replace the oral and poetic culture in this period— the public performances of poetry and rhetoric still dominated the scene).

Plato wrote his dialogues in the fourth century BCE. He had misgivings about the technology of writing, but he nonetheless wrote texts designed for the cultural elite in Greece, i.e. those men who had the education, the money, and the leisure that enabled them to acquire and read long texts. In some of his dialogues, especially the *Ion* and the *Republic*, Plato attacked the poets. We must remember that

the specialized discipline of philosophy did not exist until Plato himself created this discipline and put it on the map. To do this, he needed to take on the poets, who were the greatest rivals to the new discipline of philosophy. There is perhaps no more famous formulation in the Platonic corpus than Socrates' assertion in book ten of the *Republic* that there is an "ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry." As I have argued, "philosophy" was a discipline that did not have an ancient pedigree: it is Plato who first used the term to designate a specific intellectual enterprise. It is Plato, in fact, who first identifies "poetry" as an arch-enemy of this unfamiliar thing called "philosophy." Plato's suggestion that there is an "ancient quarrel" between these two genres should not be interpreted as true historical reportage; rather, it is part of a bold rhetorical strategy designed to define philosophy and invest it with a near-timeless status.

In his attacks on the poets, Plato focused primarily on epic and dramatic poems (which had the greatest currency in the culture). In the *Republic*, Plato claimed that poetry purveyed wrong values and false ideologies. In particular, Plato objected to the genre of tragedy, which dramatized noble and "good" people falling from happiness to unhappiness through some chance event. For Plato, one's happiness depended entirely on one's inner character: virtue and goodness were necessary and sufficient for leading a "happy" life (one achieved this kind of virtue by practicing philosophy and searching for ethical truths). Since it is virtue that makes one happy, one cannot "fall" into unhappiness when one loses "external" things such as health, wealth, and freedom. These externals have no impact on one's happiness if one practices philosophy correctly. In the genres of epic and tragedy, the heroes suffer catastrophe, and they appear to be falling from happiness and goodness into misery. Plato objected to this: the heroes in poetic texts were ignorant and did not

have good values; in short, they were already (as it were) fallen. According to Plato, the epic and tragic poems promoted the idea that one's happiness was dependent on chance, and not on one's own character.

As a philosopher promulgating a radical set of ideas about the world, Plato picked a quarrel with the poets: these famous authors purport to tell the truth about the world but (contrary to popular belief) they lack real authority. They do not possess knowledge, and thus end up passing off falsehoods as truths. In fact, Plato claims, Greek poetry traffics in virtual rather than true reality. This kind of literature does severe damage to spectators and readers, who defer to the awesome authority of the poets and accept the world-view contained in their poems. The audience internalizes the false ideas and values set forth by the poets, and then re-enacts these in their everyday lives.

In arguing for this position, Plato set forth a number of ideas that have proven central to the discipline of literary criticism. First and foremost, he introduced the concept of *mimesis*. Plato uses this term in several different ways, and this makes it difficult to translate. Since the Greek word *mimesis* originally signified "miming" or "acting like" someone (or something) in speech or in action, it is often translated as "imitation." But Plato turns this word into a technical term, and gives it a much broader range of meaning. He reconceived *mimesis* in philosophical terms: in its primary sense, it is the artistic *representation*–be it visual or verbal–of agents and events in the world. The literary author "imitates" or--more precisely–"represents" these things in the medium of language. What is the nature of this artistic representation? This is a complex philosophical question that continues to be debated today. According to Plato, the artistic representation has a different status than the people, objects, and events in the ordinary world: literature does not depict the *reality* of its objects but

rather portrays the way they *appear*. In some sense, this may seem obvious: a fictional representation clearly differs from the agents and actions in the real world. Reality and fiction are ontologically distinct. But how exactly do they differ?

Plato offers a very complex philosophical answer to this question. According to Plato, true reality resides in a metaphysical, divine sphere above and beyond the human realm. He calls the physical world we live in the realm of "becoming" or "appearance." The things that we apprehend with our senses are not fully real. Only metaphysical Beings, which are grasped by the mind after arduous philosophical labor, are "really real" (as Plato famously put it). The things in our world resemble–but fall short of--true reality. They look and seem like real beings, but are nonetheless mere appearances. In Plato's dualistic philosophy, the metaphysical realm is ontologically superior to the physical world of becoming: the former is truly real, whereas the latter only appears real. In addition, metaphysical reality is the locus of true ethical values: real Goodness (Justice, etc.)– rather than apparent goodness–is the only thing that can guide us aright in our ethical actions and decisions. Plato, then, creates a hierarchy in which metaphysical beings are privileged over those in the physical world.

But if the world around us is mere appearance, then what is the status of artistic *mimesis*? According to Plato, *mimesis* represents things in the realm of appearance rather than reality. Literary authors do not represent the real, metaphysical realm; indeed they know nothing about it (only philosophers can glimpse metaphysical reality, and they tend not to be artists). These authors deal exclusively with the human and/or physical realm. In short, the literary author creates a verbal representation of agents, objects, and events in the realm of appearance–a representation of something that is not fully real and not fully good. It gets

even worse: the verbal representation is a mere "image" of the things in our world. This image, in fact, is even less real than the things in the realm of appearance. In explicating the notion of literary representation as an "image," Plato compares literary texts to paintings: like painting, literature imitates the look and surface of things (even though its medium is language). Literary *mimesis*, then, is a verbal image of the things in the realm of appearance--an imitation of things that are not fully real. There is a vast gap, then, between *mimesis* and true reality. If the world of appearance is one step removed from that of reality, then *mimesis* is several steps removed: at best, the famous texts of the Greek literary tradition offer nothing but fantasy and illusion.

In addition to his objections to the ontological status of the poetic "image," Plato also objected to the fact that poetry aroused and "nourished" emotions and passions that undermined philosophical reasoning. Although Plato celebrates philosophic *eros*–and therefore does not object to all desire and passion–he argues that most people desire the wrong things. They long for wealth, power, honor and physical pleasures. These desires are tied up with what Plato believes is the "wrong" (unphilosophical) value system. As he claims, we desire the wrong things–things that do not lead to goodness or happiness.

According to Plato, a poetic performance in which a heroic ("noble") character falls from grace into a state of misery directly affects the viewer's character. But why should this be the case? To be sure, the viewer may "sympathize" with the fictional characters who are in grief and despair, but this need not affect his or her inner character. After all, the spectator is at a distance from these fictional characters. Plato believed that, in spite of this spectatorial distance, the viewer's sympathetic identification with a fictional character reinforces a specific value system: when one grieves over a man who has lost his wealth, honor, or

power, one ascribes to the belief that wealth, honor and power are "good" things. This was the dominant value system in ancient Greek culture (and in our own culture). For Plato, to experience tragic emotions while watching poetic performances weakens the viewer's own character and makes him or her susceptible to irrational and "bad" emotions. Most emotions work against philosophical reasoning, and thus undermine one's attempt to live a philosophical life.

Plato did, however, have a very strong sense of beauty. In two dialogues, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, Plato discusses the "Form" of Beauty. To be sure, this Form is a metaphysical being–one cannot see this beauty in the physical realm. But Plato did argue that beautiful things in the physical world–especially the beautiful male body– played an important role in the practice of philosophy. Many people think of Plato as a body-hating philosopher, since his dualistic philosophy elevates the metaphysical and incorporeal realm over the "lowly" physical world. But Plato understood the power that physical beauty has on the human viewer. The beautiful human body can generate an erotic response–a response which (he believes) is perfectly natural. Plato takes this basic human response to a beautiful body and makes it into a "first step" towards the philosophic contemplation of the Form of Beauty. While many people will be arrested at level of physical beauty, the philosopher moves beyond this simple response to a beautiful body and comes to "see" that this is but one example of beauty. The erotic response to a beautiful physical body incites the philosophic person to move "upwards" towards higher beauties. Note that it is *eros* that enables the philosopher to seek for metaphysical beauty and truth. Plato's philosophy is deeply erotic: Plato is not a mere rationalist who rejected all passions and emotions. For Plato, beauty and goodness were ontologically intertwined. Many have attacked Plato for

linking beauty to goodness. As they have suggested, beautiful objects can be, and often are, value neutral if not morally "bad." Why link beauty to goodness? Plato's conception of the erotic response to bodily beauty, and the philosophic eros for the metaphysical Form of Beauty, inaugurated a long debate about the relation of ethics to aesthetics—a debate that continues to this day.

Y. A.: How does Platonic hermeneutics influence the Greco-Roman poetics?

A. N.: I assume that you mean by "hermeneutics" Plato's response to literary and artistic texts. Many of the philosophical schools in Antiquity responded, either implicitly or explicitly, to Plato's attack on poetry. I will leave aside Aristotle, whom I will discuss below. Certainly the Stoics and Epicureans dealt with the question of how poetic texts–especially texts that incited emotions—affected philosophical thinking (note that Lucretius, in the *De Rerum Natura*, goes against Epicurean philosophy–and against Plato's attacks on poetry–in choosing to write an Epicurean text in dactylic hexameter). Since these philosophical schools argued that emotions should be massively controlled if not eradicated, they share Plato's suspicion of poetry. But these schools rejected dualism, and did not share Plato's views on physical and metaphysical beauty. For this reason, they placed no value on the physical beauty of human bodies. Note, for example, Lucretius' attack on physical beauty in his discussion of sexual obsession in the *De Rerum Natura*.

Of course the later poets were aware of Plato's work—the Hellenistic poet, Callimachus, offers a very sophisticated attack on Plato's views on poetry. And Roman writers such as Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Petronius (to name but a few) offered poetic meditations on the value of poetic and the visual arts. Needless to say, the Christian writers took an

entirely different approach to the notions of ethics and aesthetics. To put it simply, the Bible became the measure of the ethical and (correlatively) aesthetic value of all literary texts. Obviously, the Christian writers tended to reject "pagan" texts, both literary and philosophical. Yet Christian writers such as Augustine were profoundly influenced by Platonism (via the neoplatonists). In the *Confessions*, Platonic philosophy is the last step on Augustine's journey towards the conversion to the Christian god. Though Augustine moves "beyond" Platonism, his theology is deeply informed by Platonic thought.

Needless to say, Augustine's focus was on biblical hermeneutics–the "truths" that he found in the Hebrew and Christian Bible completely overshadowed Platonic philosophical positions. We do see Augustine worrying about the ways that poetic performances generate emotions of pity and grief that stand in stark opposition to Christian values (e.g. his grief, when he was a youth, for Virgil's Dido). Here, we find a clear echo of Plato's attacks on poetic texts that stand in opposition to "Truth." In addition, Augustine was horrified at the way that physical beauty pulled people away from God and towards sexuality and worldly pleasures. Although Augustine uses the metaphor of erotic passion in his descriptions of his love for God, he dissociates this erotic love entirely from the love of beautiful human bodies.

Y. A.: And also twentieth century literary theories?

A. N.: Philosophers and intellectuals have been attacking Platonic philosophy for millennia. In the last two centuries, there have been powerful attacks on Platonic dualism. In addition, many thinkers have rejected Plato's views on poetry (while celebrating Aristotle's "rescue" of poetry from Plato's evil clutches). As a literary theorist, Plato focused on passages which express specific values and propositions (not

surprisingly, his analyses of individual texts are extremely blunt and reductive). Plato showed no interest in the beauty or technical artistry of literary texts; rather, he looked at the ways that they reflect and endorse particular ideologies. In a dialogue called the "Gorgias", in fact, he explicitly states that poetic and literary discourse is nothing other than rhetoric dressed up in fancy language: it functions in the same way as the prosaic rhetoric used in the social and political sphere. In developing this critical approach, Plato anticipates (in some ways) the contemporary theoretical method known as "new historicism," which analyzes literary texts as socio-political discourses rather than as timeless aesthetic objects. Of course Plato differs from these critics in believing that some special individuals—philosophers–can transcend the social realm and contemplate metaphysical truths that exist beyond time and space. In fact, modern and postmodern theorists strenuously reject the claim that the philosopher (or any human being) can transcend history and culture; indeed they deny the very existence of a metaphysical realm of meaning and truth. Nonetheless, Plato's approach to literature bears a significant resemblance to that of new historicists and neo-marxist literary critics. Like these theorists, Plato rejects the idea (espoused, in the modern period, by "new criticism" and certain formalist theories) that one should examine texts as aesthetic objects rather than as socio-political discourses: for Plato, there is no separate aesthetic sphere with its own set of norms and truths.

We must remember that Plato's discussions of literature serve his own philosophical and political agenda: he is not just a literary critic, but a censorious judge of his culture and its discourses. Plato studied the interaction of language and power in the democratic city-state of Athens, looking in particular at the ways that literary and rhetorical discourse affected popular opinion (and, ultimately, political decision-

making). He thus had a great deal to say about the way that literary texts influenced the values and attitudes of their audiences. In sum, in spite of his claim that traditional literature promulgates false ideas, Plato inaugurated an approach to literary criticism that is now very much in vogue: the examination of literary texts in their cultural, socio-political context (though Plato used this mode of criticism to serve a very different agenda, and his tendentious interpretations of individual texts conceal the true merits of the historicist approach). Aristotle, as we will see, offered a completely different conception of literary texts. Literature, he claimed, should be judged by artistic criteria rather than in moral or ideological terms. Aristotle separated literary texts from their socio-political context, and analyzed them in aesthetic, formalistic terms. In fact, he explicitly encouraged the critic to ignore the live performance of tragedies: one should read literature in private rather than analyze its operations in the public realm. Aristotle thus anticipates the formalistic approach to literature developed in the twentieth century. Ironically, Aristotle rescued literature by writing a dry philosophical treatise, while Plato attacks literary texts while producing some of the most complex pieces of literature ever written.

Y. A.: *Art is an ideal representation of nature where all her deficiencies are furnished. Art holds prototype in individual phenomenon. This is what Aristotle views art, isn't it? My question: how universal prototype of mimesis is expressed in an individual art work for him?*

A. N.: I do not think that Aristotle conceives of art as an "ideal representation of nature." Art operates in a fashion very different from that of the natural world. Aristotle does of course claim that poetry deals more with universals, and therefore is more philosophical than historical texts (which deal with particular events). When he talks about artworks that "deal with universals," Aristotle refers to specific types of plot–plots that present specific types of characters (which differ according to gender, class, and age) and that feature actions that occur "by necessity or probability." Aristotle valued the kind of plot that is "unified," i.e. that has a beginning, middle, and end that are all tied together by actions that are causally related to one another. There are specific "formal" aspects of good plots in tragedy: reversals (especially the fall from good fortune to bad fortune), recognition scenes, and *pathos* or suffering. In a tragedy, the protagonists possess a specific set of character traits: certain kinds of characters will perform certain kinds of actions. Each choice, each action, leads directly to specific and "necessary" consequences. Aristotle opposes "random" actions and events, and rejects divine intervention within the space of a play. He objects to "external" factors that make the plot look improbable or random. There is not, then, a "universal prototype" of mimesis in an artwork: there are, however, a set of character types and of plot forms that constitute "successful" tragedies.

Y. A.: *What is the ethical status of art for Aristotle? How does it contradict with Plato?*

A. N.: In the *Poetics*, Aristotle offered a different and very un-Platonic theory of the audience's response to tragic literature. Why, he asks, does a viewer or reader experience pleasure at the artistic representation of tragic events that would horrify him in real life? Plato issued a rather blunt answer to this question: human beings have, among their many psychic appetites, the desire to weep, feel anger, and express strong emotions. They long to experience these emotions, and take pleasure in tragedy because it satisfies their appetite for emotional indulgence. Tragedy represents characters experiencing intense sorrows and emotions, and it encourages the audience to feel the same feelings as the characters (i.e. to sympathize, or "feel with" them). Tragedy does not bring a healthful release of pent-up emotions;

rather, it leads the reader/viewer to be more emotional in everyday life and less able to act rationally.

Plato, of course, believes that people should not engage in highly emotional and self-indulgent behavior, and thus considers tragic drama an especially harmful literary genre. Aristotle strenuously disagrees. He argues that people feel pleasure when reading tragic literature not because they want to experience the exact same emotions as the fictional characters. We don't read or watch a tragedy because we enjoy tears, rage, and manic emotions. The pleasure we take in tragedy is *aesthetic*: we enjoy the *representation* of tragic events because it offers an "artistic taming of the horrible" (as the German philosopher Nietzsche put it). According to Aristotle, tragic literature arouses a very specific set of emotions–pity and fear–and brings about a healthful and pleasurable experience called *catharsis*.

Aristotle's use of the word *catharsis* is difficult to translate. The Greek word most commonly means "purgation" or "purification," but Aristotle uses the word as a technical term (which departs, to some extent, from common usage). What does he mean by *catharsis*, and how does tragic literature bring this about? According to Aristotle, tragic plots and characters are designed to arouse pity and fear in the audience. The audience does not experience the exact same feelings as the fictional characters; indeed, it experiences a very different set of emotions. When reading or seeing a tragedy, we feel pity for the characters who suffer, but we do not feel *their* pain. In fact, the emotion of pity depends on a certain distance between the viewer and the sufferer–we feel pity when we are *not* personally involved in another's suffering but rather watching from an external vantage point. Aristotle makes it clear that we only feel pity for people who are good–no one feels sorry for an evil man if he comes to harm. The tragic hero, then, must be a good man or woman who does not deserve misfortune. But this character must not be a perfect paragon of virtue–he or she must have some sort of flaw that contributes to the tragic events. This flaw does not render the character a bad or unworthy person; rather, he or she is humanly good rather than superhumanly perfect. Tragedy, in short, deals with *human* life and limitations.

In the course of a tragedy, the hero must experience a reversal of fortune–a fall from happiness to misery. When we witness a good character experience a serious reversal, we feel pity for that individual. But we also feel fear. As Aristotle puts it, we pity the character and *fear for ourselves*. Why do we experience this fear? Since the fictional characters are good but not perfect individuals, they are in some sense like us–they are human beings, and suffer losses and calamities that happen to people in real life. While we, as readers, maintain a degree of distance from the characters, we nonetheless identify with them as human beings. When we encounter tragic characters and events in literature, we are led to experience our own humanity and sense the extraordinary vulnerability that characterizes every human life. When reading a tragic text, we experience "fear for ourselves"–we fear that we too will (at some point) suffer misfortune, loss, and death. We do not, of course, fear that we will experience the same calamity as the fictional character; rather, we fear for our mortality and vulnerability in general.

Tragic literature, then, is designed to arouse these two emotions–pity and fear–to a high pitch. But it also brings about a *catharsis* of these emotions. The audience does not end up becoming weaker, more emotional, and more irrational–as Plato suggests–but rather undergoes a pleasurable and healthy emotional experience. What exactly is the nature of *catharsis*? Scholars have offered many different interpretations of *catharsis*. Some argue that it is an intellectual "clarification": the audience learns something

about humanity, and learning produces pleasure. According to this view, *catharsis* is a fundamentally cognitive experience: we gain a clearer and better sense of the world, and thus end up feeling better and wiser when the tragedy draws to a close. Other scholars argue that *catharsis* is a "purgation" of the emotions–a release of strong feelings that leaves us feeling drained but also relieved. While reading or viewing a tragedy does involve cognition, they claim, *catharsis* itself is an emotional rather than a cognitive experience. According to this view, the tragic plot and characters arouse our pity and fear to a very high degree, but end up releasing and purging these very emotions, thus producing pleasure.

Because Aristotle does not define or explain the nature of *catharsis*, the term is open to many interpretations. Although I favor the latter view, I believe that the notion of *catharsis* does not fully explain Aristotle's conception of tragic pleasure. For we do not feel pleasure simply because our emotions are purged: we also enjoy the *artistry* of tragic literature. Part of tragic pleasure must surely involve a response to the beauty of (well-written) tragic texts: amazingly, some writers do indeed artistically "tame the horrible," creating beauty out of ugly and horrible events. Aristotle makes this point explicitly in a (little-read) treatise called the *Parts of Animals*: as he claims, the technical and artistic arrangement of ugly materials makes things that are ugly in life beautiful in art. Aesthetic beauty brings pleasure to the reader or viewer regardless of its subject matter.

Aristotle's approach to literature anticipates modern formalistic approaches. Turning his back on cultural and ideological issues, he focuses primarily on the formal and technical aspects of literature. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle offers a detailed typology of literary plots, character, and styles. In effect, he was the first to offer a systematic analysis of the *art* of literature–the *Poetics* is, in the literal sense, a technical study (note that *techne* is the Greek word for "art" or "craft"). Aristotle thus develops an aesthetic approach that stands in stark contrast to the historicist approach of Plato. Aristotle rescues literature from Plato's attacks, claiming that the power and pleasure of fiction actually benefit the audience. As we have seen, Aristotle also discusses (although rather briefly) the way that particular plots and characters target and arouse specific emotions. In this part of the *Poetics*, he goes beyond formalism to consider issues of reader-response. He takes this inquiry further in a text called the *Politics*, where he separates literature that has an educative function (which should be used in schools) from genres that provide pleasure and cathartic release (which are good for adults). Aristotle thus shares with Plato a concern with the readers and viewers response to literary texts; but he argues that good literature has a positive effect on the psyche, whereas Plato believed that almost all literature damaged the health of the soul.

Y. A.: *Would you please survey two lines of thought evolving out of Plato and Aristotle's mimetic concepts of art and their respective influences in the poetics, art and aesthetic of latter ages?*

A. N.: Please see above for my suggestion that Plato anticipates neo-Marxist and "new historical" literary theories, whereas Aristotle lays the foundation for formalist theories and, to some extent, theories that look at "art for art's sake."

Y. A.: *Then, what is the neo-Platonic concept of art and its form? How does art arouse sublime feelings in us?*

A. N.: I assume that you are referring here to Longinus. Longinus created the notion of the sublime in literature. The conception of the sublime was picked up by European thinkers in the 18th and 19th centuries. In British

and German aesthetic theories, certain philosophers and theorists focused on sublime natural objects and artistics texts (with the exception of Kant, whose theory of the sublime focused almost exclusively on "wild nature," the theorists dealt primarily with sublimity in literary and rhetorical texts and referred to nature as an analogue). Longinus himself focused on literary texts, though he did draw analogies between the "vast" and "sublime" passages in literary texts with gigantic natural things such as the ocean or the sun. Longinus did not emphasize formalistic aspects of a given text; in fact, he tended to pull one or another "sublime" passage out of a larger text. He did not, then, identify the "sublime" as a formal aspect or quality in literary. Longinus finds sublimity in many different authors and in many different genres. Homer and Plato take pride of place, but many other authors offer "sublime" passages. For Longinus, a passage is "sublime" if it elevates the reader, for a short time, above the human world. According to Longinus, "nature breathed into us a passion for what is greater and more divine than ourselves. . .our ideas often pass beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed." Certain literary passages or texts, according to Longinus, offer the reader a sense of the boundlessness or his or her own "soul." We must remember that the conception of the "sublime" in literature is very much contested. Not everyone feels "elevated" by passages in Homer and Plato (or any other author). One may take pleasure in literary texts, and even feel exhilarated, without experiencing the "sublime" (with all of its metaphysical baggage).

All of the writers who discuss the "sublime" use the analogy of the overwhelming impact that a natural force can have on a human being. In these cases, a perons who is in a place of safety feels dwarfed or overwhelmed by some sort of natural entity or being. How does the "sublime" effect of literary passages compare to the "sublime" experience of vast and overwhelming natural forces? As I see it, there is something problematic in the very effort to draw an analogy between the response we have to a literary passage and to some vast being or entity in nature (mountains, the ocean, the stars in the vast spaces of the universe). Certainly we respond differently to a natural phenomenon and to a human artifact. Human artifacts are not "boundless," "superhuman" or "nonhuman." One does not feel overwhelmed by "great" passages in literature in the same way that one feels overwhelmed when (for example) one gazes upon the countless millions of stars on a clear night. More work needs to be done in theorizing the psychological and the physiological differences between the experience of human artifacts and that of vast and seemingly boundless nonhuman entities or beings.

Y. A.: What impact does neo-Platonism give thereby to the philosophical and artistic development in the western traditions? `

A. N.: We find in Renaissance Humanists such as Castiglione, Pico, and Ficino a turn towards Platonism, and in particular an emphasis on Plato's conception of eros and of beauty. And, as I have suggested, 18th ad 19th century British and German thinkers and philosophers picked up on Longinus' theory of the sublime. It is important to note, however, that this "reception" of neoplatonic thinkers occurred in specific cultural and historical periods. In the last few centuries, thinkers and writers have turned their back on this tradition. They have rejected Platonic metaphysics and turned towards history, culture, and "situated knowledge." Instead of looking for transhistorical Beauty or Truth, writers and thinkers began to focus on cultural specificity and the diversity of values.

Y. A.: *Are humanity's desire to return to mythic home and art's strive to return to the whole identical? How does art itself accomplish such a return journey to the whole? Is it a return from the life itself?*

A. N.: I do not believe that all humans seek to "return to a mythic home." While nostalgia is a common feeling for many people, this does not add up to a desire to return to a mythic home. In modernity and postmodernity, the very notion of a "mythic home" has been called into question. In the West, with the advent of the Enlightenment, many thinkers turned their backs on "superstition" and "religion," which relied on "mythic" notions rather than on reason or science. Many 20th century writers register this rejection of religion and myth as some form of loss, a "disenchantment." Others, by contrast, celebrate this move away from "naïve" religious and spiritual beliefs. In the many wars in the last century, millions of people have lost their homes and their families. These people are seeking to find a home in new and unfamiliar places. This is not a search for a "mythic" home but for an actual home. Some artworks do, of course, evince a sense of nostalgia. As a subject for inquiry, I would focus not so much on a search for a "mythic home" but rather on the notion of nostalgia and the search for identity in a world where one's identity is regularly called into question.

Y. A.: *How does an artist struggle to impose beauty on the art work? Where does beauty exist before the artist imposes it on the matter (please bear Longinus in mind here)?*

A. N.: I am not an artist, but my guess is that artists do not "impose" beauty on their artworks. The beauty that they are searching for–a beauty which can, to many, appear ugly and even horrifying–emerges in their engagement with their materials (verbal, historical, material). While there are beautiful things to be found in abundance in the external world, artists do not simply "imitate" or "import" this beauty into their works. I share Kant's view that beauty does not "exist" as a quality within a given artwork. I do not believe that beauty has an ontological status as a "property" of an artwork. It is the human beholder or reader who experiences something beautiful; and each person finds beauty in different sorts of things. Much depends on taste.

Y. A.: *A very philosophical insight about aesthetic! Beauty without being could not be, nor being voided of beauty . . . , says Plotinus. How are beauty and being identical?*

A. N.: As I suggested above, Plato believed that the Forms of Beauty and Goodness were intertwined. For Plato, the Forms were the most "real" things in the universe. One could say, then, that "real" beauty and "real" goodness are intertwined in Plato. Plotinus makes a similar claim here: "true" reality is beautiful. These are huge metaphysical claims! First, I myself find beauty in physical rather than metaphysical beings. For me, "reality" is right here on earth. And, for this reason, I find that much of reality is ugly and horrifying. This makes my experiences of beauty precious and joyful.

Y. A.: *Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!*

A. N.: Thank you! It was a pleasure to discuss these issues with you.

Andrew Hadfield

Andrew Hadfield is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. He is the author of numerous work on English Renaissance Literature and Culture, including *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, awarded the Roland H. Bainton Prize for Literature by the Sixteenth-Century Society Conference (2006), *Shakespeare, Spenser and The Matter of Britain*; *Literature, Travel and Colonialism in the English Renaissance, 1540-1625*, *Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruyt and Salvage Soyl*, and *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance*. He has also edited, with Raymond Gillespie, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Vol. III: The Irish Book in English, 1550-1800*; with Patrick Cheney and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion*, and *Amazons, Savages and Machievals: An anthology of travel and colonial writing, 1550-1650*. He is editor of Renaissance Studies, Arden Critical Companions (with Paul Hammond), and Early Modern Literature in History (with edric Broan) and is also a regular contributor to The Times Literary Supplement.

30. Renaissance Poetics, Art and Aesthetics

Yubraj Aryal: How do Renaissance scholars think about humanism when they study literature, art and philosophy?

Andrew Hadfield: I think it is very important to distinguish between what we tend to think of as humanism and how it was defined in Renaissance Europe. For us, humanism means the study of mankind and has a secular flavour, suggesting that there is a tension between religious belief and humanism. Humanism is defined as a belief in human-based value systems and a concern for human values. In the Renaissance humanism was really an educational programme, based on the recovery of the classics after the fall of Constantinople and the subsequent spread of classical learning, much of which had been obscured for over a thousand years. Authors such as Lucretius were unknown throughout the Middle Ages but became significant when manuscript copies of their works were rediscovered, edited and published using the newly develop printing press, and so circulated throughout Europe. There was a potential tension between the study of classical texts and ideas inspired by humanism and Christian belief and it is notable that many Christian authors, especially the 'hotter' sort of Protestants (sometimes called 'puritans'), were skeptical of the value of classical learning. Certain key major authors felt very ambivalent about the relationship between Christian and classical learning (or, at least, their works suggest that they did). Edmund Spenser's famous description of the destruction of the Bower of Bliss, by the Knight of Temperance, Guyon, has been read to indicate that the author felt a conflict between the joys of classical learning and the stern dictates of the Bible. George Herbert expressed the same dilemma in *The Temple*, especially in the poems 'Jordan I' and 'Jordan II', which are about the appropriate

praise of God and the right way to use language, whether elaborate metaphors and classical imagery should be used, or whether God would prefer more austere language. Such arguments usually point towards a conclusion that the language of the psalms is the most appropriate for poetry. Perhaps the clearest expression of the conflict between classical culture and Christianity is in the work of John Milton, who abandons his earlier use of epic similes derived from classical epic (Homer and Virgil) in favour of Biblical language in *Paradise Regained*. I do wonder sometimes that, despite these examples, the problem is overstated and that most authors did not find the conflict between Christianity and humanism such a burning issue. After all, the educational programmes established in Elizabethan England made room for a culture of argument based largely on the work of Cicero and no one seemed too worried that this was a threat to Christianity.

I have answered the question using examples from English Literature, my field of expertise, but I think the same is true of philosophy and art. The advent of humanism did not spell the end of religion, or indeed of images when the churches divided after the Reformation. As many scholars have pointed out, when religion became a subject that had to be debated and argued about the nature of religious debate was transformed from one in which religion was part of the intellectual furniture to one which was more learned and confrontational. There were more texts and images with religious subject matter in the Renaissance than before. My colleagues in Art History and Philosophy frequently point out that the proper study of the period requires scholars and students to read and observe endless amounts of religious work and not to think that Pico Della Mirandola's 'Oration on the Dignity of Man' or Leonardo's Vitruvian man are typical works that signal a new intellectual dawn. Most texts

and artefacts were religious in the sixteenth century in Europe.

Y. A. How are realism and human emotion articulated in these disciplines?

A. H.: There was a school of thought many years ago, inspired largely by medieval scholars, which argued that there was a sharp break between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages there was a theocentric universe which subsumed all thought; with the advent of man, often seen as taking place in *Hamlet* (I am not joking!), this universe disappeared and people started to think in terms of humanity. Many people are skeptical of this narrative, myself included. I have often been attacked as someone who thinks that no real change took place from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, which is a travesty of my position, although one I have perhaps inadvertently encouraged on occasions. I am more concerned that we do not think of period labels as providing such overarching explanations of cultural shifts because societies are explained more in terms of the laws of uneven development making it hard to chart a definite break or straightforward transformation. To give one rather crude example: Italian society in the fifteenth century was very different to its English counterpart. The former consisted of a series of small republican city-states, many of them very wealthy and sophisticated, even if they were often at war with each other. England was a monarchy, striving to centralize but locked in a protracted civil war. The art and culture of each society was vastly different and it is not easy to compare Bellini, Masaccio, and Boticelli to their obscure English counterparts, nor Sir Thomas Malory and John Lydgate to Matteo Boiardo. As many scholars have argued, we should be looking at history as a discontinuous process, which is not as easy to map as has often been assumed. And, in order to bring this round to your question, it is therefore unsafe to

assume that man was an invention of the Renaissance and that only in art, literature and culture produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries do we see the beginnings of a modern, tradition of individualism. Medieval writers were acutely aware of subjectivity and individuality, as any reader of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* or Petrarch's *Rime sparse* would know. It is hard to chart a history of realism and the emotions in literature if we think of them as being a modern phenomenon. This is not to say that there were not developments and changes over time or that some authors had a more sophisticated sense of the human than others. Harold Bloom has alleged, with deliberate exaggeration, that Shakespeare invented the human and it is true that Shakespeare appears to be more interested in characters than most other writers, partly because he was a dramatist, but we might also see it as his particular contribution to literature.

Y. A.: What is the renaissance concept of the perfect Man? And how it is articulated in art and literature?

A. H.: This is a question that used to be asked a great deal but which has now fallen off the intellectual map. My answer to the previous two questions gives some idea of why scholars are less interested in this question than they used to be. The dominant scholar who is associated with Renaissance views of man and who made the relevant texts available was Paul Kristeller who died at an advanced age in 1999. There was an approach to Renaissance literature and culture, still around when I was a student in the 1980s, which looked at conceptions of mankind, humanism and the philosophy that developed out of the Italian city states, usually related to Pico's 'Oration' and Lorenzo Valla's 'Dialogue on Free Will'. There is now much skepticism about the value of this approach, not because such works were not important (they clearly were), but because we have a more nuanced understanding of the progress and history of

Renaissance thought and culture. It is no longer assumed that northern Europeans simply adopted the ideas of their southern European counterparts, which spread north slowly and surely. Instead, people think much more in terms of a diverse Renaissance which developed in different ways in different areas just as it developed in a chronologically diverse manner. The term the 'Northern Renaissance' is used to describe what happened in Germany, the Scandanavian countries, the Low Countries, and Britain, and to recognize that figures like Sir Thomas More and Desiderius Erasmus were not simply responding to Italian ideas but were developing their own. I don't think there is a concept of the perfect man, unless one looks at a painting such as Raphael's 'School of Athens' (c.1511), and notes that the perfect age of man was assumed to be about thirty, old enough to be past the follies of youth, experienced and young enough not to have the indignities of middle and old age setting in (expanding waistline, loss of, er, memory, and so on). But beyond this, I cannot really see much point in pressing the concept too hard.

Y. A.: Did Renaissance art and literature inspire ideas derived from classical humanism that contradicted the spiritual message of the Christian church. Were art and literature in conflict with church teachings?

A. H.: Again, this is a hard question to answer easily and straightforwardly. I am not sure that there was such an obvious conflict as has often been assumed, although clearly certain works affronted the religious authorities and art and literature made them nervous. It is no accident that the Papacy established an index of prohibited books, nor that in England censorship concentrated on religious subjects. It is, in fact, amazing what you could often get away with if you did not stray into representing religious subjects or offend mighty people and cause a scandal. As a result authors and painters often carefully steered their work away from direct

representation of religious subjects and issues. Obliquely, works often hinted at religious problems, or, more commonly, problems that had a religious dimension (which most problems did). Sometimes authors adopted a directly confrontational stance as Christopher Marlowe appears to have done in his plays and poetry (although not everyone agrees). His plays *Tamburlaine the Great parts one and two* show the humble Scythian shepherd rising to be the great conqueror of most of Asia, defeating the great Ottoman and Turkish empires. The allied Christian opposition under the leadership of the Hungarians behave treacherously and are deservedly defeated when they break an oath for their own advantage. Only when Tamberlaine curses the Koran does he become ill and die, a link which must have troubled a contemporary English audience. Many think Marlowe's early death was closely connected to his hostile and cynical approach to Christianity and he was described as an atheist by his contemporaries. Others are less sure and think that Marlowe was less transgressive than many imagine. But he is a good example of this conflict between art and literature and the religious authorities, one that, I would argue, is an exception that proves the rule. Remember that Sandro Botticelli was inspired by the religious crusader, Girolamo Savonarola; Erasmus produced an edition of the Bible; Raphael and Michelangelo were employed by the Pope; John Milton was nothing if not a Protestant author; George Herbert and John Donne became churchmen after having careers at court; Ben Jonson converted to Catholicism, and so on. There are far more examples of authors who worked within religious frameworks (even if they were not always orthodox and did push the boundaries of faith) than those who declared an open hostility to religion.

Y. A.: What vestiges of medievalism can be traced in renaissance art and literature?

A. H.: A great deal! But then I am someone who wants to break down the absolute division between medieval and Renaissance art and literature. Again, I stress that it is not the case that I see no change at all from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Clearly the advent of technology, especially printing; new techniques in art, such as more sophisticated notions of perspective, a notion central to Erwin Panofsky's ideas about Renaissance art; the centralization of the state and the development of a bureaucracy, which enabled monarchs to organize and control their states and oversee the nations that they ruled more coherently; social and economic changes, especially the development of trade and money, all made a massive difference. But the idea that there was a fundamental shift in the history of consciousness I find hard to believe. Writers such as Edmund Spenser looked back to an English medieval past even as they developed new forms of writing in English using a classical and European heritage. Can we really see Giotto, Durer and Simone Martini as completely different creatures who belong to different intellectual universes? And I'm not really sure that Chaucer and Shakespeare are as far apart as people usually imagine them to be.

Y. A.: How are beauty, truth and power humanized and even spiritualized in renaissance art and literature?

A. H.: It depends what you mean by beauty, which I'll come back to. Power is a concept that has almost been analysed to death in relatively recent writing on the Renaissance, so much so that it is making a comeback. I think you can read art and literature in two divergent but not necessarily mutually exclusive ways. On the one hand art is seen to be a statement of power, a means of reminding the reader that they are controlled by a powerful state which has designs on them. Stephen Greenblatt's superb reading of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, now nearly thirty years old, still resonates through the world of Renaissance scholarship and rightly so,

I think. Greenblatt argues that Spenser's epic poem sought to get beyond a sense of the dramatic or interpretative and to remind readers that art is fundamentally undramatic in nature. Spenser, for Greenblatt, sought to demonstrate to his readers that beyond art there was power, showing the reader a fixed authority that determined the poem, the very opposite of Shakespeare's open, dramatic art. I am not sure that Greenblatt is right, but no one has poses the problems and questions better or understood what is at stake so profoundly. On the other hand, as Greenblatt's reading suggests, art can be seen to challenge power, opening up a space beyond the confines of state authority (there is a third reading that art and literature are not as often about power as people imagine and often played little role in state propaganda). Generally, American New Historicist critics veered towards a reading of art that approximated to the former position; British Cultural Materialists, like my brilliant colleague, Alan Sinfield, explored the latter reading. I do not think power is ever really humanized in art and literature in any meaningful sense: cultural works adopt or challenge structures of power and authority, which is one of the things that I have explored in my work and which has been, I think, one of the most fruitful developments in literary criticism within the humanities in the last thirty years.

As for beauty, it depends on what one sees as beautiful, a thorny question and it is perhaps not surprising that many literary critics and art historians have abandoned work on beauty in recent years, preferring to study the material conditions out of which art and literature emerged, a more labour-intensive but easier mode of study! In fact, just as there has been a movement back to the study of power, so has there been a movement among many scholars demanding that we do not lose sight of the purpose of the objects we study, and that we remember their aesthetic value. To this end we really need to think carefully about value as a concept and the history of value, which I think people are starting to do. But this is largely a project for the future.

Truth is perhaps less hard to describe as a concept, but harder to describe in action. Writers did, of course, believe in truth and their ability to represent it, however problematic and partial that representation might be. Writers either followed Plato in believing that art was usually delusive and at two removes from the truth, accepting Plato's realist doctrine of the forms which we could only witness second hand, like shadows in a cave. Or they followed Aristotle and believed that art and literature could tell us real things about our fellow men and women through our capacity for mimesis, or imitation, a defining characteristic that made us fully human. Most writers who had a theory of art and/or literature seem to have combined the two in some way, either through ingenuity or indolence and confusion. Attacks on art were really versions of Christian Platonism which argued that art was an indulgence of the senses and did not produce real knowledge at all.

Y. A.: What is new in renaissance poetics?

A. H.: On a basic level Renaissance poetry manuals, which were now disseminated more widely as they could be printed, gave writers the chance to imitate and copy different forms of writing. Renaissance poetry manuals were full of lists and charts, as the material collected in Brian Vickers' *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* demonstrates. Writers loved to classify and describe verse forms explaining how to write particular kinds of poetry, explaining who and what they could describe, when they could be used, and so on. George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* is full of instructions to aspiring writers on how they should frame their poems, what subject matter

went with which style and so on. Most poetry manuals contain similar material, which makes up the greatest part of literary criticism, derived from rhetorical manuals which were designed to show readers how to make different types of arguments, what style, what mode of address to adopt, which examples to use, and so on. This emphasis is new, although it is not a complete break with medieval poetic theory and advice books. But it is not surprising that many new forms of literature first appear in the Renaissance (e.g., the sonnet, and, arguably, the novel), or are revived from classical antiquity (such as the ode). Printing also enabled writers to argue with each other about important issues such as the use of rhyme in poetry and continue debates in public, which have survived enabling us to reconstruct them.

The discovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Renaissance inspired a number of works of poetry and it significance. Aristotle's theory of mimesis as the fundamental principle of literature and art was clearly encouraging for writers and helped to inspire the production of culture. If you believe that literature is an imitation of life and can provide real knowledge about the world then it has an obvious function and should be encouraged. Aristotle's division of drama into tragedy as a form that shows human beings as better than they really are, and comedy as a form that shows them as worse than they are, was also helpful, being easy to understand, clear and possessing an obvious practical application (perhaps, perversely enough, best illustrated with the development of mixed modes of drama such as tragicomedy, which forced writers to think about what they were trying to write).

Y. A.: What status does a work of art have in the Renaissance?

A. H.: Again, it depends and it varies. It is interesting that writers in England are painfully conscious of their inferiority to their European counterparts, leading them to argue time and again that more emphasis should be placed on art and literature and that they should be taken more seriously by their ignorant countrymen. Sir Philip Sidney argues that even the Irish and the recently discovered native Americans have more respect for poetry and poets than the English do, a situation that he feels must be remedied sooner rather than later. Literature and art are felt to have a low status in England, a problem that impoverishes the intellectual life of the country, makes it look ridiculous in comparison to its European counterparts (especially when court life and culture is examined), and downgrades the status of a nation that should be at the forefront of Europe spearheading the Protestant challenge to Catholic hegemony. Like many of his contemporaries, Sidney tried to develop new forms of literature to resurrect the moribund state of English culture, writing the first sonnet sequence in English as well as a huge prose romance that spawned a sub-genre. Spenser adopted a similar route in writing a whole series of new verse forms, culminating in *The Faerie Queene* that combined Italianate romance, native English vernacular literary styles and classical matter. Milton adapted the epic to an English blank verse style and boasted that he was writing things that had never been attempted before in the history of English poetry. English Renaissance poets were nothing if not consciously experimental. In Italy, given the reputation of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Boiardo *et al*, literature had a higher status, as did art. The same was true in France and, to a lesser extent, Spain. It was the more obviously self-conscious Protestant countries that worried about the status of art and literature, especially as they had a problematic relationship to their own history, having had to argue that everything before the Reformation had been tainted if not downright evil. On the one hand they sought to sweep away all vestiges of the past a declare a 'year zero', destroying all art, as happened with many of the convinced

iconoclasts who tried to destroy not simply secular but all religious art as blasphemous. On the other, they were acutely conscious of the need to preserve a past that could disappear for ever and even aggressive Protestants, such as the former Carmelite monk, John Bale, laboured hard to preserve the materials dispersed and often destroyed when the monastic libraries were closed. Art in Catholic countries had a secure status as work that served the glory of God–or was part of a tradition of beautiful images and imaginatively produced text–even if censors were vigilant and intrusive in spotting what they saw as Protestant heresy. And with the advent of the Counter-Reformation, artists and writers were given even more encouragement to express themselves for the cause and try and show how wonderful God's servants could praise him and imitate his kingdom. Protestant culture was more fractious and insecure, uncertain of its status and needing to establish itself as anew, while preserving what could be saved from the past.

Y. A.: Thank you for your kind participation in our interview project!

A. H.: It's been a pleasure.

Index