

**EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA :  
TOWARDS A POSTMODERN DEMOCRACY**

by  
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The requirements of social and educative justice are examined further in the light of John Rawls's conception of justice as 'fairness'. In particular, critical response to his notions of 'the original position', 'veil of ignorance' and 'overlapping consensus' misrepresents the critical and creative capacity that these concepts properly denote and preserve in the interests of participants' 'strong' democratic capacity.

The ethical implications of a non-authoritarian relationship between learners and existing discursive formations are then discussed with reference to Philip Wexler's 'textualist' theory of social analysis and education. His advocacy of 'collective symbolic action' is found to be compatible with an uncoercive discourse ethic, oriented to mutual understanding and contextualised hypothesis formation by self-reflective agents.

Inferences for education are proposed, in conclusion, emphasising the teachers' role as *agent provocateur* of the 'liminal imagination' (generating non-formulaic symbolic movement and self-formative struggle by the learners themselves), which qualifies the usual obligation to approved curricular content. Education for a postmodern democracy is sustained by, and sustains, both context-relative knowledge - publicly educed - and an ongoing 'desublimation' of discourse, in the interests of participatory self-critique and -renewal.

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### DECLARATION

This study represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use was made of the work of others it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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The warm interest and encouragement of my supervisor, Professor Clive Millar, have benignly 'pricked the sides of my intent' in traversing the treacherous theoretical terrain of this thesis. His own practice as a teacher has also helped to illuminate the ideal educative attributes that are discussed in the pages that follow. Similarly, the example of Professor Tony Morphet must be acknowledged: his thoughtful seminar discussions and observations on assignments kindled the curiosity that has animated and shaped the writing of this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'postmodern' lacks precise or unitary definition, but is construed to denote a philosophical critique of 'the modern ideas of reason and the rational subject'. Baynes *et al* continue:

It is above all the 'project of the Enlightenment' that has to be deconstructed, the autonomous epistemological and moral subject that has to be decentered; the nostalgia for unity, totality and foundations that has to be overcome; and the tyranny of representational thought and universal truth that has to be defeated.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis considers how the de-reifying and anti-essentialist implications of postmodern (re)writing can contribute to an education for democratic citizenship in South Africa, but without forsaking the integrative and emancipatory value of such normative notions as culture, truth and justice. Implicit in the postmodern perspective is a sense of knowledge and identity as non-absolute and radically unstable, being mediated and relativised by interpretative frames of reference that give contingent form to the perceptions of socially situated human subjects. However, also implicit - it will be argued - is the desirability of a publicly ratified link between knowledge and experience. Thus, maximal receptivity to new and unpredictable data or danda<sup>2</sup> should modulate with their intelligible reduction and systematisation and with the successful or unsuccessful testing of the emergent hypotheses under maximally explicit and publicly attestable empirical conditions. The crucial overlap between the postmodern and positivist tendencies is the destabilising role of a creative and critical 'openness' to difference. Any 'form' of hitherto ratified knowledge is thereby liable to alternative reinscription or substitution; the meanings deemed to be isomorphic with our experience are to be placed 'under erasure', to be exposed to the unsettling effects of 'otherness' - of unknown experiences, values, discourses, beliefs, perspectives - as the prerequisite of provisionally and always imperfectly validated representation.

In order for this ongoing dialectical movement between explicitly conditional certainty and perpetual uncertainty to be democratic, however, all who are affected by the postulated resolutions and claims to relevant public knowledge must be empowered to participate equally in the process, as maximally autonomous thinkers. This poses a difficulty for educationists in particular, whose relation with learners is inherently unequal, owing to their conventionally superior command of valued discursive and

cultural 'capital'. As Wally Morrow writes: 'Educative relationships cannot be relationships between equals, and it is misleading to suggest that learners can control their own education; at the same time educative teaching is anti-manipulative.'<sup>3</sup> There is a tension between the students' dependence on the teacher for primary socialization or orientation, in respect of valued information or subject matter, and the requirements of free and equal, democratic participation in the construction of knowledge. This implies a contradictory dualistic role for the teacher - a responsibility for primary orientation within a relatively stable conceptual field, and yet also a responsibility as the non-manipulative catalyst of critical independence in the students. Teachers' privileged construction of primary co-ordinates fits uneasily with their role as unprejudiced facilitators of reflective autonomy in the students and of the destabilisation and contention this entails.

As has been stated, a maximally reflexive and undistorted perspective on contending data is the precondition of autonomous participation in democratic hypothesis-formation. This flexible yet critical responsiveness by participants is an integral part of any process of public decision-making that would claim to be democratically accountable. If such democratic decision-making is always in process, then the renovating critical openness that exposes previous resolutions to conditional erasure is a strenuous ongoing imperative. This demands of participants a communicative commitment which, it will be claimed, differs from their customary ideological commitments. This commitment involves a normative respect for a communicative process of context-relative but historically unpredictable knowledge-formation, rather than for truth as a determinate object or theoretically finished product. This does not deny the pragmatic requirement of purposive, truth-oriented action in the real world; it merely ensures that such product-oriented action remains the representative expression of the autonomous (and therefore perpetually changeable) will of a self-governing citizenry.

This thesis hopes to examine arguments that illuminate the central dialectical tension between stability and instability indicated above, with a view to exploring its educational pertinence in ideologically-riven contexts such as our own. In South Africa, a legacy of social injustice has thrown into sharper than usual relief the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate rule, between authoritarian oppression and democratic self-government. In a situation such as ours, where the weight of historical and empirical evidence underwrites mass opposition to the current political regime<sup>4</sup>, the strenuous acquisition of reflective independence is more easily displaced by the less ambiguous

demand for united action (albeit that such action is advocated in the name and interests of democracy). Education for democratic self-government is not readily compatible with education for complete likemindedness, the former requiring as it does a supple decentering of stable selves and beliefs as the precondition of democratically 'centered', and temporarily validated, decision and action. Notwithstanding the inevitable and needful role of primary enculturation as a potentially enabling prerequisite of dialogic self-empowerment, it is the danger of putting conventional certainty before critical and explorative uncertainty that threatens the prospect of a self-reflectively empowering education.

However, the impact of dominant material structures on the enabling potential of cultural norms poses difficult questions: discriminatory social structures impinge coercively on differentially situated subjects - being either privileging (through an advantaged alliance with dominant interests) or disabling (through a mystifying diminution of sectional or even majority interests). Nonetheless, the servile dependence of thought on material determinants is disavowed by a postmodern view of discourse as the dynamic, reformulable 'ground' of social perception and purpose. The provocative role of discourse as the unstable but self-empowering associate of social transformation is a crucial issue to be addressed. The pliancy bespoken by discursive movement is contrasted with a dangerous regard for 'theory' as the absolute determinant of practice instead of as the clarifying but fallible by-product and stimulus of better ways of coping. It is by keeping in motion the necessary relation between guiding truth-perspectives (or theory), experimental public hypotheses, and radical openness that the danger of reifying either conceptual abstractions or material determinations may be guarded against. Accordingly, a postmodern democracy - as articulated in this thesis - will give pre-eminence to the mutually decentering interaction that sustains and is sustained by the solvent power of what could be termed the 'liminal imagination'. C.A. Bowers comes close to this idea with his reference to the creation of a 'liminal cultural space' that is opened up when traditional forms of authority are contested and 'delegitimized'. This relativising of conventional cultural authority provides 'a moment when the voice of the individual matters' and one can participate in the negotiation of new forms of authority.<sup>5</sup> However, if the liminal cultural space opens an opportunity for languages of possibility to gain an entry, it also presents a danger to the vulnerable, culturally-exposed individual, whose inherited codes are not necessarily sufficiently rich or stable a foundation for self-assured critical engagement with and judgement of new contenders for cultural authority. The vulnerable individual, in Bowers' terms, may lack the 'communicative competence' to negotiate new personal meanings with real independence. Just as a child

is at the mercy of authoritarian influence, so the person shorn of all traditional assurances cannot hope to share meaningfully, as a critical partner, in the creation of society. If a process of democratic government is to engage people as mutually responsive partners, worthy of equal respect, then it cannot also require the summary erasure of the traditional beliefs that effectively comprise the whole self-concept of certain participants. Our unseen ideological circumscriptions need to be exposed to critical consciousness, with the help of others, but if a dependency relationship between the newly demystified individual and an alternative order of meaning is to be avoided, then the liminal space must be preserved as the non-restrictive arena for generating and exploring culturally unsettling notions. It is arguably this vigorous transformative capacity that undergirds the aspiration to democratic legitimacy through a maximally enlarged collaborative community, the expansion and inter-animation of which must put in question the divisions that exclude and marginalise what is 'other' in specific contexts of value, belief and action. It is the challenge of maintaining a dynamic relation between this refiguring openness and justifiable social purpose that impels the following excursion.

## CHAPTER ONE : CULTURAL AUTHORITY AND DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA

At the centre of the educational quest for democracy, clearly, is the challenging role of leadership and authority in bringing the learner to a state of critical independence. Autonomy is acquired via a process of enculturation which provides necessary foundational coherence for dependent beginners, but which also disposes them to a largely predetermined view of the world. This two-edged nature of meaning-acquisition does not disappear for those who have 'graduated' to adulthood. Autonomous participation in democratic self-government therefore remains a testing social and personal ideal.

Of general significance is the matter of 'limits' - the limits that are placed on democratic decision-making, either explicitly or covertly. Such limits are traceable to largely conventional axioms of thought - to principles or ground motives that condition a world-view in keeping with certain interests. Priority is accorded to competing 'independent grounds' by different interest groups, not least of all in the South African context, a fact which complicates the task of a democratic politics. That foundational principles are recognised to be essentially contestable, in keeping with postmodern insights about language, has intensified our awareness of 'difference' as creatively life-enhancing but also as radically threatening. Despite the potential for critical self-revision, the lack of reliable co-ordinates also increases the danger of others' manipulative influence.

The link between learning and politics is discernible in Morrow's statement that 'Politics is the interpersonal activity which creates and sustains the conceptual schemes which order social relationships'.<sup>6</sup> On this view, the field of conceptual meaning (created by interpersonal activity) orders our social life. The paradox, however, is that such interpersonal activity is itself part of, and generated by, our meaning-filled social life. Thus, anterior meanings are self-evidently implicated in the interpersonal activity that creates meaning. The same testing interplay is apparent in Peter McLaren's statement that 'Culture is never depoliticised; it always remains tied to the social and class relationships that inform it'.<sup>7</sup> Here, the nature of the causal link between cultural meaning and relationships is ambiguously expressed by the word 'tied': patterns of relationship hereby 'inform' culture, being manifested in the meanings and practices it embodies; at the same time, unless such interpersonal meanings and practices totally elude human intention, they may be assumed to be liable to alteration or confirmation by culturally-reflexive social agents. What was once deemed to be objective knowledge

may therefore be recognised as a dynamic social construction; but the power of individual reason to apprehend the dynamics of the surrounding world is qualified by embeddedness in a culturally-specific communal context. The degree to which this structural embeddedness imposes limits on change by a critical citizenry is clearly a crucial question.

Central to the discussion, therefore, is the concept of 'culture' and its formative relation to variously situated communities of belief. Communities may be conceived in terms of culturally distinct criteria - giving prominence, for example, to such typical categories as race, class, and the individual. Accordingly culture may be understood as a process of structural signification helping to make life intelligible and manageable. Culture is constituted as a shared symbolic code infused in our social practices; and socialization into community life entails the internalisation and adoption of its symbolically encoded and mediated values, beliefs and practices. As has been noted, the degree to which this socio-ideological inscription of the subject continues to happen either unconsciously or consciously, critically or uncritically, is a crucial issue.

The contested nature of the link between communities and classes in South Africa highlights the challenge of establishing an acceptable relation between 'authoritative' social analysis and popular perception. 'Non-class elements can be and often are a part of class consciousness', writes Belinda Bozzoli, noting that in South Africa 'community-expression appears to take place primarily through non-class forms of consciousness' (such as the ethnic, populist and nationalist).<sup>8</sup> The criterion selected has a marked influence on a community's self-perception and on the 'forms of struggle and resistance' that it adopts in a context of felt oppression. It is in this respect that the vocabulary surrounding the popular democratic movement in South Africa has been criticized: Tony Morphet notes that the populist rhetoric of People's Education, for example, awkwardly incorporates divergent frames of reference, such as those of nationalist, socialist and liberal traditions<sup>9</sup>; Richard Levin, too, regards the use of concepts such as 'the people' and 'the community' as unhelpfully broad, lacking clarity on the need (in his view) for working class leadership in the democratic struggle against 'capitalist forms of schooling'.<sup>10</sup> The mass movement might well appeal to broadly democratic sentiments but what will have to be acknowledged, it seems, is the reality of divergent definable priorities in working towards a viable programme of communal action. Yet Thornton and Ramphela remind us that 'community' is also 'the unpredictable product of history' and that while we 'may aim at the achievement of community we must face the painful truths that communities are the result of complex

political processes and exist *in* history, not above it'.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, both premature polarisation and superficial identification are to be avoided if publicly accountable, democratic renewal is the ongoing goal.

An important issue is whether the interests of democracy are best served by respect for people's own perceptions of their experience (however unjust or mystifying these are held to be by analytic observers), or by attempting to guide such communities towards more enlightened conceptions and practices. The latter is a particular temptation in contexts where repression has curtailed the formation of an inclusive public sphere. While Levin sees class-defined community to be an *a priori* requirement of democratic struggle, Bozzoli, like Thornton and Ramphela, highlights the empirical reality of 'impure' forms of community expression that defy 'abstractions, teleologies and ideal-types'.<sup>12</sup> Levin acknowledges that people in South Africa experience their oppression differently 'due to class and other social differences', but nonetheless asserts that within this diversity 'the most fundamental' category is class.<sup>13</sup> The 'expert' authorisation of fundamental analytic categories is a familiar and dangerous political ploy, however, used to claim legitimacy for prescriptive programmes of action. Proponents of any political persuasion, including opponents of the government, are liable to do this, in Thornton's view, and so inadvertently to replicate the power structures they oppose.<sup>14</sup>

The preceding arguments reinforce the tension between deductive and inductive uses of public reason, a tension that is prominent in current educational debate. Morrow, for example, alludes to the alternative tendencies in distinguishing what he calls the 'contemporary view' of education from the 'Aristotelian view'.<sup>15</sup> The former is the traditionally dominant approach, given to an instrumental view of education, governed by an established theory and vision in accordance with which specific learning objectives are set and a structured learning programme implemented. The students are expected to assimilate a pre-specified package of knowledge, in the service of authoritative *a priori* goals. Relationships and beliefs are manipulated to meet with determinate requirements. The result of the educative process should be predictable in advance; teaching and learning should be geared to the efficient realisation of this end. Education is liable to be viewed as an instrument of social policy - in either official or oppositional circles - and to reflect an interpretation of human relationship in terms of power and control.

In contrast, the Aristotelian approach is not oriented by a substantive goal or product, but is rather committed to education as a more flexible process of ongoing discovery, generated unpredictably by the learners, with non-manipulative assistance by the teacher. No rigid, predetermined framework is coercively imposed on learners in the service of larger social ends; instead meaning is actively created by all. Joint exploration by the learners is at the centre, so that their diversified experiences and perceptions may contribute to a mutually stimulating learning process. Morrow writes:

On this view the verb 'educating' is more appropriate than the noun 'education' as it is not based on a clear-cut or substantive vision of 'the future'. At best it has only a formal or procedural view of 'the future', a commitment to certain principles of non-coercion and non-manipulation, and to the idea that the detailed shape or form of society will be discovered and generated in the processes of political struggle and persuasion.<sup>16</sup>

In evident contrast to Levin, who sees People's Education as needing a more definitive commitment to the economic categories of class struggle, Morrow sees the Aristotelian approach to education as being more openly inductive, undirected and 'fundamentally conceptual'. Accordingly, a prerequisite of liberation is a new way of speaking, to be achieved through a process of self-made 'discussion'. People's Education, in Morrow's opinion, promises to help us invent the practices that will foster such open discussion.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Morrow's confidence in the democratic potential of People's Education, others sound warnings concerning its authoritarian possibilities, symptomatic of the 'contemporary' instrumental view of education as evinced so destructively by the South African government over many years. People's Education will be discussed later in some detail; what is of interest at this point is the relationship between its desired democratic functioning and concomitant socio-structural prerequisites. Peter Buckland, like Morrow, warns against the 'technical rationality' of instrumental education, which retards the development of students' critical autonomy. Changing the country's political structure, he writes, will not in itself guarantee that this manipulative mode of rationality will disappear. It poses as much of a threat in socialist as in capitalist states.<sup>18</sup> A.M. Barrett objects to the tendency, which he discerns in both Christian National Education and People's Education, to impose 'bounds' on critical autonomy by tying the educative process to a specific sociological theory, so that admissible knowledge is effectively yoked to a pre-theorised power structure in society. What is crucial in his conception of democracy is the presence of unprejudicial 'structures for rational discussion - thinking

and understanding'.<sup>19</sup> Richard Aitken contrasts structural definitions of social relationship with a view of community as discursively rather than materially constructed, such that through interpersonal activity a 'conceptual and moral scheme' for ordering social relationships can be achieved, without negating 'the multiple significations in ambiguity'. There is real danger, he believes, 'in the growing discourse of abstracted terms, in essence emptied of substantive ideas of human agency and therefore ethical content'.<sup>20</sup> In the same vein, Smith and Knight remark that 'The abstract world is a simple world of pure virtue and unrelieved vice, but it pulls in different directions as it is operationalised in the context of what capital and labour actually do in the world'.<sup>21</sup> And Michael Ryan seeks to counter the over-simple binarism of objectivist logic by advocating a deconstructive practice of thinking that subjects 'natural' categories of whatever kind to sceptical questioning: 'the simple, habitual setting up of norms which define out secondary degradations, accidents, or deviations is to be put in question'; and opting for the 'reassuring macrocategory' rather than 'the troubling microanalysis' is to be avoided. The ambiguities and contradictions of our 'social and historical embedding' must be acknowledged, in contrast to conceptual abstractions such as the detached knowing subject.<sup>22</sup>

Despite a common opposition to monologic certainty by the writers cited above, there is no obvious consensus regarding the substantive effect of such opposition. Whereas Aitken highlights discursive movement and ambiguity to give ethical substance to intentional human agency, Ryan turns to deconstruction to emphasise the contradictory effects of an encompassing social structure. It is precisely in reference to the substantive contradictions of our 'social and historical embedding' that materialist social theorists assert that structures for rational discussion (such as those Barrett requires) cannot be the detached medium of impartial reflection. The operation of such ostensibly impartial structures is held to be significantly influenced by structured social inequities which prejudice the process of rational debate in favour of a dominant interest group. Thus, determinate systemic change is claimed to be the prerequisite of discussion on equal terms. This change must be undertaken by addressing what Rachel Sharp calls 'the real political mechanisms at work in society', including socio-economic inequalities that inhibit the prospect of 'intellectual liberation'.<sup>23</sup> What is needed, in her view, is an empirical theory of politics - as class conflict - that goes beyond an idealist faith in pure reason, and gives rise to alliances and strategies that will countermand the 'real conditions' of social injustice. Similarly, Lane *et al* argue that a concern for critical autonomy must recognise the socio-economic dimensions of structured dependency, in

the cause of meaningful educational reform and of a more egalitarian and democratic society.<sup>24</sup>

On the one hand, then, are proponents of a non-technicist, inductively 'open' approach to social and educational process, in the interests of democracy; on the other hand are proponents of objective analysis and programmatic social management, also in the interests of democracy. The former stress the danger of imposing absolutist theoretical categories on intentional human agents; the latter stress the danger of abstracting the rational agent from the structural dynamics of a real social context. These are not necessarily incompatible alternatives: as has been indicated, a central concern of this thesis will be a better understanding of the interrelation of positivist and postmodern tendencies, firing the creative dialectic between uncertainty and conditional certainty, between non-directive openness and substantive purpose. In emphasising the need to find a balance between continuity and renewal, between needful solidarity and creative detachment, C.A. Bowers poses the central challenge for those concerned with non-repressive forms of social justice - in South Africa and elsewhere: 'The problem is to find the right balance between the potential of socialization to liberate and to bind, so that both the individual and society can grow in a manner that integrates the new with the positive aspects of the old.'<sup>25</sup> This is a testing requirement, in terms of which the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of Christian National Education, liberal theory of education, and People's Education might be discussed and compared. The link between receptivity-to-difference and normative resolution, which is evident in each, will give a greater degree of contextual specificity to the theoretical tensions considered in the preceding paragraphs.

### **Christian National Education**

Christian National Education, in its alliance with a phenomenologically-oriented 'fundamental pedagogics', demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling the practice of education as a 'universal' phenomenon with the authoritative claims of a specific traditional culture. The fundamental category is considered to be our 'being-in-the-world', which involves us in relationships of dependency in our search for meaning; our purposive lives thus defy reductive objectification, but reality is always perceived through our culturally-relative, value-suffused conceptual frameworks. There is a distinction between penetrating the essentials of the 'agogic relation' - deemed to apply universally - and the qualitative specifics of our socially embedded perception.

Our acquired world-view therefore sets limits to our capacity to disclose real essences in their 'primordial phenomenality'.<sup>26</sup>

Much in the theory of fundamental pedagogics is unexceptionable, as typified by the expressed concern for an 'ennobling' relationship between educator and educand, and by a respectful benevolence towards learners, whose yearning for meaning must be 'answered' by the teacher without negating their dignity as intentional beings or their potential for self-realisation.<sup>27</sup> The educative relation is held to be one of 'dignity-in-inequality' and responsible freedom: the learners are accompanied and assisted en route to independence and meaningful 'transcendence' of their mere 'facticity', but without forsaking their 'pathic' involvement in life as a felt experience. However, while the teacher must be prepared to respond to the learners' appeals for help, without manipulating them, they must be willing to listen to the teacher's sympathetic counsel. This counsel is intended to ensure responsible guidance towards socially acceptable norms. The learners' perpetual ontic openness is not ever closed off, but their situatedness as social beings requires subjection to the supportive authority of cultural values and norms. Through elevating, educative dialogue the learners' world-view may be moulded and integrated with those of the community. The existential need for meaning will increasingly be met, and this security will enhance the learners' willingness to venture, independently, into other relationships en route to further autonomous self-actualisation or 'becoming'. The way to responsible freedom is therefore opened up by the teacher, whose benevolent accompaniment instils a respect for the authority of norms, in fulfilment of a cultural mandate. The universal educative relationship, so drawn, serves to socialise learners, without treating them as passive objects who are closed to the future and lack creative intentions of their own.

Although the idea that enculturation is a universal phenomenon is unobjectionable, Christian National Education seeks to use phenomenology to underwrite a culturally specific world-view. 'God has willed separate nations and peoples and has given each separate nation and people its own vocation', intones the National Education Policy act of 1967.<sup>28</sup> The universality of enculturation thus becomes equated with the 'universality' of racially segregated cultures. This becomes one of the 'essential' truths revealed by phenomenological reduction, which is fed into education as a 'fundamental' reality, and which responsible teachers must respect in fulfilling their cultural mandate. (It is ironic, therefore, that racial prejudice has been the destructive corollary of an educational philosophy laying claim to the non-manipulative and undistorting activity of phenomenological reflection.<sup>29</sup>) The empirical and the transcendental are here

conjoined, so that a cultural norm is 'naturalised' as neutral fact; Christian teachers are ideologically reconciled to a contradictory regard for both openness and closure.

In line with the above duality, J.A. Heyns is able to write, on the one hand, that 'being human' entails a being called to 'neighbourliness' - 'an alignment and openness to each other through which true neighbourliness will be created'. This fraternal 'togetherness' is an image of our dynamic togetherness with God;<sup>30</sup> accordingly our cultural identity is not permanent or static:

Being human is to be culturally creative. . . . The dynamic character of culture means that man can never remain in what was given historically but has to look for revision, change and renewal. Inherent in the social character of culture is the fact that men are not only individually creative in culture but that they are engaged communally in this activity. The *ethical* nature of culture means that one creates culture with others for others.<sup>31</sup>

This admirable assertion of cultural openness and democratic participation is qualified, however, by a contrary assertion of structural fixity:

Being human is to live in structures. Apart from personal relationships man also has a supra-personal relation which may be called the structural aspect of the community. . . . Not all structures are changeable. There are God-given structures and structures created by man which one cannot ignore.<sup>31</sup>

These structures are not arbitrarily superimposed on us but are validated by an 'inward imperative' which the responsible educator must respect in leading his wards to Christian citizenship in accordance with the norms, laws and relationships of a 'Godly community life'. Heyns does not claim value-neutrality for such Christian structures: there is 'no such thing as neutral education', and the educationist needs to recognise the 'intrinsic framework' within which he operates.<sup>32</sup> The identification of culture and science here becomes complete - the responsible educator is likened to a 'Christian scientist'; the identification is not used to unsettle science, however, but rather to certify culture. (It would be left to the post-structuralists to highlight the anti-metaphysical implications of the hermeneutic circle as reflected in the science/culture equation. The contradiction involved in presupposing insight into universal essences that are nonetheless articulable only in terms of culturally unstable symbolic codes is exploited by post-structuralism as a

potentially liberating, decentering strategy, although it raises problems of its own for the 'legitimation' of any form of public knowledge.)

Although fundamental pedagogicians in the Christian National fold express approval of cultural openness and renewal, and of critical autonomy, they are apparently unable to subject their own 'ground motives' to reflexive bracketing. Too high a premium is placed on communal stability, solidarity and integration (within pre-established limits); and it is in meeting this universal need for ontic security that educationists are deemed to find their true and responsible calling. The democratically expansive implications of 'neighbourliness' are similarly lost, owing to the compartmentalisation of communicative relationship along racial lines, enforced by law, and maintained up to the present in accordance with the 'principle' of group self-determination, especially in educational matters.<sup>33</sup> The high priority placed on communal stability and cultural integrity, and on neighbourly alignments (narrowly defined in segregationist terms) has been the ironic cause of communal instability and fear. Divisive institutional structures have perverted the communicative structures through which alternative communal perspectives might jointly have been wrought. The neighbourliness and autonomy espoused by Christian National Education are therefore fundamentally compromised by their subservience to rigidly delimited notions of culture and community, resting on an injudicious conflation of empirical and transcendental categories. The lateral or 'horizontal' nature of interpersonal communication is incompatible with the 'vertical' nature of authority relationships and structures sanctioned by God. By confining horizontal civic relations within the vertical parameters of revealed truth, apologists for Christian National Education feel justified in rejecting the views of 'liberals' and of 'the people' as humanistic extremes, given either to radical individualism or to totalitarianism, which scant the value of communal culture in binding individuals and in distinguishing groups.<sup>34</sup>

### **Liberal theory of education**

It has been argued above that Christian National Education forfeits the prospect of cultural renewal by equating enculturation (as a universal social phenomenon) with an ideologically specific, racial definition of culture. Liberalism has suffered a similar fate at the hands of its critics. This is inferred from Penny Enslin's defence of liberal theory of education, central to which is her distinction between an allegiance to individual freedom as an abstract or formal ideal, and the manifestations of individual freedom as variously practised. 'Emphasising a concern for individual freedom as characterising

liberalism is to make a formal point', she writes, 'rather than to offer a substantive characterisation of liberalism, as the latter must depend on the particular context'. Expressions of the liberal point of view are 'universally' distinguished by their concern for individual autonomy; but, Enslin adds, 'critics of liberalism have tended to commit the error of confusing some particular expressions of liberalism with its central, universally applicable characteristics'.<sup>35</sup> There are many kinds of individualism - religious, economic, ethical, epistemological, political, and so on; these are not all necessarily mutually compatible or the expression of liberal values in all contexts. The connection of liberalism with capitalism, for instance, is said by Enslin to be 'contingent' merely, and does not exhaust the civil liberties that attach to the concept of personal freedom.

These civil liberties are the ideal fruits of a liberal education, necessary features of which are the promotion of individual autonomy and personal meaning (evinced by self-reflection and self-direction), respect for the dignity of persons, openness to and tolerance of others, and participation in discussion (entailing a questioning of authority, awareness of topical issues, and independent reasoning). Freedom as 'positive' involvement *with* others in collective decision-making therefore coexists with a counterbalancing regard for 'negative' freedom *from* coercion. The emphasis placed on either negative or positive freedom, in a given context, will depend on communal perceptions of prevalent needs. Enslin accepts that there can be no absolute personal autonomy, but that within inevitable limits the maximum degree of autonomy should be preserved. Personal and moral self-mastery are crucial to the democratic process through which social agents fashion and delimit their communal lives; there is, accordingly, no necessary contradiction between a defence of individual freedom and a recognition of the socially constructed nature of knowledge.<sup>36</sup>

Anathema to liberalism, in Enslin's scheme, is 'conservatism' - the moulding of learners in accordance with a retrospective cultural ideal. This counters the formation of intrinsic personal meaning and the ultimate achievement of critical independence. Equally incompatible with liberalism is held to be a commitment in principle to prospective social transformation. This, too, entails the postulation of a substantive order which, like Christian National Education, is felt to impose a limit on learners' reflective autonomy. *A priori* substantive commitments are not compatible with education aimed at the creation of a truly self-governing citizenry, even though the envisioned order is purported to be in the interests of greater substantive democracy. Barrett would concur; for him, 'reasoning' is 'not a respecter of cultural boundaries' but is given to opening them up to other possibilities. 'If you are teaching people to think,' he

writes, 'you must, logically, necessarily, accept that there are no bounds that you ought intentionally to impose on that process, otherwise you are engaging in indoctrination not education'.<sup>37</sup>

This account of the liberal position guards against easy dismissive characterisations by critics on the left and the right. However, it is problematic in distinguishing liberalism from either conservatism or from the radicalism that seeks revolutionary social transformation. If Enslin is true to the logic of her formal/substantive distinction, neither conservatism nor radicalism can be viewed as fundamentally illiberal. While Enslin acknowledges as 'liberal' the Marxist's theoretical concern for the human dignity of persons, for critical autonomy and maximal personal development, and for participatory thought, action and democratic self-control, she regards the predisposition to revolution as pre-empting autonomous decision-making. This makes Marxist theory 'incoherent' and puts it fundamentally in conflict with liberal theory.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere, however, she grants an *a priori* contextualised opposition to apartheid (in defence of civil rights) to be characteristic of liberalism as practised in South Africa. Thus, in the cause of liberal freedom, a substantive taking-of-sides is held to typify the liberal position.<sup>39</sup> This is consistent with recent calls by others for liberals to join in a 'broad' alliance with forces on the left, so forsaking a non-aligned position, in the cause of substantive social justice. Jane Hofmeyr suggests that liberals 'should identify with black communities in their desire to control and participate in their own education and to develop alternative models to those in the system'. They must find the 'radical' elements of liberalism and 'translate their ideals into concrete projects, programmes and initiatives' - a strategic plan of action in the interests of a 'non-racial, democratic, free and just society'.<sup>40</sup> Charles Simkins argues for an egalitarian liberalism, with material implications concerning access to and distribution of social primary goods in South Africa.<sup>41</sup> And Van Zyl Slabbert indicates that the reality of extreme polarisation in South Africa places a responsibility on liberals to signal their support either for or against institutionalised oppression, in defence of the 'humane values' of liberalism.<sup>42</sup> Other liberal writers are more specific still: the concern for an egalitarian, democratic society might well demand a change in socio-economic relations that points to the desirability of a socialist system incorporating work-place control. This is the view of Richard Turner: 'The first essential for democracy is that the worker should have power at her/his place of work - that is, that the enterprise should be controlled by those who work in it.'<sup>43</sup> Enslin's concession that liberal practice in a given context of oppression such as South Africa may be distinguished by its substantive political stance *seems* to break down the theoretical distinction between formal and substantive characterisations of liberalism. Her

acknowledgement that freedom must be limited when it causes harm to others, and that compulsion is justified in the cause of the long-term autonomy of the individual, when viewed in conjunction with the substantive orientations advocated above (from both left and right), significantly qualifies the fundamental distinction she draws between liberalism and the substantive ideals and commitments of either Marxism or conservatism.

The solution to such tensions, all would agree, is the achievement of reflective autonomy and democratic participation which would ensure that particular commitments flow from and are validated by collective understandings. While there is merit in this, the dynamics of enculturation and the role of significant authority figures in this contextualised process complicates the ideal model. Any 'language of possibility' infusing individual perception mediates cultural information codes, the autonomous acceptance of which requires an ability to reflect on such codes with critical regard to one's established frame of meaning and discursive practices. As has been noted, primary socialization is effected through relations with significant others, whose influence cannot initially be subjected to reflective analysis and critique by the relatively unformed individual, whose discursive paucity inevitably curtails the requisite critical mobility. 'Indoctrination' as the setting of bounds on autonomous reflection is a likely phase for the initiate into new cultural knowledge. It need not continue to be so; but breaking out of the circle of self-confirming belief requires the unsettling provocation of alternative conceptualisations and experiences, without forgetting that too pressured a sense of cultural vulnerability might induce either a reactionary reaffirmation of traditional identity, with consequent polarisation of positions, or mindless capitulation to vanguard cognoscenti - to the cost of critical collaboration.

Such possibilities underline the need to secure a productive and equitable relation between social bonding and critical renewal, as advocated by Bowers. If the individual is not an unconditionally free entity, but is intersubjectively constituted through symbolic interaction with communal others, then education must acknowledge this contextualisation as a condition both of personal self-knowing and of critical self-renewal. 'An understanding of embeddedness, of continuities, and of cultural and community membership seems essential to the formal educational process carried out in the classroom', Bowers writes; but he adds that this understanding 'needs to be balanced by an ability to make explicit (and then politicize) aspects of taken-for-granted beliefs and practices that are injurious in both an individual and communal sense'.<sup>44</sup> However, given the relative vulnerability of the young to cultural systems propounded by authoritative

'significant others', the challenge is how to undertake the balancing act suggested by Bowers, at the same time giving due place to the self-formative rather than manipulative use of the liminal cultural space. It is in the formative but never finally definitive arena of the liminal imagination that contending meanings jostle as the unprogrammatically stimulus of an inclusive community of debate. Substantive belief-commitments represent a form of purposive closure or definition that is given ongoing democratic warrant only as the product of a condition of such maximally inclusive openness. A truly emancipatory education-for-democracy will therefore have to make perpetual place for a relatively unproscribed liminal zone where the legitimacy of alternative belief systems may be subjected to multi-vocal contestation, maximally free of physical and ideological constraint. That the liminal imagination is not incompatible with ideological alignment - being a potent source of ideological vigour without itself being of one party - will be a signal contention of this thesis. It remains to be asked how People's Education in South Africa measures up to the challenge of political and educational liberation, in comparison with the limitations imputed to both Christian National Education and liberal theory of education.

### **People's Education**

People's Education is intended to enable 'all sectors of our people' to participate 'actively and creatively' in establishing a non-racial unitary democracy in this country. Critical thinking and analysis and collective input are valued as both educational and political goals, in contrast to the 'stunted intellectual development' and the 'capitalist norms' of competition and individualism associated with the system of apartheid.<sup>45</sup> As has been noted, there is much in such aims that liberal thinkers can align themselves with - a concern for the dignity and participation of all, and for their full development consistent with the rights and well-being of others. However, in its rhetoric and composition, the People's Education movement evinces contradictory tensions.

In particular, there is on the one hand an appeal for uncoercive alliances between ideologically autonomous entities; on the other, there is a stress on the authority of a particular leadership. The tensions appear, for example, in documents relating to the formation of a 'mass education movement' and the establishment of teacher unity. The Harare Conference on Teacher Unity (1988) voices a commitment to realising the goals of People's Education in South Africa, and - with reference to teacher support - recommends that 'Ideology should not be a precondition for unity'.<sup>46</sup> More recent deliberation by the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) on the formation of a

'mass education movement' (MEM), as the educational ancillary of the mass democratic movement, envisages this as 'a loose alliance of organisations, each manufacturing (*sic*) its own autonomy' yet working closely together on individual campaigns and projects, which are to be 'discussed and consulted broadly in the spirit of democratic participation'. A comment is made on the valuable experience of learning to 'moderate our language', to 'tolerate others' and to appreciate 'the experience of broader aims and gains'.<sup>47</sup> Eric Molobi writes elsewhere: 'The mass democratic movement is not a single class movement, it straddles classes and rallies masses on particular broad issues.' A 'progressive' teachers' organisation, he adds, will mobilise teachers as an organic link with 'the masses'. He then qualifies the non-class nature of the alliance, however, by noting its intention 'to cut free from the apron-strings of the Bourgeoisie'.<sup>48</sup> This qualification is symptomatic of the programmatic side of the education struggle. Thus, the MEM is indeed found to require 'an ideological basis for inclusion', to ensure maximum unity and to weld itself into a single force that counterposes 'all apartheid education schemes and programmes'. The leading role as 'initiator' and 'nerve centre' will be the NECC, at least until the movement can 'stand on its own as a coercive force', and can 'speak with one voice' and 'move in unison'.<sup>49</sup> At the 1987 conference on Teacher Unity the role of the working class is seen by the NECC as paramount in achieving this solidarity within the broad front against apartheid. The working class is held to be 'the most reliable sector of the broad national liberation movement', and the national democratic struggle is therefore urged to strive for working class leadership.<sup>50</sup> (Teachers are said not to be 'natural allies' of the working class - an awkward circumstance, given that those in control of *all* teacher organisations, according to Ian Moll, are 'petty bourgeois'.<sup>51</sup>) Similarly, Jay Naidoo of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU - a prominent affiliate of the NECC) envisages a 'national union of teachers based on the democratic principles and practices of the workers' movement'. He sees People's Education as vital in breaking the bondage of 'apartheid capitalist education', and sees unity as a 'fundamental principle of socialism'.<sup>52</sup>

Such accounts expose the divergent tendencies within the People's Education movement, associated largely with the articulation of equal participation within the broad front against apartheid in terms of working class leadership in the struggle for socialism. There is also a racial dimension to the vision of a non-racial society. As Jakes Gerwel writes, 'the struggle for democracy is crucially linked to the *majority* character of our society' and is aimed at 'non-racialism under African leadership'.<sup>53</sup> Fatima Meer, too, calls for 'the widest and strongest black resistance', for 'one black people' in a 'united front' against the apartheid regime.<sup>54</sup> The difficulty of reconciling assertions concerning

the character of a pre-specified 'leadership' with the (unpredictable) expression of grassroots democratic autonomy is baldly illustrated in the attempt by M. Segwai (of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania) to articulate the relation:

We should never bully the people; we must patiently explain everything to the masses. That is the correct way to go about revolutionary work among the people, otherwise the dictum *Liberation is the act of the people themselves* becomes traversed (*sic*).<sup>55</sup>

In Segwai's version, a condition of self-liberating autonomy is that the masses be non-violently 'imbued' with a 'revolutionary theory and ideology'. (The dangers of such well-intentioned but directive teaching have already been instanced in the case of Christian National Education.) A more challenging and credible expression of an emancipatory link between education and ideology in the South African context is apparent in the mission of the University of the Western Cape (UWC), committed on the one hand to 'free scholarly discourse and research' but also to an ideological identity as the 'intellectual home of the Left'. This is in recognition of the 'operative contexts' within which any university is said to operate, and is compared to the Afrikaans universities' context of 'Afrikaner nationalism' and the English universities' context of 'anglophile liberalism' (in the account of the rector, Gerwel).<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere, Franklin Sonn likens People's Education favourably to the self-empowering nationalism of Christian National Education, which originated in his view as a needful struggle against anglophile domination. The University of the Western Cape, in Gerwel's opinion, is today testimony to its own history of counterhegemonic struggle, and accordingly finds its 'internal imperative' to be a 'critical alignment with the democratic movement'. Bearing in mind Heyns's earlier injunction concerning respect for the 'inward', self-validating cultural imperatives of Christian institutions of learning, an important question must concern the revisability of UWC's intrinsic, self-defining 'imperative'. The signal difference, in Gerwel's account, is perhaps UWC's 'creative' orientation towards a future, open 'community', in which 'social realities' are no longer suppressed through 'discourse-censorship'. Such a commitment does not compromise an obligation to 'truth and science' but redeems it from the undemocratic abuse it has suffered under the existing regime. This openness is compatible neither with unreflective, unremitting 'activism' nor with the studious avoidance of activism. Nor is commitment to 'the Left' intolerant of critical diversity; rather this is the *sine qua non* of the scholarly pursuit of knowledge. 'These scholars', Gerwel writes, 'command the frontiers of science and can therefore philosophically not be subject to "higher authority"'. He notes that the

scientist's autonomy, historically, has required defence against 'gods and politicians' - the church and the state. UWC, too, seeks to defend that autonomy through its respect for 'diversity' and the 'right to the production of new knowledge'. But the non-sectarianism this implies needs to be 'historicised', Gerwel adds, to appreciate its relevance for us as producers of knowledge, contextualised within relations of historical inequality. This perspective is best represented, he claims, in the 'Congress tradition' (that of the ANC) - a judgement that is immediately challenged by Neville Alexander for effacing the relation between truthful social analysis and (in his view) socialist-inspired unity of action.<sup>58</sup>

Discernible in Gerwel's line of thought is once again the subtle assimilation of a 'formal' openness to a 'substantive' political or ideological position. This is necessarily characteristic of People's Education as both a political and an educational project, and accounts for the 'underlying tension' (in Ken Hartshorne's words) 'between statements on critical and creative thinking, active participation and democratic practices on the one hand and implied alternative ideological pressures, educational controls and power issues on the other'.<sup>59</sup> However, this tension, as has been shown, is not unique to People's Education. The same testing interplay is manifested in the arguments of variously liberal, radical and conservative theorists. Perception of the general need for cultural-ideological openness is tempered by the perceivers' identification with a particular socio-political cause or value system, with a bearing on contemporary problems. Nor should it be otherwise, if democracy is to have concrete social and personal meaning. There are certainly dangers in this identification, particularly for education, or for any relationship between 'leaders' and those whose interests they seek to represent or nurture. Nonetheless, it is a necessary identification for us as socially situated beings, and raises difficult questions with implications for educative leadership; for example, who controls the terms in which the identification is expressed, and who undertakes the analysis or directs the strategic initiative? Hartshorne expresses the hope that teachers will be able to maintain a 'broad' commitment to non-racial and democratic values rather than to a 'narrow' sectarian party-political ideology.<sup>60</sup> This intimates a degree of political concern and moral awareness, while temporising on the matter of definitive truth or compulsory action. Whether this is a plausible position, especially in sharply divided social contexts, is one of the questions that this thesis undertakes to examine, with due regard for the difficulty of distinguishing educational and political 'relevance' in the struggle for democracy.

### Barber on democracy : participation and leadership

What has emerged from the above consideration of Christian National Education, liberal theory of education, and People's Education is avowed support in each case for non-manipulative teaching, combined with support for a context-specific vision of social justice. In considering further the implications for democracy and for leadership in each case, Benjamin Barber's study on *Strong Democracy; Participatory Politics for a New Age* is suggestive.<sup>61</sup> Barber distinguishes between three main kinds of democracy: 'thin' liberal democracy - in which individual autonomy is prominent but there is little collaborative involvement; 'unitary' democracy - in which a single communal voice is privileged to the detriment of divergent opinion and collaborative involvement; and 'strong' democracy - in which personal autonomy is realised and sustained through ongoing collaborative involvement in communal decision-making. 'If the definition of democracy as popular sovereignty has any meaning,' Barber writes, 'then it is sovereignty over language - over talk fashioned by and for the talkers themselves.'<sup>62</sup> In order for this sovereignty to be maintained, public talk must be an ongoing critical and creative process, reflecting free and open communicative relationships amongst citizens who are all equally empowered and willing to share in this process. It is in the light of this requirement that the three kinds of democracy might be compared.

'Thin' liberal democracy is portrayed as a travesty of liberalism's virtues: the latter's proper respect for private interests and individual autonomy here becomes selfishness; tolerance of others becomes passivity; respect for the law elicits bureaucratic extravagance; and liberty becomes 'anarchism'. Anarchism is one of the three so-called 'dispositions' of thin liberal democracy, the other two being termed 'realism' and 'minimalism'. The *anarchist* tendency is that of 'radical individualism', safeguarded by constitutional rights and duties encoded in the law. The free enterprise ideology harmonises with this belief in the separateness of self-determining individuals, who are not naturally disposed to conflict. Our natural 'atomism' is given formal warrant in judicial norms; in this 'juridical democracy', however, power is something to be 'contained', rather than creatively used and collectively participated in. The *realist* tendency is more cynical concerning people's 'natural' disinclination to interfere with each other, and is given to a more authoritarian politics of 'power, law and control'. Individuals are viewed as competitors within finite territory; the law, accordingly, is a prudent defence against others, within the mutually respected limits of which private interests may be pursued without interference. This makes for democracy in the 'authoritative mode', aimed at negative personal regulation rather than positive public

co-operation. The *minimalist* tendency in thin liberal democracy accepts the reality of intra-communal difference and conflict, instead of denying it (as the anarchist does) or repressing it (as the realist does); but this acceptance, which marks democracy in 'the pluralist mode', comes to entail passive toleration of others and their differences, rather than creative interaction with them. The minimalist politics of 'toleration, pluralism and non-interference' still places private preferences at the centre, making for a fragmented citizenry and a 'reticent' form of public reason. In all three cases, public affairs are administered by representatives to whom civic responsibility is delegated as a technical matter, maintaining the legal framework that impartially secures the negative liberties of each separate person.

This portrayal of thin liberal democracy does not exhaust the liberal position, although its three main 'dispositions' describe particularly prominent historical characteristics. In the South African context, the liberal aversion for uncompromising sectarian alignments, and the faith in an harmonious accommodation of differences tend to pull against the harsher tendencies of realist 'power, law and control'. The liberal concern for human rights, constitutionally protected, has traditionally existed in firm opposition to apartheid 'law and order'. Under apartheid ideology, racial groups replace individuals as the characteristic unit of self-determination and self-interest. Concern for non-interference in the life of exclusive cultural groups has overridden the liberal concern for the negative liberties and rights of individuals, which would counteract official interference in private lives. A needful respect for individual choice is evident in South African liberalism, compatible with minimalism but intimating a more fraternal bonding through a 'generosity of spirit' and 'an attempt to comprehend otherness' (in Alan Paton's words).<sup>63</sup>

In 'unitary' democracy, the communitarian spirit which is lacking in thin liberal democracy is taken to an extreme. While thin liberal democracy gives rise to personal autonomy without participation, unitary democracy gives rise to communal authority without participation. A realist concern with power, law and control is evident, but in the service of a seemingly disembodied corporate voice or will. The reality of social differences is not used as the stimulus to creative relationship, but is eliminated in the cause of an authoritative unifying consensus. Democracy as a form of intersubjective relationship is displaced by a monolithic collectivism that breeds orthodoxy and homogeneity. Instead of autonomous, interactive citizenship there is conformism to the collective will of an organic mass or frozen symbolic collectivity such as 'the people', 'nation' or 'race' (conceivably also 'class'). The paradigmatic demands of the people's

government are endowed with a stability and legitimacy that are not exposed to unsettling democratic processes. Democratic rhetoric is appropriated as a subterfuge, seeking to authorise an 'omnicompetent totalism' that fixes the positions of all citizens. Such rhetoric, giving voice to empirical absolutes, becomes - in Barber's uncharacteristically oratorical words -

a camouflage for the reintroduction of independent grounds, a stalking horse for Truth in the midst of politics, a Trojan Horse carrying Philosophers, Legislators and other seekers of Absolute Certainty into the very inner sanctum of democracy's citadel.<sup>64</sup>

In a unitary 'democracy', mass integration dispels the exploratory-creative initiative of autonomous agents. Dissension becomes betrayal; and dialectical relationship is replaced by politics in 'the consensual mode'. A politics that is circumscribed by predeterminate cultural and ideological norms or by supposedly objective constraints (whether economic, ethnic, or any other) cannot, in Barber's view, also be the work of self-producing citizens.

In South Africa, elements of this unitarian dogmatism are apparent on the political right and, more ambiguously perhaps, on the left as well. The philosophy of Christian Nationalism clearly imports into politics the 'independent ground' of racial separatism, conscripting all citizens to its divisive scheme. This hitherto non-negotiable principle has wrought its omnicompetent totalism only too well in our collectively disparate social lives. Cultural diversity has been reified, to the detriment of truly 'public' interaction and reason, and has buttressed its claims to legitimacy by fixing the positions of all citizens within prespecified categories. Equally, democratic rhetoric on the left is marked at times by a disconcerting emphasis on mass unity and discipline. As has been noted, critical and creative openness are qualified by reference to the authoritative voice of symbolic collectivities. And where liberal approaches are concerned, it must also be acknowledged that the self-producing capacity of truly autonomous agents is as effectively undermined by self-willed atomism and apathy. Social fragmentation and self-enclosure can emasculate public talk just as efficiently as a monolithic collectivism. (However, as will be argued in Chapter Four, the minimalist toleration of difference valuably suggests a necessary tactic of reticence on the part of teachers who wish to avoid manipulative closure in the classroom.)

Deliverance from the dangers of thin and unitary forms of quasi-democracy comes in the form of 'strong' democracy. This is communitarian but not totalitarian, involving everyone in a perpetual process of public talk, in the search for 'working maxims' appropriate to variable contextual needs. Adherence to pre-political truths and immutable principles contradicts the strong-democratic requirement of mutually responsive participation. This full participation manifests a civic and moral liberty that goes beyond the negative liberty of self-preoccupied individuals, to encompass the freedom of fraternal deliberation. It expresses a sense of obligation to, and sympathy for, others with whom a common destiny must be created. Strong democracy is not tied to a substantive belief-system but is a 'procedural conception', dedicated to a 'process' rather than to a definitive outcome. 'Democratic politics', Barber writes, 'is a form of human relations, and does not answer to the requirements of truth.'<sup>65</sup> This democratic relationship is essentially discursive, a form of symbolic interaction that 'makes and re-makes the world'. It is through talk that people come to be perceived as members of cultural groups or economic classes, and it is through talk that transformative perspectives and actions are fashioned. Political empowerment is therefore intrinsically a function of discursive participation.

There is a problem, however: complete participatory self-government is held to be a mythic ideal; in reality there will always be disparities in communicative competence. Some will command discursive resources that others lack. The link between such discursive power and the distribution of cultural and material capital, as proposed by Marxist critics, raises challenging questions here; but even contending viewpoints in this regard are symbolically mediated, depending on their expressive reach to elicit an answering sympathy. In particular, disparities in self-productive and self-expressive power highlight the challenge of responsible leadership and education.

The kinds of leadership most compatible with strong democratic ideals are what Barber terms 'transitional', 'facilitating' and 'moral' leadership.<sup>66</sup> Where a democratically self-governing system is lacking, *transitional* leaders are to invent participatory institutions, and temporarily 'represent' the interests of the people whom they 'guide' to a state of independent self-government, before fading away. *Facilitating* leaders are required within existing participatory systems to help them work properly - guarding against the domination of an aggressive minority, for example. Such leaders are politically neuter, contributing to the efficacy of the democratic 'process' rather than to a substantive ideological cause. A more inspirational role is attributed by Barber to *moral* leaders, who exemplify and evoke the fraternal qualities that are needed - such as

civility, mutuality, temperance, unselfishness, affection. Moral leaders, like transitional leaders, are 'self-liquidating', inspiring a will to pursue the good, yet without directing the course of that quest. The moral role is perverted when identified with a particular faction and its exclusive policies rather than with the co-operative virtues on which discursive relationship depends. Clearly the danger of covert manipulation exists; this will always be a threat to the cause of strong democracy. Also problematic is whether civic involvement in substantive issues can be successfully stimulated by non-partisan 'procedural' functionaries. What people evidently require is socialization into the widest available range of pertinent discourses, the conflicting claims of which will open up liminal spaces in the participants' belief systems, which they themselves will be required collectively to reorientate and revise in the light of their respective perceptual fields. The educators' responsibilities, one infers, would be equally respectful of the learners' right to self-production, albeit in relation to the concepts and 'languages' that comprise the learning agenda. What is as important as the content of this agenda, therefore, will be reflexive awareness of its limits as a non-exhaustive construction. Accordingly, there is a sense in which 'agenda-setting' itself comprises the agenda of a participatory learning process; agenda-setting is to be a 'permanent function' of collaborative talk, and is not to be predetermined by elites.<sup>67</sup>

There are apparent tensions in Barber's portrayal of strong democracy. There is the discomfiting implication that loyalty to the co-operative virtues is not compatible with commitment to a substantive policy option; or, put differently, that in a given context of struggle the interests of a particular political faction and of the strong-democratic process will not coincide sufficiently clearly to justify ideological advocacy by moral leaders or by teachers. There is also a tension in the description of strong democratic self-government as a 'never-ending' process of deliberation, decision and action. Ambiguity inheres in the requirements of 'action': if this action pertains to the community as a whole, then its efficacy as policy may well require active unity and cohesion, for pragmatic purposes. This suggests the need for discipline and authority consonant with the policy - as a product - resolved upon. Despite the preference for conditional 'working maxims' rather than positive 'truth', public talk clearly produces forms of relatively stable knowledge, to be 'applied' to a 'future realm of common action'.<sup>68</sup> Given the fact that 'participation' only fulfils its potential in terms of the power to which it gives positive effect, the open 'procedural' conception of democracy must evidently be compatible with substantive closure in particular contexts of need. This suggests a place for positivist methods that value the empirical explicitation of policy hypotheses, in publicly intelligible and accessible terms. Strong democracy engages adversaries in co-operative talk with the

practical intention of producing such mutually acceptable, explicit forms of relevant knowledge, the substantive effects of which may be democratically assessed. What makes this substantive public knowledge different from truth as an immutable product is its paradoxical 'grounding' in talk as open, unstable process. Policy decisions are thus legitimated through their respect for procedural preconditions that define a 'formal' openness. It is the mutual decentering signalled and engendered by this formal receptivity (ideologically non-normative but communicatively normative) that guarantees an ongoing dialectic between cultural authority and innovative autonomy. It is here that the private 'I' and the public 'we' work to decentre each other, as a prerequisite of legitimate decision-making. This presupposes, however, a populace that is discursively empowered and is both willing and able to participate in the process of democratic hypothesis-formation and evaluation.

There still remains the difficulty of purposive moral leadership that is given to ideological advocacy in the interests of context-relative truth and justice, and in the longer-term interests of a democratic public sphere. In such cases moral leadership might coincide with transitional leadership, so that an educator, for example, might feel obliged to guide learners ideologically as a precondition of longer-term self-government. The dangers of this have been touched on already, with reference to education as the inflexible purveyor of cultural authority and as the instrument of social policy, and with reference to the vulnerability of learners under conditions of radical cultural uncertainty. The potential coincidence of moral and transitional leadership, in the ostensible interests of strong democracy, is both a potential threat to autonomous participation and a plausible necessity. The conundrum originates, perhaps, in a degree of correspondence between subjects' categories of meaning and conventional structures of social practice. Thus personal meanings and ideological constructs come to be 'geared into the continuities of day-to-day life' (in Anthony Giddens's words).<sup>69</sup> These habitual 'continuities' do not necessarily delimit completely the discursive capacity of the individual agent; accordingly, by exposing social actors to alternative conceptualisations of social dynamics - that is, to competing discourses or symbolic systems - educative leaders place such actors in a position to reconsider the adequacy of customary limits and self-understandings, and to mobilise their own political counter-offensive, if need be, grounded in self-produced meaning rather than the dictates of social technicians or intellectual elites. This line of thought requires that transitional and/or moral leaders pursue their task primarily by assisting others to expand rather than to delimit their discursive-conceptual range as the prerequisite of self-generated communal change, and as the corollary of continued democratic self-government. A primary focus on symbolic

scope need not imply the abstraction of meaning from political struggle, and the insertion of thinking subjects as 'shifters' in an abstract text or code;<sup>70</sup> rather, it implies their increased capacity for self-conscious insertion into continuities of interpretative struggle, within their own socially and discursively stratified political contexts.

In South African education, for instance, the educative implications of strong-democratic ideals may be tentatively associated with liberalism in its supposedly more radical form, dedicated to a 'broad' oppositional alliance in the cause of a democratic culture in which citizens and learners engage themselves in the dialectic of interpretative struggle, within our fraught political terrain. People's Education is equally committed to democratic empowerment and critical autonomy, this being associated with programmatic material change. In both the liberal and People's Education perspectives, the conflation of moral and transitional leadership roles is indicated, with some continuity being envisaged between the substantive beliefs of the leadership and the counterhegemonic interests of the democratic majority. Whether education for liberation is compatible with education as an agent of programmatic struggle is a challenging question here, as is the correlation between conditions of material production and cultural or ideological production. As far as the educational vision of the National Party in South Africa is concerned, its unilateral commitment to racially separate educational systems and to 'group' self-determination is incompatible with the formal openness of anti-manipulative 'educating' (in Morrow's sense). It serves as a cautionary reminder of the undemocratic potential of socio-ideological 'technicism' in education, yoked to prespecified ground motives and substantive political designs. It gives urgent topicality to the question of how educative and political leadership can 'assist' learners and citizens to see and think for themselves, without at the same time prejudicing their capacity for self-direction.

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### **Limits and transgression - the 'fluid edge'**

It is the danger of authoritative limits that prompts Johan Muller's neo-Nietzschean critique of the 'will to power' manifested by intellectuals via the 'will to truth'<sup>71</sup>. This power motive is not the less evident when self-criticism forms part of an ongoing project of rational progress, in his view. Muller's own critique of Enlightenment rationalism is deemed not to form part of this quest for clarified truth, however, positioned as it is at the limits of the traditional paradigm, by endorsing as its 'founding principle' not the

forging of rational certainty but 'doubt about the desirability of positive knowledge' and about 'the necessary benevolence of reason'.<sup>72</sup> Citing Michel Foucault (whom he supports, in opposition to Jürgen Habermas), Muller avers the potentially 'terroristic' nature of positive knowledge, with its pretensions to 'universal grounding', in working against democratic autonomy and self-determination - particularly when such knowledge is certified by an academic elite or even by its abstract credential of being 'oppositional'. This reinforces a distinction between objective 'reason' and subjective 'passion' (Habermas's terms), with the implication that the former (appropriated by intellectuals) will take priority over the latter, imposing proper constraints on its undisciplined volitional power. In this way, the real politics of knowledge is displaced by a supposedly disinterested philosophical perspective that sets the objective limits of thought and action for others, whose relatively undisciplined impulses are thereby discredited and subjected to a higher cognitive authority.

This argument applies equally to the 'dynastic' knowledge of a dominant regime of truth and to oppositional knowledge, in Muller's view, because 'power inheres in the form of knowledge and not in its ideological proclivities'.<sup>73</sup> What is needed is 'an alternative to the social role knowledge currently occupies in relation to power' - one that employs the founding scepticism of the Foucauldian perspective by going 'beyond necessary limitation to explore possible transgression'.<sup>74</sup> In nurturing the impulse to transgress, the naive belief in rational 'perfectibility' should be eschewed, and intellectuals should 'curb any desire to lead'. Thus the field of social practice will be appropriated and redefined by the community and its organizations; the limiting conventions fixed by an ostensibly disinterested rational authority will thus give way to communal self-volition - firing the impulse to transgress inherited constraints - and decisive reconstruction, whereby limits are correspondingly revised.

Muller makes some telling points concerning the dangers of a totalising discourse supposedly valorised by transcendent principles. The danger of premature closure from whatever quarter is indeed a real one. The need to destabilise systems 'grounded' in partisan interests masquerading as objective truth is particularly urgent in contexts of oppression. A target of Muller's critique is evidently the division between theory (which is linked with ahistorical reason, universal grounding and positive knowledge) and practice (which is linked to historically contextualised political action, engaging the interest-relative frameworks of particular interpretative communities). By redressing the dualistic imbalance between the claims of objectivism over subjectivism, Muller seeks to demystify the assumption that there is a detached arbitrating perspective from which an

impartial referee might presume to conjure necessary rules as the guardian of naturalised knowledge. Deference to such presumptive authority disempowers the democratic will in accordance with limits prescribed from above. The positive impulse to transgress officially sanctioned bounds in pursuit of more democratically supple forms of social justice is thus curbed by a customarily disciplined regard for received wisdom and normative constraints. Muller's proposed way out of this impasse is therefore to exercise a 'mature' approach to necessary limits (in the spirit of Foucault), accommodating and promoting the impulse to transgress, and acknowledging the coerciveness that inheres in the structural relation between knowledge and power rather than in expressed ideological loyalties. People will then not be tempted so readily into the role of duly edified, passive spectators of social policy, but will enter the ring as active contestants in the struggle for democratic justice. Muller's argument is directed, therefore, towards means of publicly accountable policy-formation, responsive to the need for ongoing criticism and reconstruction but in terms other than those of Enlightenment rationalism.<sup>75</sup>

The arguments of Brian Fay provide suggestive points of similarity and difference to those of Muller. Fay propounds a 'critical social science' that retains a rational and objective approach to the process of 'enlightenment, empowerment and emancipation' while at the same time recognising the transience and limitation of historical needs and perceptions.<sup>76</sup> In arguing against utopian ideals that imply a goal of absolute completion, he seeks to supplement faith in emancipatory action with 'an ontology of tradition, embeddedness, historicity and embodiment'. The theories that result would be more modest in their hypothetical reach, aspiring not to universalising, permanent solutions but being instead 'self-consciously local, particular, situated, experimental and physical'.<sup>77</sup> The rational clarity this involves would be more fallible and partial, acknowledging the ambiguity, contingency and constraint associated with any human programme, yet also engaging social actors in continued and purposive collaboration. An unqualified faith in the power of progressive change to secure a perfect destiny is 'naive' and likely to end in 'tyranny' - reminiscent of the hubris of the overreaching tragic hero; equally, though, an exaggerated sense of confinement and embeddedness is self-defeating and needlessly conservative. What is required is a balance between a realistic regard for limits and the revisionary power of the creative spirit: this 'ecological sense' (of balance) amends the critical enterprise so that it is 'both positive and negative, simultaneously opening and closing, promising and discouraging'. This, Fay adds, 'is not an easy conjunction to maintain'.<sup>78</sup>

Fay's account of the difficult balancing act of a critical social science converges with Bowers' injunction concerning the desired balance between bonding and renewal, and also with Muller's advocacy of a 'fluid edge' between limitation and transgression. Muller's cautionary comment on the dynastic or terroristic potential of even 'oppositional knowledge' resembles Fay's sober recognition of the tyrannous tendencies of any over-idealistic regime of truth. Yet there is ambivalence in the arguments of both writers towards the claims of reason in its customary relation to the Enlightenment ideal of efficient progress. Thus, although Muller distances himself from Habermas and Kant, and endorses neo-Nietzschean scepticism as opening up a 'space of no return at the limits of the Enlightenment project', he also declares the need 'to be very clear what we are for and against', and emphasises that he is 'certainly not against Enlightenment *per se*'.<sup>79</sup> And Fay, despite his cynicism regarding the possibility of perfection and claims to definitive truth, still strives to promote 'reflective clarity' by which people will be able 'to determine rationally and freely the nature and direction of their collective existence'. A critical social theory, in Fay's sense, still seeks 'to reveal to its audience its true nature in a scientific manner: this is what it means by enlightenment'.<sup>80</sup>

The circumspection shown by Muller and Fay concerning the dangers of absolutism reflects a deep distrust of metaphysical ideals and non-ideological certainty. As this thesis will suggest, however, despite the dangers inherent in claims to perfect knowledge, the deconstructive function of a transgressive 'hermeneutic of suspicion' is valuably and necessarily supplemented by appeals to empirical facts and definitive truths. The negative, deconstructive moment is meaningful only in relation to the formative struggles of purposive, situated subjects, whose search for positive meaning and order correlates with the hope of a perfect enlargement of life, consonant with the will of one and all. However, in arguing for the continued value of claims to cognitive authority (whether empiricist or idealist), this thesis views the transgressive or liminal imagination as the ever-present impetus or occasion for the reciphering of discourse and of the constructs that give shape and substance to contextualised hypotheses and to established theory. This potentially destabilising source of open contestation is viewed, in a postmodern democracy, as the interminable prerequisite and corollary of any 'legitimate' public policy, subjecting it continually to the test of democratic reinscription and reconstruction. In arguing a case for the productive link between the radically transgressive, the hypothetically formative, and the conjecturally perfected moments, this thesis will examine the views of various critics of representational realism and reason, with the intention of showing their implicit reliance on both postmodern as well as positivist tendencies of thought - a conjunction that lends credence to the concept of a postmodern

democracy. In pursuing this line of thought, the following chapter will examine in more detail the ostensible divide between the views of Jürgen Habermas, as a defender of the project of 'modernity', and of Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard, as exponents of the postmodern spirit.

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## CHAPTER TWO : MODERNITY VERSUS POSTMODERNITY?

Modernity reaches back to changes in Western European thought in the seventeenth century, with the displacement of inherited cosmological and metaphysical assurances by increasingly self-reliant thinkers, whose questioning instituted the objectivist epistemology of scientific and liberal-humanist thought, oriented to the truth-serving powers of the autonomous reasoning subject.<sup>81</sup> In contrast to the premodern world-view in which knowledge, identity and structures of human relationship were fixed as the natural expression of a divinely ordained system, the modern world-view entailed an expanded and differentiated sense of human power, defining a capacity for independent enquiry and learning, for responsible interaction, and for self-fashioning and self-expression. This altered awareness of human capacity is reflected in the distinctions maintained by Kant and Weber (and subsequently by Habermas) between the cultural value-spheres of science, morality and art. Associated with the development of these distinct faculties was an orientation to the ideal of a composite truth, accessible to the disciplined mind in its experience of and reflection on the manifold realities of life. This tendency was fuelled by the Cartesian dualism of subject and object, by scientific empiricism, and by the Lockean notion of perception (as the mirroring in mind of an antecedent reality). These led to the foundational and representational habit of thought which is held responsible for the illusion that a natural order for the social world might be discovered which is as consistent and stable as that of the natural sciences. The philosophy of consciousness that underwrites this idealism entails the notion of a transcendental subjectivity, permitting the reflexive co-ordination and validation of perceived truths, en route to a vision of the composite whole.

This philosophy of the subject in the 'Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian' tradition may be distinguished from the subsequent 'Hegelian' and 'Nietzschean' versions of epistemology (in Richard Rorty's terms).<sup>82</sup> The Hegelian view acknowledges the dependence of one's perceptual power on historical and social variables, and shifts the burden of rational validation from the partial powers of the self-reflective ego to an impersonal historical process directed towards the ultimate realisation of Absolute Spirit. This teleological thrust is readily assimilable to a faith in the cumulative acquisition of objective knowledge and its contribution to rational evolution, as expressed by proponents of progressive modernisation. By contrast, the Nietzschean attitude expresses the postmodern impulse in its aversion for any aspiration to absolute truth and for limits set in the service of totalising systems of belief or action. Claims to rational progress, definitive truth or ultimate order are seen to be inescapably relative to non-absolute

signifying systems, ungroundable in any presuppositionless substrate. A correlative decentering of both the individual and society occurs: the identity between signifier and signified, which is presupposed by a correspondence theory of truth, is exposed as a metaphoric illusion; similarly, the confident contours of individual and social identity (which typify versions of both liberal-humanist and Marxist thought) are disrupted by the contingent contiguity of infinitely recombinable terms, the supposedly rational fixing of which in any 'authoritative' order may be achieved only at the cost of alternative revisionary possibilities.

Whereas philosophy has traditionally sought to annex the transcendent terrain of a metaphysical vantage point, from which the perspectives of diverse value-spheres might be reflectively assessed and harmonised, the postmodern view eschews any belief in such normative authorisation. In Rorty's view, the post-Cartesian distinction between these cultural spheres of interest, and the metadiscursive claims of a transcendent philosophical Reason, have contributed to the assertions of exclusive areas of expertise, appropriate to different fields of knowledge. The domination of scientific thinking, as manifested in logical positivism, and its denigration of the non-physical realm as irrelevant to true knowledge, is an example of this presumptive intellectual authority; another instance is the rise to prominence of positivist sociology, and the domination of instrumental thought that typifies modern administrative bureaucracies. The underlying philosophical circumstances permit a distinction between the roles of the 'traditional' intellectual (in Cornelis Disco's terms), unattached to any single value-sphere (like Plato's philosopher, sensitive to universal Forms and Ideas), and those identified with one or another of the specific value-spheres and its associated interest groups.<sup>83</sup> The 'culture of critical discourse' of the 'traditional' Enlightenment intellectual may thus be distinguished from that of the more specialised intellectuals within the divisions categorised by Kant and Weber. The traditional culture of critical discourse is prominently retained by German philosophers of the Frankfurt School, Disco argues, but not by postmodern French philosophers, owing to earlier industrialisation in France with its promise of emancipation through social modernisation. There, the traditional intellectuals forsook their culture of philosophical detachment for the role of 'pacified' intellectuals, acquiescing in the development of cognitive-instrumental rationality in the ostensible interests of social improvement. Yet the turn away from metaphysics amounted to an inhibition of the critical potential of the Enlightenment. In Germany, the continued influence of philosophical idealism helped to preserve the promise of the larger culture of critical discourse as 'a public adjudicator of truth and morality'.<sup>84</sup> By evading the earlier seductions of an industrial scientism, the German critical theorists

conserved a faith in universal reason, which the subsequent disillusionment with modernisation elsewhere caused to be equated with merely technical or instrumental rationality. Accordingly, the postmodern trend in France comes to express a radical scepticism that German critical theorists tend to refute; the classical ideals of order, consistency, identity and clarity that characterise the power of reason are displaced (under the influence of Nietzschean thought) by the refractory romanticism of a system-defying will-to-power, the expression of which constitutes its own integrity. It is the tension between these two trends that this chapter undertakes to explore, with reference to the opinions of Jürgen Habermas, on the one hand, and of Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard, on the other.

### Habermas

While denouncing all totalising tendencies, Jürgen Habermas nonetheless advocates a more 'comprehensive' concept of reason than is ascribed to Enlightenment thinkers by anti-rationalist critics of the enlightenment.<sup>85</sup> In his opinion, Nietzsche's totalising critique of reason presupposes a 'reductive' view of reason as the agent of cognitive mastery and instrumental domination. Reason here serves an objectifying and manipulating role, reinforcing the subordination and separateness of that which is the object of attention. This 'exclusion model' severs subjective reason from nature: both the 'outer nature' of the physical domain and the 'inner nature' of the personal or psychological are thereby dominated and even repressed. By contrast, Habermas's communicative model is held to be 'inclusive', uniting the threads of outer nature (factual and propositional truth), inner nature (subjective experience and self-expression), and society (interpersonal relations and normative understanding). Instead of absolutising the authority of the rational subject, and constructing a false dichotomy between a controlling cognitive reason and its non-rational 'other', Habermas sees reason as a polymorphous meaning-giving faculty, concretely mediated with otherness in social practice. Otherness in this view indicates the occasion of differentially rational (rather than non-rational) meaning. The differential nature of rational meaning is reflected in differential validity claims appropriate to either propositional, normative, or aesthetic-expressive 'truth' - claims that are raised, and meaning that may be validated, only in the process of communication oriented to mutual understanding.

Habermas joins with postmodernists in decrying the tyranny of representational truth and the associated impact of objectivist epistemology on the operation of modern technocratic states; but he does not *equate* these depersonalising abuses of logocentric

thought with Enlightenment rationality. The different cultural value-spheres of science, law and morality, and art are all articulated *within* reason, rather than being divided, as in the logical positivist scheme, between the rational (governing scientific knowledge) and the non-rational (things not subject to empirical proof). Accordingly, the distortions of the modern 'rationalised' state are attributable not to an excess of reason but to a 'deficit'. The rectification of reason - through the interpersonal medium of a communicative rationality that harnesses the mutually qualifying perspectives of the different value spheres - is for Habermas fully consonant with modernity, being the expression of 'the counter-discourse' inherent in it and (contra Nietzsche) unleashing 'the subversive thought of modern thought itself against the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness'. The one-dimensionality of logocentric thought tied to representational truth, cognitive-instrumental rationality and propositional statements is altogether reductive - ontologically, epistemologically and semantically. Habermas therefore propounds a 'pragmatically expanded theory of meaning' that highlights not the primacy of propositional language *per se* but rather its communicative use as one distinctively human but not essentially privileged capacity.<sup>86</sup>

Drawing on John Searle's theory of 'speech acts', Habermas moves the analytic focus of linguistic philosophy from the truth-conditions of simple assertoric statements to the entire spectrum of constative, regulative and expressive meaning. This expanded range of meaning is realised in interpersonal speech acts through the communicative testing of validity claims appropriate to the three value spheres and their predominant linguistic functions: the propositional (related to facts), illocutionary (oriented to the responses of interlocutors) and perlocutionary (oriented to a speaker's subjective intention). This expanded theory of meaning retains the connection between meaning and validity presupposed in truth-condition semantics, but alters the range of validity criteria to accommodate a broader conception of rational meaning. The world to which the rational subject relates is now no longer only that of objects but the more multi-dimensional 'lifeworld' uniting the objective, the social, and the subjective by means of communicatively mediated knowledge. This lifeworld is the ever-changing repository of and resource for meaning-patterns associated with factual understanding (for cognitive-instrumental truth), with normative social behaviour (for moral-practical action), and with subjective intention (the aesthetic-expressive dimension).<sup>87</sup> These are all intermeshed, but are susceptible to clarifying discrimination, through the process of communication geared to mutual understanding.

Accordingly, in his theory of communicative action, Habermas advocates 'the paradigm of mutual understanding' in opposition to the post-Cartesian 'paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness' with its attendant split between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. By so doing, he wishes to avoid the vacillation between autonomous 'transcendental' and 'empirical' dimensions of understanding, replacing this dualism by intersubjective, communicative relationship that accommodates these previously contradictory 'self-thematizations' in modified form. Partners in a communicative relationship can never attain a completely transcendent perspective, commanding absolute knowledge, because of the ever-receding horizon of their 'lifeworlds'. Participants oriented to communicative understanding may draw on the interpretative resources of their contextual lifeworlds so as to 'reconstruct' rule-knowledge pertaining to determinate situations (that is, 'empirical' knowledge of 'specific totalities'); but for a larger universalizing view encompassing all the structures of a lifeworld or of all lifeworlds ('anonymous rule systems'), a 'theoretically-constituted perspective' is required, which co-exists with specific rule-knowledge as a provocation to creative and critical thought by historically situated communities. In the communicative relationship, then, empirical knowledge of specific totalities is enhanced by mutual methodical 'self-critique' and analysis of existing 'pretheoretical' knowledge; while the transcendental dimension of 'anonymous' (not specifically embodied) theoretical construction generates mutually provocative 'formal-pragmatic' postulations.<sup>88</sup> This formal-pragmatic dimension is necessarily qualified and given particular substantive content by communicative action, which avoids the objectivating detachment and absolutist illusions of exclusive, subject-centred reason.

The intersubjective testing of validity claims involves for Habermas a pragmatic logic of argumentation, and procedures that help communicative partners to redeem something of the rational potential that is built into the validity basis of all speech. It is only when the communicative structures of the lifeworld are subordinated to the reifying authority of purposive-instrumental cognition that the problems of a distorting and alienating 'modernization' arise, in which part dominates whole, and the reciprocal recognition of communicative understanding submits to usurpation and division by the objectifying consciousness. The distorting result of cognitive-instrumental domination reflects and perpetuates an 'entanglement' which marks our neglect of the necessary relation between the multi-dimensional lifeworld and communicative practice. A harmonious 'interlacing' can be regained only if plans for social action arise from a process of communication that allows for the interdependence of both the symbolic and the material production of the lifeworld.

In delineating the principles and procedures of rational argumentation, central to his theory of communicative action, Habermas rejects the idealism of a pure, non-situated reason (as wrongly imputed to his notion of an 'ideal speech situation' oriented to universal consensus). Such an abstraction would merely entrench the polarity of transcendental and empirical realms. There is no detached, absolutising reason; it is 'by its very nature incarnated in contexts of communicative action and in structures of the lifeworld'. The purism of a self-sufficient rational ego is quite incompatible with meaning that is communally constituted and intersubjectively validated. The decentering that occurs in such a dynamic mutuality contradicts the unity and certainty of a superior definitive perspective. Speech oriented to mutual understanding opens an interplay between 'alter' and 'ego' that engages self and other in a process of critical reflection, while also sustaining 'a networking of social interactions and lifeworld contexts'.<sup>89</sup>

This paradigm of mutual understanding is more creatively radical, Habermas believes, than either Marxist 'praxis philosophy', or its phenomenological corrective, or the linguistic turn of structuralist and post-structuralist thought.<sup>90</sup> All of these alternatives retain the limitations of a subject/object dualism, he argues. By emphasising labour and the determining forces of production rather than the developing insights of critical-rational consciousness, Marxist philosophy became trapped in the depersonalising 'fetters' of the objectifying 'production paradigm'; equally, the phenomenological counter-thrust reaffirmed the dualism by its emphasis on the penetrating power of subjective perception (despite such qualifying factors as temporality, situatedness and embodiment). Similarly, even the linguistic turn - in Habermas's overly negative interpretation - conceives of the subject either as the autonomous exploratory-creative user of language (as in aesthetic modernism, positing alternative structures of coherence and meaning); or the subject is viewed as the passive victim of the trans-subjective expanse of language, difference or power.

The potential of communicative action depends, however, on the degree to which the communicative situation is untouched by coercion or domination, so that argumentation is governed by free and equal rational interaction. Despite the impossibility of realising an absolutely ideal speech situation given to the expression of pure reason, untainted by pretheoretical bias and interested motives, it is the reciprocal and necessary presupposition of argumentation that the conditions of an ideal speech situation are sufficiently met for consensus to be hypothetically attainable. These conditions are summarised by Seyla Benhabib:

first, each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication; second, each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations, and to challenge justifications.

(The above constitute the 'symmetry conditions'.)

Third, all must have equal chances as actors to express their wishes, feelings and intentions; and fourth, the speakers must act *as if* in contexts of action there is an equal distribution of chances 'to order and resist orders, to promise and to refuse, to be accountable for one's conduct and to demand accountability from others'.<sup>91</sup>

(These comprise the 'reciprocity conditions'.) All these conditions should obtain if participants are to aspire to mutual understanding that is based on the force of maximally unconstrained rational argument. There is a universal common interest in safeguarding these conditions, which serve to ground argument and consensus in a 'common form of life' that is not incompatible with the lifeworlds of the communicative partners.

These lifeworlds exist as a substantive context that sets limits of its own to the formal efficacy of the presupposed ideal speech situation. What is preserved by the 'universal pragmatics' of an ideal speech situation is not the inevitable certainty of authoritative consensus, but rather the continued prospect of an opening towards a yet-to-be-attained, even better, agreement. A creative tension is set up between the partial insight associated with 'specific totalities', and a yet-to-be-embodied comprehensive ideal - a tension that seems to guarantee for Habermas the continued possibility of going beyond existing agreements and institutionalised norms. His references to ideal possibilities do not indicate a complacent expectation of future finality, but are rather a necessary presupposition and stimulus of communication aimed at an as yet unrealised understanding.

Critics of Habermas have stressed the totalitarian implications of the universal or transcendent 'moment' of validity claims. By contrast, it is argued here that this appetite for perfect inclusion should be understood as a co-implicate of the *openness* preserved by the elusive ideal speech situation. In the spirit of Muller's position, but contrary to his interpretation, the postulate of an ideal consensus is seen here as giving credence and force to an appeal for continual transgression. In this respect, the following comments by

Habermas on the validity claims arising from rational communication are highly significant:

Of course, these validity claims have a Janus face: As claims, they transcend any local context; at the same time, they have to be raised here and now and be de facto recognized if they are going to bear the agreement of interaction participants that is needed for effective participation. The transcendent moment of *universal* validity bursts every provinciality asunder; the obligatory moment of accepted validity claims renders them carriers of a *context-bound* everyday practice. . . . Hence, a moment of *unconditionality* is built into *factual* processes of mutual understanding - the validity laid claim to is distinguished from the social currency of a de facto established practice and yet serves it as the foundation of an existing consensus.<sup>92</sup>

Habermas's reference elsewhere to the 'integrative' function of communicative rationality is misleading if the transgressive stimulus of the transcendent moment of validity claims is not given its due weight.<sup>93</sup> The 'obligatory' moment, pertaining to contextualised consensus and social integration, is properly qualified and relativised - made fallible - in his scheme, by the speculative scope of the formal-pragmatic, 'universal' dimension that is liable to burst 'every provinciality asunder'. It is the postulated 'unconditionality' entailed by the 'transcendent moment of universal validity' that makes perpetual place for the otherness which sustains the liminal imagination and the possibility of creative change. At the same time, however, the force of the appeal to a transcendent validity retains a residual power on the level of everyday practice, in respect of specific issues, after agreement has been reached. The danger lies in the facile identification of the 'obligatory' moment of accepted validity claims (which takes effect in context-relative, institutional norms) with the perfection intimated by the original transcendent moment. A simple conflation of the obligatory and transcendent moments could constitute a reification (as in the case of Christian-National apartheid ideology), and so deny the function of the 'ideal' or 'universal' as a continued provocation to the revision of established beliefs and practices. What protects openness to change is the idea of something always beyond the given, generating a permanent dialectic between conditional knowing and unconditional possibility. There is no hierarchical separation between the ignorant and those in possession of the truth, in this scheme; alter and ego are called to the dynamic reciprocity of a 'common form of life', rooted in but reaching communicatively beyond particular provincial totalities.

Communicative action therefore sustains a constant interplay of the locally consensual and expansively ideal, the conventionally formative and openly speculative. Universal or absolute truth is never fully realised, being intrinsically unconditioned and notionally formal, any consensus having local effects only, and contributing to the further embodiment of specific lifeworlds. The latter, with their never-wholly-objectifiable limits, nonetheless tend to constitute a 'conservative counterweight' to further dissent, in Habermas's view. They are comprised of intuitive self-understandings, body-centered complexes of experience, holistic cultural knowledge - giving rise to internalised know-how rather than cognitive know-that.<sup>94</sup> (Foucault's notion of social 'biopower' - to be discussed later - comes to mind here.) It is this solidary social practice, concrete micro-instances of power in action, that the procedural formality of an ideal speech situation is intended to expose to argumentation and possible change through a dialectic of the transcendent and obligatory dimensions, of the universal and provincial, the unembodied and the embodied. Despite the subversive and re-formative potential of communicative rationality, its participatory nature provides for social solidarity through mutual understanding, even as it subjects existent patterns of thought and conduct to innovative pressure. Even solitary, abstract thinking may come to share in the interplay of alter and ego, as a 'reflective' form of communicative action - that is, reproducing intersubjective relationship at the reflective level, so that self-relation and -reflection are mediated through the 'performative relation to an addressee' (in Habermas's terms).<sup>95</sup> This notion is consistent with Habermas's flexible conception of 'self-thematization' which is reconciled to both theoretical and practical reason - embracing the reflective reconstruction of 'anonymous' rule-systems, and the methodical critique of specific social totalities.<sup>96</sup> The differential validity claims of the postulated cultural value spheres also accord with this model of a flexibly stratified and interwoven discursive realm, susceptible to the non-manipulative influence of a collaborative and democratically integrative, but unsettled (and potentially unsettling), communicative rationality.

However, the equal reciprocity presupposed by communicative action might be travestied and repressed in specific contexts, as in South Africa, so curtailing the value (for both self and other) of the dialectically generative capacity of intersubjective discourse. In this way, the prevailing structures of the lifeworld are reinforced by institutional limits that restrict the concrete mediation of 'incarnated reason' with its 'other', and deny the internal decentering that Habermas regards as intrinsic to modern reason. There is no single programmatic solution to the reification of a given empirical order; but by stressing the perpetual incongruity between the ideal and the 'real' - which fires the ongoing dialectic - Habermas implies the inevitable historical desublimation of

the totalised truth-perspectives.<sup>97</sup> This does not remove the danger that accompanies the attainment of any new order, the danger of further presumptive closure. The determining influence of provincial totalities poses a continual challenge to communicative rationality, engendering their own sense of achieved solidarity, which is not unambiguously open to the transgressive dynamic of a rectifying, counterhegemonic reason and to the alternative 'networking' of interactive lifeworld structures.

It is this very danger of closure that justifies the role of communicative action as mediator of the critical function of traditional philosophy, in Habermas's view, serving to illuminate and interpret the lifeworld in its totality and to reopen the contact between the diverse dimensions of meaning and validity. In the guise of communicative rationality, this modern 'philosophy' sustains a pragmatic relationship with society, not only as an integrative force but also as a creative one, so that philosophical reflection serves as a medium or - in the account of Baynes *et al* - as a 'supplier (Zuarbeiter) of ideas that are treated as empirical hypotheses' and also 'as a stand-in for empirical theories with strong universalist claims'. The latter are relativised by this reflection, so that 'questions of "unity and universality" that might otherwise be closed or dropped' are held open. Similarly, this cross-cutting communicative 'philosophy' serves to 'open up the encapsulated spheres of science, morality and art' and feed them into the lifeworld as mutually interactive and provocative dimensions of communal experience and action.<sup>98</sup> It is this dynamic interrelation which energises and defines what Habermas calls the 'counterdiscourse of modernity', and which he wishes to redeem through the 'paradigm of mutual understanding', in the face of the reductive equation of the Enlightenment project with the limited paradigm of 'the philosophy of the subject'.

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## Foucault

Whereas Habermas's theory of communicative action expresses the centrality of relations of *meaning* amongst dialogic partners, Michel Foucault emphasises instead the relations of *power* that inhere in any claim to significant truth. In his view, any validity claim implies a regime of truth, giving to discourse a political dimension that is merely disguised by an ostensibly neutral procedural ethic. A view of human relations as regulated by an impartial structure of communication belies the real locus of power that obtains in any social order. He refuses analyses which are 'couched in terms of the symbolic field', and directs attention instead to analyses 'in terms of the genealogy of the

relations of force, strategic developments, and tactics', so giving due weight to the 'open and hazardous reality of conflict'. Habermas's communicative model, he would claim, is a way of avoiding the 'violent, bloody and lethal character' of this reality, 'by reducing it to the calm Platonic form of language and dialogue'.<sup>99</sup> Foucault sees such dialogue as implying the interchange between autonomous subjectivities freely able to chart a way to enlightened clarity. What Foucault seeks to highlight rather is the subject's place within an historical framework and its associated, constitutive web of power, producing 'effects of truth' that it is not possible to distinguish from any deeper or more authentic foundation.

The power that circulates within the social polity is not simply repressive (Foucault dismisses the distinction between ideology and truth); it is the substantive source of our self-understanding. It is positive, coaxing us into knowledge and experience, rather than merely negative like a forbidding set of objectifiable laws. A 'genealogy' of power can trace its effects - unlike the 'archaeological' emphasis of Foucault's earlier work, delineating the model of objectifiable laws or structures.<sup>100</sup> There is no sovereign source of the power relations dispersed throughout society. The 'biopower' Foucault describes is pervasive and unsystematizable; it is not co-ordinated by any arch-manipulator such as the state, or the economy, or history (these latter produce power effects of their own, but are not the locus of any pervasive causal logic). Power relations invest all areas of social reality - 'the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology . . . ' - and possess an unpredictable dynamic that rules out the possibility of one grand solution. There are, he writes, as many different kinds of 'revolution' as there are 'possible subversive recodifications of power relations', in their different areas of manifestation.<sup>101</sup>

Nonetheless, biopower is implicitly linked with the process of 'normalization' that intimates but exceeds the monolithic power of the Law, and the Word, and the Text or Tradition in delimiting the nature and capacity of citizens in 'modern society', rendering them victims of procedures of objectification and subjection, surveillance, classification and distribution.<sup>102</sup> This normalization is linked implicitly to the metaphoric notion of biopower as a pervasive conditioning force, directing the behaviour and relationships of the members of the social organism. Foucault likens the process of normalization to techniques of disciplinary training that make possible the 'meticulous control of the operations of the body', ensuring 'the constant subjection of its forces' and imposing on these operations 'a relation of docility-utility'. In this way our modern 'political anatomy' is realised, evincing a 'microphysics of power' and giving impetus to the 'utilitarian rationalization of detail in moral accountability and political control'.<sup>103</sup> It is precisely

these processes of subject-constitution that are the focus of Foucault's genealogical micronarratives, highlighting the 'specific rationalities' of different fields. Power is not amenable to one-dimensional measurement; the norms it employs are specific to different rationalities and are more fluid than laws which are coded for less flexible, universal application. (This is reminiscent of the composite Habermasian 'lifeworld', as a dynamic compound of the various dimensions of modern reason.) Hence Foucault is not sympathetic to the measuring of overall social 'progress', as though the diverse micrologics of power could be accommodated to the comprehensive rationalisation of a single grand account. This might merely give credence to a dangerous 'immaturity' of thought, inspiring the projection of utopian visions with their associated ballast of normative prohibitions and obligations.

However, Foucault does indeed acknowledge the presence of transient and local co-ordinating principles in specific contexts, which orientate relationships within and across different 'domains'. Such co-ordination is only ambiguously system-wide: it is 'not uniform nor constant', and 'there is no general type of equilibrium between finalized activities, systems of communication, and power relations'; but there are what he calls 'blocks' in which the various value domains 'constitute regulated and concerted systems' and are 'adjusted to one another according to considered formulae'.<sup>104</sup> Nonetheless, these definable instances of formative logic do not in Foucault's view justify adherence to a 'theory' that would claim to explain power in a global, totalising way. Hence his dismissal of the 'traditional intellectual' (as servant of the truth) and his alternative account of the 'specific intellectual', concerned with practical instances of power in specific sectors of social experience. This unites them with particular instances of concrete struggle, not with universal categories or general truth; nonetheless, a unity with the masses is liable to arise, owing to the likelihood of a common adversary - 'namely, the multi-national corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators, etc'.<sup>105</sup>

There is seemingly a tension in Foucault's account between the role of systematic power liable to generate the unity that might justify a theoretical account, and the micro-effects of biopower in the lifeworlds of people in diverse sectors of society. The 'savants' of small-scale milieux are now the specific intellectuals, replacing the would-be universal or traditional intellectual whose role was joined to a juridical faith in definitive general laws - in large conceptions of equity that may apply to all people everywhere. The specific intellectual no longer presumes to serve as the leader of universal

movements for justice or freedom, owing to the multiplicity of sites where micro-effects of power are unforeseeably experienced and contended against.<sup>106</sup> Foucault again qualifies the impression that no theoretical account of large mechanisms of power in given societies is possible, by allowing that every society does have a 'general politics' of truth which orchestrates effects in the real world. The specificity of intellectual activity in this account simply means disavowing any pretension to speak for 'universal' truth; it is quite acceptable for specific intellectuals to clarify the 'general functioning of an apparatus of truth', or the values of a 'class position', or the 'conditions of life and work'. It is equally acceptable for them to articulate the dominant social 'politics of truth' and to 'operate and struggle at the general level of that regime of truth which is so essential to the structure and functioning of our society'. What distinguishes this intellectual role from the traditional conception is that the struggle is not undertaken in the interests of objective truth or a determinate knowledge-domain, but concerns rather the variable 'rules according to which the true and the false are separated', and their attendant power effects. It is not a scientific enterprise, designed to conquer ideology, but a battle about the 'status of truth and the economic role it plays'.<sup>107</sup>

Clearly there is room for potential misunderstanding in Foucault's references to a discernible rule-governed 'system'. What seems crucial is whether this systematic knowledge is inferred as static or fluid - as a 'juridical schematism' or a circulating 'economy' of power. Foucault's rejection of the dialectical logic of contradictions in favour of genealogical 'relations of force' is evidently not intended to deny the possibility of systematic analysis amenable to a kind of theoretical formulation. What is at issue is the status accorded the positive theory: if deemed 'scientifically' true and (therefore) fixed and universal, like the deep structure of 'langue', Foucault decries it; if, on the contrary, it defines a social system so as to highlight the political dynamic of its current regime of truth, this is acceptable - that is, if it is not done in the name of any reified order of truth. It is the constitutive effects of a particular political system that genealogy can discern: genealogy is 'a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc', without making reference to a transcendental subject.<sup>108</sup> Such constitution is not hierarchically logical, having instead micro-effects that allow for subversive recodifications in diverse milieux, without effecting or affecting a necessary comprehensive scheme. As previously noted, Foucault denies the attribution of power to any sovereign source. Yet there *is* a 'general regime of truth' that orchestrates the larger polity; and genealogical analysis should serve to ascertain 'the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth'.<sup>109</sup> The question then, perhaps, is how this new politics might be constituted and defined as such, and by whom?

An important issue for democracy is the means of ascertaining a new general politics and of implementing the changes implied by it. This requires some way of engaging the views of diverse 'specific intellectuals' (potentially everyone) so as to secure their meaningful participation in this public policy formation. It remains to be seen whether a form of communicative action, as theorised by Habermas, is not the undefined mediator of any alternative politics of truth implied by genealogical analysis. Foucault writes:

The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses - or what's in their heads - but the political economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.<sup>110</sup>

Habermas would agree with this acknowledgement of the fallibility of any system of knowledge, and would concede its power effects, but would direct attention to the procedure for ascertaining that the production of an alternative politics of truth is as free as possible of distorting power effects. It is here, at the nexus between old and new regimes, that his discourse ethics would seek a foothold, with due regard to the dialectic between lifeworld and system, and its effect on the hegemonic formation.

Further ambiguity in Foucault's position, implying his actual compatibility with Habermas, is apparent in his article 'What is Enlightenment?'. Here Foucault reiterates his concern for the production of alternative regimes of truth, and locates in the 'maturity' identified by Kant as a mark of Enlightenment thinking a willingness to question and disobey the authority of inherited constraints, with a view to defining conditions under which the use of reason can serve to justify new forms of knowledge, action and aspiration. But what is significant for Foucault is not the advent of an enduring substitute, permanently sanctioned by reason, but rather a critical 'attitude' that compels man 'to face the task of producing himself', without end. Enlightenment denotes for Foucault, therefore, the 'permanent reactivation' of this attitude, a philosophical ethos giving expression to 'a permanent critique of our historical era'.<sup>111</sup> He detaches this ethos from a facile 'humanism' - that is, from a philosophy of the subject that implies the perfectibility of human understanding (as manifested in religious, scientific and political dogma). Instead of using reason to determine limits that are considered stable, grounded

in rationally justified foundations, Foucault recommends the use of reason to identify areas of contingency and singularity that are not accommodated to the limits of existing social designs or conventional beliefs. The possibility of transgression this incongruity suggests is made clearer by way of genealogical analysis, linking the form of what we are to the discursive dynamics that select and occlude contingent options. Such analysis, accordingly, 'will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do, or think'.<sup>112</sup>

The ambiguity consists in the corollary *formative* thrust of such transgressive critique. Here, the critical attitude of transgression is replaced by a more constructive moment (albeit an 'experimental' one), in terms of which the work done at the limits of ourselves 'is put to the test of reality' in order to specify the points 'where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take'.<sup>113</sup> This constructive moment does not authorise the change as permanent or global, however. Owing to the inevitable limits on our knowledge and awareness, and to our historicity, we are 'always in the position of beginning again'. But the lack of a transcendent perspective does not entail a radical relativism or incoherence: 'The work in question has its own generality, its systematicity, its homogeneity and its stakes.'<sup>114</sup> This productive coherence is to be understood always to be a 'historical figure' that refuses claims to permanent validation. What Foucault advocates is a 'critical ontology of ourselves' that is an attitude as opposed to 'a theory, a doctrine . . . a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating'. Nonetheless, he does claim for such a critique a *theoretical* coherence', but this is confined to the genealogically-prompted problematisation of the historical forms of biopower that have constituted us as subjects. The reconstructive 'experiment', whereby 'historico-critical reflection' is put to 'the test of concrete practices', is assigned to the category of '*practical* coherence'.<sup>115</sup> What is lacking, it seems, is a means of accounting for the step between theoretical and practical coherence, between genealogical analysis/critique and experimental testing. Here, again, one must allow a possible mediating role for Habermas's communicative action, without assuming that the rational discourse it bespeaks or the validity claims it strives to redeem entail the dogmatic fixing of limits as universal or permanent.

Foucault's appeal for continual experimental testing implies that social policies must remain in the realm of open hypotheses. Proof or verification as the outcome of such testing would involve the construction of affirmative theoretical norms, something from which he ambiguously distances himself. (The 'theoretical coherence' referred to above pertains to problematisation not affirmation.) Elsewhere he describes the

experimental attitude as 'prudent' and 'demanding': 'at every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying with what one is doing, with what one is.'<sup>116</sup> This critical alertness seemingly cuts across the division between theory and practice, in his view. Instead of 'applying' ideas (seen as the constituents of a prior theory), Foucault sees 'testing' them as displaying a more immediate interfusion of action and thought, of the lifeworld and the structuring initiative. He thus intends to substitute the dynamism of interactive forces for the disciplining guidance of reified abstractions. Yet there is a manifest tension in Foucault's remarks on the implicit role of theory in any purposeful social intervention. The matter is not resolved by restricting programmatic, intentional action to the microlevel - to the multiple spheres of specific intellectuals. Foucault himself disavows any prior allegiance to the principles of an integrated political theory: '... the questions I am trying to ask are not determined by a pre-established political outlook and do not tend toward the realization of some definite political project'.<sup>117</sup> Such allegiance would entail a 'totalizing' impulse that would negate the critical attitude that should open up rather than foreclose on unplanned perspectives. He espouses instead an ethical interest that is freely responsive to concrete problems, not for the sake of some grand scheme but for the sake of unpredictable moral and historical practice. Yet Foucault also allows that this ethical attitude is compatible with political purposes, obliging those who govern to be analytically attentive to the implications of action taken in any social context. This appears to grant that such moral action is consistent with an implicit theory which is brought to explicitness in the political sphere; the reality of guiding principles is not effaced by the translation of purposive social action into the language of a moral rather than political discourse.

At the same time, Foucault expresses apparent sympathy for a Habermasian discourse ethic as a 'critical principle' - that is, oriented not so much to maintaining an existing social consensus as to exposing the non-consensus inhering in existing power relations, with a view to overcoming it. He explicitly refutes the idea that such a critical principle has a 'regulatory' function dedicated to conserving an existing state of affairs, associated with a previous consensus. 'The farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality.'<sup>118</sup> This attitude chimes with the 'maturity' he feels the Enlightenment promised, but which has not yet come about - a willingness to criticise conventional constraints that presume to safeguard the interests of all. 'Obedient' respect for a supposed consensus thus gives way to a more subversive, re-creative spirit. Again, the line between transgressive critique and reconstructive 'regulation' is an evanescent thing, serving perhaps as a purely formal notion, necessary but indeterminate, and being accorded context-relative substance only

by specific interpretative communities. An equitable way of defining such collective meaning, through a process of communicative action oriented to mutual understanding, remains a largely tacit dimension of Foucault's political ethics.

The value of communicative 'regulation' is brought to the fore, however, by Foucault's denigration of 'polemics' as opposed to 'dialogue'. The sceptical assailing of accepted limits, which he associates with 'maturity', is clearly contrasted to (although suggestive of) a polemicism that is not self-critical as well. In dismissing the view that polemicists can 'validate' their opinions by waging 'war' on an adversary who is demonised from the outset, Foucault recognises the need for another communicative means of seeking such validation. This is found in the 'dialogue situation': in 'the serious play of questions and answers, in the work of reciprocal elucidation', the exercising and respect of participants' 'rights' - for instance, the right 'to remain unconvinced, to perceive a contradiction, to require more information, to emphasize different postulates, to point out faulty reasoning, etc'.<sup>119</sup> Such an interchange is likened to a 'game' in which interlocutors adhere to certain rules, appertaining to their mutual rights. Foucault's conception here is clearly suggestive of the qualities that characterise Habermas's ideal speech situation as a regulatory principle of his discourse ethics. For Foucault the critical impulse to 'transgress' obviously does not extend to the impartial norms of the dialogue situation described by him, as that would be incompatible with the requisite 'truth'-seeking partnership (the polemicist's addressee is not seen as 'a partner in the search for truth, but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong . . .', in Foucault's words).<sup>120</sup> It is the polemicist who is seen as immature, adhering unreflectively to prior inviolate convictions and a superior consensus that sparks a militant self-assertion.

However, it appears that Foucault's distinction between polemics and dialogue is not developed primarily to argue for a more mature form of validation as such. It is to pursue the theme of continued openness as opposed to closure, the need for ongoing critique rather than a dialogically-derived consensus. Accordingly, his own approach to political questions is not marked by a sense of party-political alliance, or by a methodical search for the one valid 'solution'. Rather, it is of the order of 'problematization', a posing of questions that no 'political formula' can answer completely. He sees a truly dialogic, problematizing attitude as viewing politics from the outside - from a position that does not express or embody any stable system of belief, value or tradition. As he puts it:

. . . the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a 'we' in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a 'we' possible by elaborating the question.<sup>121</sup>

Here again one is confronted by a seeming aporia concerning the fruits of dialogue that eventuates in consensus: one is prompted to ask what criteria accord credibility to the outcome of dialogic discussion, as opposed to the validation proclaimed by the polemicist. What norms pertain to the formation of a future 'we', what self-generative bonds of common purpose? One infers that the condition of openness preserved by the dialogue situation is also a prerequisite of democratic justice and valid representation. Open dialogue constitutes a formally normative yet substantively non-prescriptive principle that gives conditional justification or validity to decisions reached through maximally inclusive processes of democratic communication.

Foucault also approximates an endorsement of the Kantian-Weberian distinction between cultural value spheres, on which Habermas develops his account of modern reason. Foucault expresses his interest in the 'relations among science, politics and ethics', for example, with a bearing on the formation of 'a scientific domain, a political structure, a moral practice'. Genealogical analysis is directed at fields of experience in which 'the three fundamental elements of any experience are implicated: a game of truth, relations of power, and forms of relation to oneself and to others'.<sup>122</sup> Foucault then distinguishes further between the attitudes associated with such experience, and the work of 'thought' as a relatively detached, objectifying (but still problematizing) agency:

Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.<sup>123</sup>

This characterisation of the work of 'thought' tantalisingly recalls a critique of pure reason, and a transcendent subjectivity that might validate the ungrounded claims of practical reason. However, Foucault stresses that such thought is not exercised in the promise of an infallible judgement, authorising 'a formal system that has reference only

to itself; nor is such thought shaped to or governed by a natural propensity for a single, right solution; rather, 'it is an original or specific response - often taking many forms, sometimes even contradictory in its different aspects - to these difficulties, which are defined for it by a situation or a context'.<sup>124</sup>

The implication would seem to be that participants in a dialogue situation (like genealogical analysts in respect of history) may engage in thought that reflects on the conditioning factors of divergent responses, on the pretheoretical 'elements' that make possible different kinds of problematization, relevant to specific issues. This would clarify the 'postulates or principles' of the diverse responses, which might then be susceptible to modification in keeping with a new problematization that intimates a more mutually acceptable 'solution'.<sup>125</sup> Where the validity-status of proposed solutions is concerned, one infers (in keeping with the general tenor of Foucault's arguments) that any consensual outcome does not command the status of theoretical certainty, however salutary the 'experimental' behaviour of the relevant field of experience may prove to be. Stable definition is anathema to the critical thrust of self-reflective, dialogic thought: problematization is not oriented to 'an arrangement of representations' (that is, to static, fixed constructs) but is something fluid, responsive to historical contingency. Foucault's caution concerning the dominating potential of large-scale co-ordinating principles is consistent with his wish to avoid the disciplinary habit that would tend to impose a monologic interpretation of power or order on any society, either as a substitute for detailed analytic critique or as a revisionary but reified ideal. The hypothetical generalisation, which tempts the imposition of tyrannical rule, is thus replaced by an acute sensitivity to the more nuanced particularities of experience. This is the reason for his genealogical focus on the 'how' of power instead of on the 'what' or 'why'. This micro-analysis accounts for the difficulty Foucault has in reconciling himself to any manifesto or set of politically formative ideals amenable to reasoned debate, critique and consensus, and to the programmatic constitution of a future co-ordinated regime. Any social narrative cohering around a set of rationalised abstractions invites the construction of parameters to be respected, rather than the properly cautious, experimental attitude of modernity. He writes:

To put it bluntly, I would say that to begin the analysis with a 'how' is to suggest that power as such does not exist. At the very least it is to ask oneself what contents one has in mind when using this all-embracing and reifying term; it is to suspect that an extremely complex configuration of realities is allowed to escape when one treads endlessly in the double

question: What is power? and Where does it come from? The little question, What happens, although flat and empirical, once it is scrutinized is seen to avoid accusing a metaphysics or an ontology of power of being fraudulent; rather it attempts a critical investigation into the thematics of power.<sup>126</sup>

Such a critical ontology, it appears, is not necessarily the prerogative of an enlightened few. Although power relations are 'rooted deep in the social nexus', they are not seen by Foucault as constituting an irresistible monolithic imperative but as a simplified structuring of 'the possible field of action' - a field within which a degree of autonomous choice is possible, reflecting the 'recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom'. This implies that the hegemonic order is not wholly determinative, nor is the freedom absolute: 'it would be better to speak of an "agonism" - of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.'<sup>127</sup> This 'agonism', then, arises from the tension between disciplinary forces and an insubordinate residuum that is the occasion of possible reversal and ongoing transformation. It is evidently the source of the critical animus of 'thought', as previously discussed, which sustains and is sustained by communal dialogue and creative struggle.

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## Lyotard

As Fredric Jameson notes in his foreword to Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard's discussion presents a critique of Habermas's 'vision of a "noise-free", transparent, fully communicational society'.<sup>128</sup> In this respect, Foucault and Lyotard are in apparent sympathy, although as I shall continue to argue, they have more in common with Habermas than is perhaps usually recognised. For Lyotard, 'postmodern' designates the present state of culture and the 'condition of knowledge' (viewed as a 'crisis of narratives') in the most highly developed societies - a crisis marked by transformations in the 'game rules' for science, literature and the arts. More specifically, Lyotard conceives of this change as altering the status of claims to true knowledge, claims depending either on the metadiscursive legitimation associated with grand philosophical narratives, or on the pure objectivity sought by science. Lyotard conceives of the 'modern' as typified by such strivings for certain knowledge and scientific truth; whereas the 'postmodern' is marked by 'incredulity' towards the metanarratives on which such

efforts depend.<sup>129</sup> He is sceptical whether legitimation in the postmodern condition may now be found 'in consensus obtained through discussion, as Jürgen Habermas thinks'; and he adds -

Such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games. And invention is always borne of dissension. Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy.<sup>130</sup>

Lyotard develops his argument by way of reference to Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games', which occur in specific domains of discourse and are governed by conventional rules requiring no ultimate philosophical defence. These rules are activated merely as pragmatic constraints on players in the 'games', whose more or less voluntary participation and respective 'moves' are rendered intelligible in terms of the options permitted by the rules. Both the legitimating claims of a discourse oriented to true or objective knowledge, such as science, and the legitimating claims of a discourse oriented to true justice or freedom, such as critical social theory, are ostensibly deluded by the idea that there is a determinable transition between true and false, when really there is only a transition between acceptance or non-acceptance of the codes and conventions of different games, distinguishable by no truth-bearing standard. Further, social beings are not trapped within any one game, but may move at will from the governance of one to that of another.

The range of movement created or permitted within games, and of choice between alternative games, justifies a view of communication as a dynamic struggle for discursive power: 'to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics.'<sup>131</sup> This idea of agonistics is not meant to suggest only a destabilising tension; rather, the social fabric itself largely relies upon and helps to make possible the diverse 'moves' within and between its constituent language games. Lyotard argues for a distinction between this agonistics, which calls for continual mobility in any social interaction, and the more static model of communication as an exchange of pre-packed definitive messages between sender and receiver. He also rejects emphatically the oppositional thinking that views messages as making claims about determinate referents that are either true or false. Although any language game may well become institutionalised as dominant, so that its rules come to define the limits of permissible or acceptable knowledge and practice, the capacity to differ and to reactivate

contrary moves and games indicates - as in Foucault's account - a freedom of interactive engagement within the variegated social 'network'. Thus interlocutors are always involved in 'pragmatic relationships', while also being 'displaced by the messages that traverse them, in perpetual motion', giving rise to unexpected, disorienting and destabilising counter-moves that evade easy systematisation.<sup>132</sup> Despite his stress on flexibility and unpredictability, it is clear that Lyotard regards an agonistics as compatible with the presence of 'rules' governing relationships between participants. Such rules do not foreordain the trajectory of all 'moves' in the social process, although the various possibilities of movement are presumably interpreted in keeping with a set of conventions required for mutual intelligibility.

Lyotard associates this agonistic relativism with the flexible constitution of cultural norms across the several value spheres acknowledged by Habermas and Foucault as well. This knowledge entails a 'competence' that is concerned not only with the criteria of cognitive truth but includes the criteria of 'justice and/or happiness' and of 'beauty'. Accordingly, cognitive knowledge of the 'true' is supplemented by customary knowledge of the 'good' - this knowledge 'is what constitutes the culture of a people'.<sup>133</sup> More significantly for the development of his argument, Lyotard identifies such customary or cultural knowledge with 'narration' which provides immediate legitimation to its collective audience. This is held to differ from a concern for 'noise-free' legitimation attributed to Habermas. The classical epic, for example, served a socially cohesive role by portraying in narrative form the quests and successes of heroic figures, exemplars of valued qualities that are reaffirmed in the telling - the narrator, audience and characters being united in their identification with the narrative experience. Such popular narrative knowledge is self-validating and of immediate social and personal significance: it 'does not give priority to the question of its own legitimation' and 'it certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation and proof'.<sup>134</sup> It is not itself 'developmental'; nor is it 'expert' knowledge. All are joined in its activation of significant relationships which reaffirm its import rather than contributing to a rationally evolving process.

Lyotard claims that the rise of the post-empiricist philosophy of science in recent times marks a loss of faith in the possibility of value-free, objective, non-narrative knowledge. Science is recognised as being subject to non-absolute discursive criteria, as being governed by presuppositions which determine the conventional rules of the game. But Lyotard highlights the concurrent rise of the language game of 'legitimacy', which manifests itself in the two 'grand narratives' of 'emancipation' and 'speculation'.<sup>135</sup> In the

narrative of emancipation, denotative knowledge is viewed as a cognitive 'means' to a political or moral 'end' reflecting freedom and justice, which is prescribed and validated by the unitary will of 'the people' (the 'practical subject' of knowledge). Here there is no synthesizing metadiscourse that inevitably subsumes means to end, however; the cognitive and the moral or political spheres are distinguishable. This distinctiveness may serve a critical function: for instance, scientists can refuse to collaborate with the wilful 'prescriptions' of a political programme. In the narrative of speculation, by contrast, principles of cognitive knowledge are synthesized with ethical ideals, in a grand philosophical system. Neither of these grand narratives is able to ground itself any more than science is able to do, in Lyotard's opinion; indeed, their delegitimation has been hastened by the futile 'game of legitimacy' itself, which has only revealed its arbitrating limits to be set by conventions of no surer validity or relevance than any other optional language game or contract.

Where does this leave the seeker of order and progress? As Lyotard writes, 'The social subject itself seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games', and 'nobody speaks all of those languages' - they have no universal 'metalanguage'. In the postmodern world, however, there is no nostalgia for the loss of the grand narrative. What 'saves' the inhabitants of this world is the 'knowledge that legitimation can only spring from their own linguistic practice and communicational interaction'.<sup>136</sup> On this note, Lyotard implies that the only source of legitimacy is the particular narratives constructed through ongoing discursive interaction that is the flexible legitimising medium of both social solidarity and social reconstruction. What is yet to be made clear is how this mobilisation of responsive narrative know-how may be fairly reconciled with the directive and stabilising influence of existing popular 'prescriptions', with due regard for conditions that secure truly democratic participation and accountable representation.

In this regard, Lyotard poses questions for what he calls 'social pragmatics', in the light of the 'narrative pragmatics' of postmodern science. Instead of seeking ultimate coherence, identity and consistency the narrative pragmatics of postmodern science accepts the impossibility of a universal metalanguage, and instead conducts its activity as 'paralogy' and finds its justification in the destabilising and 'remounting' of its languages of internal communication. Such scientific practice is attuned to 'fracta', to areas of indeterminacy, to 'undecipherables', and it constantly seeks 'new stories' and little narratives, locally-determined rules and norms, creative 'moves' in the pragmatics of knowledge. This paralogical narrative culture does not aspire to wider consensus but to its opposite - to a deferring of consensus, a disturbance of reason's order, dissenting

moves that elicit unpredictable counter-moves. It is a 'differential' and 'imaginative' enterprise, challenging homeostasis, homogeneity, and the 'terroristic' elimination of otherness that is implied by ultimate commensurability. Science now accepts a plurality of formal and axiomatic systems, regarding this not as cause for alarm but as the opportunity for perpetual 'morphogenesis'.<sup>137</sup>

In this spirit of radical creativity and plurality, the grand claims of emancipatory discourse and systematic philosophy are seen as a threat to freedom. Habermasian communication is unexceptionable in its opposition to the tyranny of technocratic systems, but the 'regularisation' of moves and faith in rational progress through consensus are misdirected, in Lyotard's view, giving delusive credence to the prospect of a future metaprescriptive homogeneity. Indeed, compared to the pluralist narrative pragmatics of postmodern science, social pragmatics is even less amenable to isomorphic resolution than is possible in scientific discourse. The network of social language games is irreducibly 'heteromorphous'. Lyotard writes:

There is no reason to think that it would be possible to determine metaprescriptives common to all of these language games or that a revisable consensus like the one in force at a given moment in the scientific community could embrace the totality of metaprescriptions regulating the totality of statements circulating in the social collectivity.

...

For this reason, it seems neither possible, nor even prudent, to follow Habermas in orienting our treatment of the problem of legitimation in the direction of a search for universal consensus through what he calls *Diskurs*, in other words, a dialogue of argumentation.<sup>138</sup>

The alternative is to regard potential consensus as being not an end but, as in postmodern science, a 'state of discussion' that finds its only validation as part of a larger 'quest for paralogy'. Lyotard thus reverses the traditional view of the search for knowledge and justice, seeing the exploration of new possibilities as the never-finished object of the quest, rather than the attainment of a perfect goal. Accordingly, social justice should not be linked to the achievement of stable consensus, which has become a 'suspect value', but to the micro-contextual instancing of 'temporary contracts' which are the outcome of 'finite meta-arguments' and are always susceptible to 'eventual cancellation'.<sup>139</sup>

Clearly, there is reason to construe Lyotard's disquisition as promoting continual openness, in contrast to the repression and seduction associated with modern systems of social authority. There is much to recommend in his denunciation of the fixating and regularising power of totalising orders, given to the efficient 'mercantilisation' of knowledge in a modern, 'rationalised' world. However, it is arguable that his endorsement of narrative plurality entails an overly negative view of the pragmatic role of consensus in the pursuit of a just public policy. Lyotard does not in fact regard consensus as inherently oppressive; he does see its enabling value as the prerequisite of any contract - however temporary, finite or local. If such contracts (which imply a degree of conditional 'closure') are to be formed, as the basis of mutual intelligibility and of further ventures in destabilising and 'remounting' various languages, there would seem to be a need to attend to factors that might prejudice any initial working consensus, however provisional it may be. What Lyotard does not address is a means of defence against the possible intrusion into a 'state of discussion' of inequitable relations between participants, which reflect and perpetuate an imbalance in participatory power. His assumption appears to be that participants in language games are all equally and fully cognisant of their rights, and are able to exercise them, in terms of the rules of their narrative game - even if such rights define a freedom to transgress. Dissension can be as terroristically domineering as convergence, in practical effect, if participants are not equally adept at differential self-assertion. (The negative effect of thin-liberal 'anarchism' on Barber's strong-democratic 'talk' comes to mind here. The role of 'facilitating' leaders in protecting reticent members from more aggressively voluble ones is equally to the point, whatever the merits of their respective 'causes' might be.) A related difficulty is noted by Lyotard but glossed over in celebration of 'ambiguity': this pertains to the compatibility of multiple temporary contracts with the culture of late capitalism, characterised by a consumer-oriented commodification of diverse perspectives and by their correspondingly rapid obsolescence.

The last point is highlighted by Jameson in his introduction to Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*. Jameson links postmodern plurality to the 'dynamic of perpetual change' identified by Marx as immanent in capitalist production. He also links Lyotard's conception with an aesthetic that is 'closely related to the traditional ideologies of high modernism'; but this celebratory capacity for reconstructive change is divorced from the 'telos' traditionally associated with narrative, implying the impossibility of anything 'beyond capitalism' that could legitimate a political struggle for a 'radically different future'. Jameson therefore rejects the indiscriminate denunciation of all 'totalizing' projects, seeing Habermas's critical theory as being more sensitive to the political value

of rationalised claims to truth.<sup>140</sup> In the end, Jameson appears to regard the 'pleasures of paralogism' as being politically ineffectual, in the absence of a more sustained and purposive affirmation of a large-scale programme of action. The latter requires rationalised commitment to a collective metanarrative, attuned to objective needs and to the silent ideological terrorism of the political unconscious which mystifies one's relation to the real conditions of life.

Both Jameson and Habermas would endorse Lyotard's caution regarding the dangers of unreflective dogmatism; but they would not wish to discredit in advance the prospect of a mutuality that is self-critical yet expressive of a greater degree of purposive solidarity than Lyotard's radical decentering appears to allow. It would be wrong to view Habermas, particularly, as being the blind devotee of an all-devouring metaphysics of truth. The universal pragmatics of communicative action has much in common with Lyotard's depiction of the narrative pragmatics of science. It is not misleading to see a recognition of narrative diversity as a necessary and integral dimension of Habermas's discourse ethics, as formally represented and preserved by the postulated 'ideal speech situation'. Of significance, in this connection, is Habermas's account of the relation of philosophy to 'the reconstructive sciences', the aim of which is to reveal the hidden presuppositions of any scientific or social competence. It does not aim to demonstrate an all-inclusive homogenising 'grammar' or 'deep structure'; on the contrary, it aims to 'yield knowledge that is not necessary but hypothetical, not *a priori* but empirical, not certain but fallible' (as Baynes *et al* explain), while at the same time assuming that such knowledge will elicit agreement.<sup>141</sup> In this process, philosophy functions to reveal rather than to efface the specific narrative presuppositions of any explanatory account. This process of rational self-reflection accordingly serves not to hasten the premature assertion of a general truth but the very opposite: philosophy functions as a 'Platzhalter' or placemaker, holding in abeyance any final judgement. It works to hold open questions of 'unity and universality', while serving a constructive critical function as the source of ideas that might be treated as creative hypotheses, for which decisive empirical evidence is yet to be found. These hypotheses are taken to share the 'universal' presupposition of communicative action, namely that a claim to validity might be redeemed through the agreement sought by force of argument. It is in this sense that the reconstructive sciences (and similarly Lyotard's own rhetorical account of the narrative basis of social and scientific knowledge) may be said to raise 'universal - though defeasible - claims to validity'.<sup>142</sup>

It could also be argued that Lyotard, in generalising his account of narrative to include the social as well as scientific realms (with appropriate discrimination), evinces the kind of communicative rationality that Habermas associates with the role of modern philosophy. It offers a relatively comprehensive perspective from which the modern imbalance between different value spheres may be subjected to enlightening scrutiny and mutual decentering, in the interests of a more humane relationship between the cognitive, the moral-practical, and the aesthetic-expressive dimensions of the lifeworld. As Habermas writes:

Reaching understanding in the lifeworld requires a cultural tradition that ranges across *the whole spectrum*, not just the fruits of science and technology. As far as philosophy is concerned, it might do well to refurbish its link with the totality by taking on the role of interpreter on behalf of the lifeworld. It might then be able to help set in motion the interplay between the cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-expressive dimensions that has come to a standstill today, like a tangled mobile.<sup>143</sup>

Despite his support for a fuller perspective on the 'totality' (an ever-dangerous aspiration), Habermas's project is clearly not that of an authoritarian consciousness, or a belief in an ultimate static order. It is the very antithesis: not to authorise the string-pulling of a master puppeteer, but to generate freely interactive motion; not to freeze the filaments in a silent or single-patterned structure, but to stimulate an ever-fluid, largely unpredictable - though not unintelligible - movement of diverse connected parts. His emphasis is on liberation into communal participation and communication, rather than final arbitration. Communicative rationality is the catalyst that activates the unsettling hope of mutual understanding; it facilitates transitions between, and new developments amongst, the diverse language games that Lyotard is anxious to preserve as agents of postmodern paralogy. It is in this sense that Habermas writes that 'a philosophy starting from formal pragmatics preserves the possibility of speaking of rationality in the singular'. Here 'singularity' refers not to one monolithic generic type, but to an internally differentiated way of thinking which is able 'to account reflectively for its own context of emergence and thus its own place in history'. This self-reflective awareness of relative limits, which marks the modern philosophical role of communicative reason, is an impetus to ongoing agonistic struggle and creative networking in social relationships and understandings, so that adherence to totalising metanarratives, in Habermas's view, 'could never even arise'.<sup>144</sup> Philosophy, in this account, collaborates in all kinds of discourse to enhance the self-reflection of

participants regarding the presuppositions of validity claims within and between different cultural value spheres and their constituent language games. This brings to light the manifold 'singularity' of reason as evinced in a variety of discursive contexts; at the same time, the tacit expectation of any speaker - to enlarge the sympathetic understanding of others - reflects the 'universalistic' dimension of communicative action. It is this (dis)integral tension between a non-absolute narrative pragmatics and a hypothetical ideal agreement that constitutes modern philosophical discourse as the preserver of critical 'space', in its intertwinement with the forms of life that mediate our understanding of ourselves and the world(s) we inhabit.

\* \* \*

From the foregoing analyses a distinct consonance emerges between Habermas, Foucault and Lyotard in their common regard for openness, problematization and transgression, and for specific contexts of social thought and action. The major difficulty pertains to the formulation of larger-scale policies and comprehensive knowledge, as theorised by Lyotard and Foucault, which requires a more explicit and prominent role for Habermas's communicative action. Concerning the first aspect - that of openness - there are clear similarities between the 'critical ontology' of Foucault, Habermas's 'counter-discourse of modernity', and Lyotard's 'narrative pragmatics'. Foucault elaborates this critical ontology in terms of the reflective work of 'thought', which problematizes our conventional perceptions, and is marked by an 'attitude' of critique characterising the 'maturity' of the insubordinate Enlightenment thinker. All patterns of belief and action are regarded as provocative hypotheses, subject to processes of experimental 'testing' that are never conclusive, so sustaining an 'agonism' between freedom and control that puts us in the position of always beginning again. Similarly, the plurality of language games depicted by Lyotard underscores his emphasis on the value and necessity of dissension and parody. The 'agonistic' wrestling with non-absolute 'rules' of a narratively variform community encourages an incredulity towards metanarrative striving, replacing consensus with ongoing 'states of discussion', and permitting the perpetual 'morphogenesis' of society. These views are in keeping with Habermas's emphasis on the openness required by communicative relations oriented to mutual understanding, incorporating a 'universal' or 'transcendental' moment that serves to provoke a 'going beyond' of existing norms, under the pressure of diverse criteria of contextualised meaning and validity. Communicative reason - although articulated with the procedural discipline of a discourse ethics - is inherently transgressive, cutting across the domains of conventional

discourses and value spheres, and preserving the unsettling tension between the validity claims of 'own' and 'other'.

Similarities appear, too, in the three writers' emphasis on historicity and particularity, resisting all absolutes. Foucault stresses the idea of truth as an historical 'figure', determined by its use in specific contexts; correlatively, he contrasts the unifying work of theory or philosophy with the many micro-narratives, micro-norms and micro-revolutions of a multi-dimensional, dynamic society. Hence his reference to a diversity of 'specific intellectuals' and 'specific rationalities', thriving on the contingencies that are integral to the unstable and largely unco-ordinated web of a diversified 'biopower'. Lyotard, too, views the subject as 'decentered' and society as a network of 'temporary contracts', finite arguments and diverse 'competences'. There is no 'noise-free' homogenising narrative; paralogy proliferates in response to 'fracta', differential relations, areas of indeterminacy. Similarly, Habermas accords due weight to the structural 'networking' of a multi-faceted lifeworld, and to the non-definitive instances of 'know-how' in various contexts of action and discursive interaction. He substitutes the reified formalism of abstract rule-systems with a flexibly 'situated' and differentiated faculty of reason, attuned to the substantive needs of 'specific totalities'.

While giving prominence to specific, embodied totalities, Habermas grants only abstract and critical content to the idea of 'universal' totality, yet accepts as pragmatically necessary the formal coherence and unity intrinsic to the concept of totality itself. This is a relativised totality, presented not as the perfected product of an infallible intelligence but as the expression of mutable know-how attained in processes of social interaction. The mediating role of communicative reason entails a constructive interpretation of the lifeworld as a finite intersubjective totality, and allows for collective decision-making and democratic policy-formation to occur, so giving effect to the 'obligatory' moment of mutual understanding. Despite their view of consensus as a 'suspect value', both Foucault and Lyotard give largely tacit support to the socially integrative role of communication as the mediator of mutual understanding, however finite and temporary it is considered to be. This is evident in Foucault's deprecation of self-righteous 'polemic' in favour of self-disciplined dialogue, with its 'serious play' of reciprocal questions and answers and its respect for participatory 'rights'. There is also his recognition of the 'general politics' of any regime of truth, with its regulated 'blocks' of determinable homogeneity and systematicity. What is lacking is a means of effecting a truly accountable transition between the subversive recodification of an old regime, at the microlevel, and the new regime's co-ordinating 'apparatus of truth'. Some equitable public means is required for clarifying and justifying the relation between manifold

'norms' and uniform 'laws', or between the unpredictable 'theoretical coherence' of genealogically-prompted problematizations, and the 'practical coherence' of more purposive experimental 'testing'. Lyotard, too, vacillates on the co-ordinating role of general structures and assumptions in the formation of social policy: on the one hand, he decries the aspiration to communicational transparency and complete agreement, while on the other hand viewing the only source of 'legitimation' to be the 'linguistic practice and communicational interaction' of particular social communities. Both Foucault and Lyotard significantly qualify their valuable stress on the open, contingent and differential, by acknowledging the need for a formative moment that is amenable to reflective but non-absolute control through strong-democratic talk that is oriented to mutual understanding.

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### CHAPTER THREE : SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SYMBOLIC MOVEMENT

What the tensions and affinities between Habermas, Foucault and Lyotard have highlighted is the decentering, co-ordinating and legitimating role of a process of free and equal communication marked by reciprocal openness as the warrant of an intention to collaborate in forming a mutually acceptable social system. This process makes for maximally representative decision-making, and grants conditional credibility to resolutions reached. This composite validating role - pertaining to the process and correlatively to the product that eventuates - is important to an understanding of educative responsibility. In particular, it is to be asked whether educative 'success' is to be gauged by the substantive content of the participants' decisions and beliefs, or by the quality of the process by which such decisions and beliefs come to be held and 'ratified'. Put another way, the question is whether educative 'justice' is evidenced by the specific content of the participants' resolutions and knowledge, or by the interactive conditions and procedures that eventuate in such resolutions and knowledge (whatever the specific content may happen to be). The answer to this question will significantly influence educators' conceptions of their task, and of the limits they impose on their role as leaders in the educative process. Thus, a primary regard for learners' reflective self-control might be set against the option of a primary regard for a specific context-relative interpretation of justified social knowledge. To some extent these formal and substantive options will tend to converge, owing to the educators' cultural embeddedness, but it is a key contention of the present argument towards a postmodern democracy that reflexive self-subsumption is made possible and enhanced by communicative reason and its recodifying power, to the benefit of both intentional creativity and collaborative self-control. In exploring further this challenging tension between social and educative justice, the arguments of John Rawls provide a provocative point of entry.

#### **Rawls on justice**

In elaborating his concept of 'justice as fairness',<sup>145</sup> John Rawls disclaims any interest in universal principles or the 'essential nature and identity of persons'; his concern is not with justice as truth but justice as situated agreement within the public culture of a democratic society. This cultural tradition provides the 'intuitive' starting-point for a conception of society as a moral system of co-operation between free and equal persons. Social justice is conceived through the organisation of communal convictions into non-absolute 'principles' that express a provisional 'overlapping consensus' on the public 'good'. Justice is therefore effected and maintained by the free and equal participation of

citizens in a system of mutual co-operation. However, Rawls acknowledges that this is an 'idealised' conception of beliefs intrinsic to the public culture of liberal democratic societies. Clearly, in fact, citizens are not all equally free; yet the political order is deemed to express an agreement validated by the requisite 'appropriate conditions': 'In particular, these conditions must situate free and equal persons fairly and must not allow some persons greater bargaining advantages than others.'<sup>146</sup> This reflects the belief that any imbalance of power existing within society must not unfairly prejudice agreement on public policy in favour of any privileged person, class or group.

To meet these appropriate conditions, Rawls proposes the notions of the 'veil of ignorance' and the 'original position', designed to expose dialogic partners more fully to the 'otherness' of their interlocutors, and to encourage radical questioning of customary presuppositions and practices. What remains unquestioned - at least in the public culture of liberal democratic societies - is the formal 'basic structure' of society as a shared system of mutual co-operation between citizens as free and equal persons. In attempting to suspend and question the effect of our conventional limitations, privileges or assumptions, we must be able to become reflexively detached from ('ignorant' of) them, and try to engage with our partners from an 'original' - ideally undistorted - 'position', in shaping a more equitable order of relations. The veil of ignorance and the original position are not intended as mystifying metaphysical notions belying the reality of political inequality and injustice. On the contrary, they constitute a formal 'device of representation', in Rawls's terms, highlighting the value of 'a critical perspective' that is continually alert to the need for 'good reasons' for any public policy. (This device of representation is reminiscent of Habermas's appeal to the 'transcendent' as an always destabilising, critical notion, yet one that also gives credence to the subsequent claims to rational consensus.) The original position is not conceived to represent a 'natural right' (that is, a metaphysical or philosophical principle) but is an idealised or utopian conception that is felt to accord with the intuitions of members of a democratic society. Rawls is not trying to 'prove' the universal necessity of such intuitions but merely to express the traditional 'settled' conviction of a democratic culture.<sup>147</sup> Paradoxically, however, the original position is postulated as an intrinsically unsettling device, insisting on the provocative value of an ideal, symmetrical relation between free and equal citizens, despite the contradictions and inadequacies of normal justice. The liberatory, revisionary thrust of the original position is evident, however, despite - or because of - its representational, idealised character. As Rawls explains:

. . . one of our considered convictions, I assume, is this: the fact that we occupy a particular social position is not a good reason for us to accept, or to expect others to accept, a conception of justice that favours those in this position. To model this conviction in the original position the parties are not allowed to know their social position; and the same idea is extended to other cases. This is expressed figuratively by saying that the parties are behind a veil of ignorance.<sup>148</sup>

The original position and the veil of ignorance therefore serve to model the decentering of the dialogic subject that is the prerequisite of rationally defensible argument. Precisely because it is a formal or idealised 'device of representation', such a conception escapes and works against the institutionalisation of any single set of beliefs as the final, exclusive arbiter of truth and justice. Any consensus reached will always be the imperfect product of contingent socio-historical communities; but avoiding the danger of viewing customary circumscriptions as inviolable requires the always-other of a transcendent or formal ideal, as the provocation to self-subsuming and self-critical dialogue.<sup>149</sup> It is precisely this presupposition of discursive relations in a democratic culture that gives credible, but temporary and conditional, authority to any constraints that are subsequently imposed on all, in the desired service of social justice. These constraints are understood always to stand 'under erasure', in post-structuralist spirit<sup>150</sup> - to be liable to the unpredictable cancelling effects of the veil of ignorance, and subject to revision in the light of further communal experiences, language games and perceptions. There is always a danger in the assumption that the goal of ideal interpersonal relationship is ever attained. While it is plausible to suggest that self-critical dialogue can help us towards public 'self-clarification' and to take a 'clear and uncluttered view of what justice requires' (as Rawls intends), it is potentially misleading to think that complete transparency is ever realised. Such dialogue nonetheless helps to make us more susceptible to reciprocal 'unmasking', devoid of manipulative or aggressive intent.<sup>151</sup> (This is reminiscent of the Bakhtinian 'carnavalesque', denoting a transgressive, imaginative impulse, playfully yet seriously interrogating conventional hierarchies and social belief systems.)<sup>152</sup>

In Rawls's view, an 'overlapping consensus' as the publicly shared basis of political decisions involves only those of our beliefs and practices which we are able to expose to the test of fundamental reflective critique. Convictions of an essentially obdurate or inscrutable kind are relegated in Rawls's scheme to the area of 'private' belief, and are therefore to be viewed as irrelevant to public, political discussion. Those of our personal

commitments that are not compatible with the overlapping public consensus hitherto attained through self-reflective public debate must be relegated to a private sphere that will not controvert the community's ongoing quest for a generally accepted public good. Only beliefs that are exposed to critical reflection and the possibility of public revision are considered pertinent to political debate and public policy. This will ensure that no public policy takes on the character of an unquestionable doctrine. Clearly individuals differ in their religious beliefs concerning ultimate ends, for example, as is their right; but such differences are allowed to have no practical bearing on the public action provisionally ratified by a maximally decentered dialogue between all interested parties. It is in this spirit that Rawls regards 'justice as fairness' as staying 'on the surface, philosophically speaking'.<sup>153</sup> This is in keeping with the modern proliferation of world-views and conceptions of the good, and with the loss of belief in philosophically-validated universal truths. Accordingly, Rawls writes,

We must recognize that, just as on questions of religious and moral doctrine, public agreement on the basic questions of philosophy cannot be obtained without the state's infringement of basic liberties. Philosophy as the search for truth about an independent metaphysical and moral order cannot, I believe, provide a workable and shared basis for a political conception of justice in a democratic society.<sup>154</sup>

(Here the 'basic liberties' alluded to are equally to be understood as non-universal constructs, being merely those accepted as necessary within the liberal-democratic tradition.) In effect, Rawls relegates to the sphere of the private imagination constructs that are incompatible in their practical effect with those ratified as workable hypotheses by public reason and put to the test of political action.

A questionable aspect of Rawls's formulation, however, is his contention that hitherto fixed personal convictions about ultimate ends or truths 'are not to be introduced into political discussion'.<sup>155</sup> This stricture might seem to dilute the significance of the original position as a device for the representation of unconditioned, free-thinking persons, open to revisionary stimuli without the threat of discourse censorship. It would be more consistent with the imaginatively-enlarging function of the veil of ignorance not to debar particular private beliefs (whatever their content) from public discussion, but to require that their adherents introduce them in a properly self-critical, dialogic spirit. Only by admitting all beliefs concerning both ultimate and interim ends to the arena of public debate can the original position undertake to fulfil its

role of exposing conventional identities and discourses to unforeseen transformations. Clearly, if institutional transformation were to negate or radically diminish the 'basic liberties' associated with the 'basic structure' of a democratic society (as understood by Rawls), this would entail the defeat of that democratic tradition, and its revolutionary replacement by an alternative, undemocratic order with its own value system. However as a 'political' conception, 'justice as fairness' allows alternative 'moral' conceptions of the good to flourish alongside one another without impinging substantively on the 'kernel' of the overlapping consensus that underwrites a democratic constitution.<sup>156</sup>

Rawls therefore believes justice as fairness answers to the need for social unity and co-operation on the basis of mutual respect, despite the modern loss of faith in universal good. According to this scheme, the basic structure of a society predisposed to such a system of mutual co-operation will be marked by 'two principles of justice' which give due weight to the claims of both individual and community, freedom and equality, negative and positive rights. The principles Rawls proposes in the interests of fair public debate and its 'reflective equilibrium' are stated as follows:

1. Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with a similar scheme for all.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.<sup>157</sup>

As will be argued later, however, the nature of inequality in educative relationships necessitates a specifically educational interpretation of basic democratic rights and liberties, with particular reference to the teacher's and learner's relative control of the veil of ignorance as a critically enabling device.

The reflective equilibrium and overlapping consensus associated with the promissory original position and veil of ignorance are seen by Alasdair MacIntyre as a misguided attempt to deny the reality of embodied social tensions, and to construct a set of general rationalisations that conceal or evade the conflict of interests out of which a more genuine sense of the communal good and narrative purpose could be forged. (In this regard, Barber's distinctions between 'strong' and 'thin' liberal democracy are

similarly to the point.) Rawls's social contract theory of justice is thought to imply a view of discrete groups of atomistic individuals, with disparate interests, coming momentarily together to formulate common rules of life by artificially bracketing the differences that characterise ordinary social relationships.<sup>158</sup> In MacIntyre's account (as in Barber's), liberalism is associated with the negative attempt to defuse the antagonism of irreconcilable opinions concerning the rational good by securing a 'neutral ground' from which a verdict may be passed on rival claims. The impossibility of wholly objective resolution has led to a deceptive pluralist rhetoric that works against the prospect of a communal narrative 'telos'. In MacIntyre's view, such a communal telos is properly forged in the crucible of actual social conflict - from collective experience evincing a dialectical praxis rather than by the supposed resolutions of an abstract discursive logic. He argues that modern individualist morality is marked by the prominence of a scheme of optional 'rules' as antecedent guides to proper action. Accordingly, 'virtue' comes to be understood as obedience to pre-designed principles, existing as rational abstractions that are divorced from any substantial belief in specific communal goods and ends.<sup>159</sup> MacIntyre regards the Aristotelian tradition of the virtues as reversing the priority of law over virtue: thus, public conceptions of the good are derived from the contingent experience of struggling historical communities, and bestow only provisional authority on customary institutional norms and principles. Instead of relying on a range of rules as the impersonal index of 'legitimate expectations', MacIntyre believes we should be able to draw on a shared understanding of embodied narrative purpose, so as to determine the disposition of goods that best serves the ends of our own historically-conditioned community.<sup>160</sup> It is only this flexible grounding in a shared experience of conflict and inequality that permits context-specific purpose and dialectical progress as the dynamic expression of a communal will, in contrast to abstractly compartmentalised spheres of value and interest. It is liberal conceptions of the fragmented body politic that require a prominent structure of rules for right behaviour and for the protection of divergent preferences, rather than advancing active collaboration in pursuit of collective social ends.<sup>161</sup>

MacIntyre evidently regards the distinction between individual preferences and public projects as being unjust to the priority of positive collaboration in collective historical narratives. Although he is right to query the separation of personal convictions concerning ultimate goods and ends from the realm of public politics (as inferred from Rawls), he is insufficiently cognisant of the critical and catalytic potential of the veil of ignorance and the original position. These are not simply devices to ensure perfect objectivity or neutrality; rather, they hold the prospect of opening limited perspectives to

the solvent power of the liminal imagination and the possibility of an enlarged perception of common purpose. The process of free and equal, rational debate need not be viewed in abstraction from worldly struggle. Just as theoretical and practical 'coherence' are mutually implicated in Habermas's account, and the conditions of an ideal speech situation are the desired co-implicates of a democratically-justified emancipatory praxis, so for Rawls the original position and the reflective equilibrium of an overlapping consensus should heighten and manifest the dialogic subjects' awareness of situated suffering and struggle. Participants in this open communicative process should find themselves exposed in unpredictable ways to the perceptions of both dominant and marginalised interest groups, to the benefit of mutual understanding and social renewal. The activity of a composite discursive field bears no necessary relation to a mystifying neutrality or to passive toleration, but can subject preferences and positions to unexpected pressure, with practical consequences for a more unified (but non-absolute) social narrative. MacIntyre himself, by appealing to the conditional validating force of communal preferences, accommodated to a common purpose, gives credence to Rawls's version of democratic liberalism as the expression *not* of a neutral ideal but of the settled and intuitive (though publicly revisable) convictions of a determinate tradition. Barber's version of strong democracy is perfectly compatible with both Rawls and MacIntyre, properly understood.

Whereas MacIntyre remains sceptical of Rawls's argument for a democratic 'basic structure' within which a plurality of heterogeneous beliefs and corresponding 'unions' can co-exist, Richard Rorty views Rawls's effort to 'stay on the surface, philosophically' as an appropriate alternative to any attempt to justify a universal order of meaning to humanity at large.<sup>162</sup> MacIntyre asserts the continued need for a unifying sense of communal purpose, while Rorty celebrates a vision of people as 'centreless networks of beliefs' whose overlapping consensus on common interests stands without need of philosophical justification. Agreement amongst situated subjects is seen by him as the expression of 'ethnocentric' habits, creative latitude for which inheres in the reciphering effects of citizens' unrestrained conversation, as they come to terms imaginatively and pragmatically with their contingent social circumstances. Rorty's support of Rawls, like MacIntyre's opposition to him, is formulated in terms of a critique of the Enlightenment project and Enlightenment rationalism, characterised in by now familiar fashion as resting on universalist assumptions regarding ahistorical truth and essential human identity. As Rorty puts it, the 'theory that there is a relation between the ahistorical essence of the human soul and moral truth' supposedly 'ensures that free and open discussion will produce "one right answer" to moral and scientific questions'.<sup>163</sup> Rorty is

one with MacIntyre in dismissing talk of inalienable human rights, consonant with our common human nature, arguing that what counts as just is 'relative to one group to which we think it necessary to justify ourselves - to the body of shared belief that determines the reference of the word "we"'.<sup>164</sup> Like MacIntyre, Rorty decries arguments back to 'first principles' unless this merely means the seeking of 'common ground in the hope of attaining agreement'.<sup>165</sup> He declares:

I cannot find much use for philosophy in formulating means to the ends that we social democrats share, nor in describing either our enemies or our present danger. Its main use lies, I suspect, in thinking through our utopian visions.<sup>166</sup>

This concession to the critical function of philosophy in 'thinking through' our utopian visions is suggestive: given that 'truth' in Rorty's view is 'made' not found, and given that our visions (those that guide our 'making') may be justified (thought through), at least to our community, in the 'hope of attaining agreement', there would seem to be little more than rhetorical not substantive differences between Rorty's postmodern aesthetic pragmatism, MacIntyre's communal narratives, and Habermas's communicative reason. The capacity to reflect on a given system of belief and to counterpose or correlate it with an imagined alternative is not normatively yoked to prior conventional criteria, nor is it the exclusive function of wholly autonomous individuals. It is the symptom of a decentering and reconstructive faculty that draws unpredictably on discursive relationships, however private or public, injecting into established patterns of thought and action a critical and creative force in the service of wider associations for the better attainment of future goals. The liminal imagination thus helps to energise strong-democratic involvement, injecting its transgradient, provocative power into the hypotheses of social and personal endeavour. This unsettles the boundaries between the theoretical and hypothetical, scientific and imaginative, public and private, while serving as a precondition for self-reflective participation in a credible process of communal decision-making. The difference from the supposed Enlightenment version of true representation is merely that 'theory' derived from finite agreements is always subject to the ongoing 'test' of unforeseen experience, new discursive relationship, and responsive hypothesis-formation, as effected by an interactively productive citizenry.

MacIntyre's expressed difference with Rawls may be better understood in the light of Rawls's distinction between an overlapping consensus (which forms the basis for his political conception of justice) and a 'modus vivendi' agreement.<sup>167</sup> In Rawls's view,

established social institutions, and the community's interpretation of their function, reflect 'a fund of implicitly shared fundamental ideas and principles' on which an overlapping consensus relies. Although these culturally fundamental and often intuitive shared ideas and principles are not themselves taken to constitute a comprehensive religious, philosophical or metaphysical system, they are nonetheless not inherently incompatible with the diverse comprehensive belief-systems in the community at large. The overlapping consensus therefore embraces the points of common or overlapping belief amongst the various cultural sub-sectors of the community. These points of identity Rawls terms 'theorems . . . at which the comprehensive doctrines in the consensus intersect or converge'.<sup>168</sup> Because of this minimally necessary compatibility with the plurality of private or sectional belief-systems, Rawls can claim to avoid the charge that his conception of justice is indifferent to citizens' substantive truth-commitments. The stability of an overlapping consensus depends precisely on its not being entirely irrelevant to the world-views and convictions of the participants.<sup>169</sup> This is what differentiates it from a modus vivendi agreement, such as a treaty. The common motivation for adherence to a modus vivendi arrangement by the parties concerned is expedient merely, involving the mutual suspension of hostilities for the negative reason that it is conditionally advantageous for the separate disputants to do so. The result is an unstable unity that barely conceals antagonistic interests (Barber's depiction of thin-liberal 'minimalism' and 'realism' come to mind as pertinent here as well.) In contrast to a positive overlapping consensus, then, reflecting certain common intrinsic interests, a modus vivendi represents an expedient submission to certain rules as a necessary political tactic.

This argument by Rawls is evidently intended to rebuff the charge that an overlapping consensus is no different from thin-liberal 'bargaining', as conceived by MacIntyre and Barber. However, MacIntyre would not be convinced by the non-dialectical stability that is connoted by a reflective equilibrium and an overlapping consensus. Rawls himself appears to be suitably cautious of the ideal scheme he draws. This caution reflects his awareness of the plurality of modern belief-systems - a plurality that serves both to justify his case for a non-absolute, political conception of justice and simultaneously to place it in jeopardy. This constitutes a tension in his argument which invites the kind of critique that MacIntyre presents. Rawls acknowledges that heterogeneity embracing radically different and even contradictory value systems poses a threat to co-operation on key issues, even raising the spectre of physical conflict.<sup>170</sup> The lack of agreement on the requisite terms of 'fair social co-operation consistent between citizens regarded as free and equal' might then engender stubborn civil strife, to the

benefit of none.<sup>171</sup> Faced with this impasse, however, opponents may resort to a *modus vivendi* agreement as a necessary first step on the path to a more stable and potentially more equitable dispensation. Rawls argues that historically the principle of toleration was first accepted in the spirit of a *modus vivendi* following the Reformation; in this respect Barber and MacIntyre could agree with him. However, this phase in liberal politics is but a transitional one, in Rawls's account, being instrumental in the gradual development of a more genuine and intrinsically stable overlapping consensus (evidently in the spirit of Barber's strong-democratic talk). Such development from an initial *modus vivendi* relation is held to be a realistic option, because most people's 'religious, philosophical and moral doctrines are not seen by them as fully general and comprehensive'.<sup>172</sup> Sufficient 'slippage' and flexibility ensues to allow for mutually co-operative accommodation to a common political conception of justice that establishes the basic participatory rights and liberties of all. Only by then taking such basic matters off the agenda can we secure stable terms of political co-operation; leaving them on the agenda would be dangerously unsettling, Rawls believes, by raising the stakes of political controversy, increasing public insecurity and perpetuating opportunistic antagonism. Fixing the initial terms of social co-operation, even as a *modus vivendi* initially, will generate the 'tendency' for the 'essential co-operative virtues' to develop. A *modus vivendi* compromise based on negative rights can thus mature into an overlapping consensus based on positive moral grounds.<sup>173</sup> Irreconcilable fundamental beliefs are necessarily excluded from the initial agenda in the interests of longer-term mutual understanding and possible agreement. (This transitional potential of a *modus vivendi* relationship suggests the unrealised potential for strong-democratic encounter which Barber attributes to thin-liberal minimalism, as discussed in Chapter One.)

If Rawls is justly suspicious of the premature fixing of a specific 'comprehensive doctrine' as the authoritative guide to the destiny of all, so MacIntyre is justly suspicious of the premature fixing of 'basic rights and liberties' as the technically correct parameters within which 'fair' social interaction and decision-making can occur. The equitableness of an initial working arrangement between parties to a *modus vivendi* is indeed difficult to ascertain. The negative terms of the initial arrangement, proposing mutual non-coercion, may fail to address effectual imbalances of power in the initial talk that Rawls thinks will mature into a viable overlapping consensus. What will be required, it seems, are effective 'facilitating' leaders (in Barber's sense) who are capable of ensuring a credible balance of power within the working framework. The effective presence of such facilitators would help to answer the question whether Rawls, by removing fundamentally divisive belief-commitments from the issue of a stable initial framework for debate,

emasculates or protects the stimulating role of the always-other, as manifested in mutually open and responsive discursive relations. Presumably once underlying antagonisms have given way to terms of basic collaboration, with the help of facilitating leaders, then the self-subsuming potential of the veil of ignorance and original position will be a more manifest part of the participants' communicative ethics. Competing ground motives will then be more reflexively viewed, so increasing the prospect of a 'slippage' in respective beliefs and non-negotiables that might lead to greater mutual sympathy and reconciliation. The continued disqualification of sharply different convictions from the arena of public political debate is unnecessary once the *modus vivendi* arrangement has changed into a more stable system of co-operation. Continued disqualification of such convictions would give credence to the charge that supposedly representative social agreements, valorised by the normative formalities of an ideal speech situation, are really no different from any *modus vivendi* concluded within the expedient framework of 'thin' liberal democracy. It is indeed only by admitting all conflicting perspectives to the arena of public discourse that strong democratic relations, bred of an openness to and engagement with otherness, can flourish and give rise to the resilient narrative purpose that communitarians like MacIntyre and Barber wish to advance. However, there is one fundamental right that cannot be put under erasure without self-contradiction in any system that aspires to democratic justice - namely, the right to free and equal participation in the formation and ratification or revision of public policy.

This democratic requirement indicates the value of the distinction between formal and substantive 'norms', in respect of social justice. The basic right of participatory autonomy is best viewed as a formal ideal, not itself ideologically contained (at least within the inherently contested arena of democratic politics). It constitutes a 'transcendent' norm for the validation of any public policy whatever its empirical or substantive content. It is this basic, formal right to fundamental communicative liberty that one such as Rawls would rightly wish to remove from the political agenda as something liable to cancellation. Vigilant political concern for this right and its imperfect historical manifestation is certainly called for - and this entails ideological struggle in specific contexts; but as a formal ideal, this right to participatory autonomy may be regarded as a transcendent or trans-ideological prerequisite of 'truly' representative government. As has been noted, however, Rawls would eschew the universalistic connotation of 'transcendent', seeing the right to equal critical involvement as the culture-specific intuition of democratic communities. (It will be argued in Chapter Four that Rawls's characterisation of the *modus vivendi* relationship, like the minimalist's

relatively disengaged toleration of plurality, bears certain valuable implications for the prospect of a non-manipulative relationship between teachers and learners, in the longer-term interest of democratic health.) Philip Wexler is another who gives equal prominence to this discursive liberty but who is equally anxious to renounce any implication that this is a universal principle. By viewing reference to normative absolutes in negative terms only - as dangerously metaphysical - Wexler, it will be argued, limits unnecessarily the productive capacity that his 'textualist' analysis of socio-cultural form is intended to release.<sup>174</sup>

### **Wexler on symbolic movement**

Philip Wexler proposes the practice of social analysis and of education as forms of 'symbolic collective historical action', in keeping with the postmodern emphasis on non-foundational process rather than on falsely stable notions of truth and being. In contrast to the ostensibly ahistorical and essentializing tendencies of positivist, universalist and humanist thought, Wexler's post-positivist 'social analysis' is directed towards the re-animation of historical and symbolic 'movement'. His is a 'contextual approach' to social knowledge - an approach that is held to be neither idealist nor materialist yet to be compatible (through 'discourse') with both: discourse (as symbolic action) may be 'autonomously described' yet is simultaneously understood as 'always and integrally historical and social'. Wexler adds: 'Neither object nor subject, social knowledge is a process of contextually meaningful symbolic action.'<sup>175</sup> It offers a practicable conception and vision of collective mobilisation and action that is coherent and purposive, but not totalising in its achievements or its claims. It is, accordingly, in the specified context of an overly commodified ('post-industrial') culture that Wexler argues the particular historical relevance of post-structural theory, capable of redeeming signifying activity from ideological occlusion, by desublimating and reciphering public discourse. It is the experience of 'symbolic movement' in a post-industrial semiotic society that needs to be seen in both its political and educational dimensions. The capacity 'to form and direct speech' is itself formed by education, and is the generative source of political power and self-empowerment. Education is therefore crucial to the formation of society, not least of all to one that aspires to reflect or represent the dynamic will of a citizenry that is empowered to contribute equally and freely to socially-formative speech.

Wexler's contextual, semiotic approach to social analysis is claimed to go beyond what he calls 'sociological liberalism' in both its 'old' and 'new' forms. The 'old' sociology is associated more obviously with the culture and institutions of Enlightenment

rationalism and liberalism, marked by its orientation to objective truth, as perceived by free and autonomous, rational individuals. Old sociology was thus assumed to contribute to knowledge held to be accumulatively coherent, and testifying to the integrating insights of an authoritative mind. This denial of 'dispersion' in the liberal discourse of old sociology conduces to a confidence in techniques of surveillance and control, to the detriment of those ideas, actions and persons that do not meet the standards of the prevailing system of belief. The ethos of freedom and reason associated with liberalism therefore mystified the reality of victimisation, in favour of those in control of the means and fruits of knowledge production.

The 'new' sociology arose in reaction to the ideological implications of old sociological liberalism - the avowed neutrality and objectivity of the latter found to be hiding its 'interested social basis' (in Wexler's words).<sup>176</sup> 'New' sociology reflected a loss of faith in a supposedly impartial model of society and of education, grounded in an absolute consensus. It highlighted the role of education in reproducing unequal class relationships, and argued the need for resistance and contestation that testify to a critical consciousness. New sociology emphasised the interest-relative, social construction of knowledge, and the inequality associated with classroom relationships between teachers and learners, and with the hegemony of capitalist-liberalism. New sociology sought to create a 'culture of critical discourse' that would demystify the idealist, objectivist and positivist analyses of old sociological liberalism by revealing its ideological functioning: the controlled educational and social inequality evinced a hidden curriculum, ensuring socialization into values and positions that corresponded to the dominant social structure.<sup>177</sup>

Despite this needful attention to contextual and ideological dimensions of social reproduction, Wexler finds the new sociology to be overly theoretical and abstract, elevating its counter-concepts to 'the same transhistorical, static level' of those it opposes. Its stress on reproduction, resistance and contradiction, and on an abstract culture of critical discourse is viewed as an academic rationalisation, a model that is not conducive or responsive to significant transformations in specific contexts of historical struggle.<sup>178</sup> New sociology tends to be 'acontextual', 'above and beyond social history'; it is the creation of leftist intellectuals, drawing belated academic inferences from the activities of the American New Left movement of the 1960s. Despite the defeat of liberal-humanist ideals by New Right 'technocratic-conservatism', the new sociology remained (Wexler argues) fundamentally a critique of liberalism, illustrating the abstractness of its belated theorisations and critical analyses. More seriously, however, despite its oppositional

intent, the new sociology is found to be complicit with liberal ideology, by limiting its opposition to the terms set by the superordinate group: 'resistance' to predetermining 'real' structures is highlighted, rather than the more positive, transgressive striving of an ascendant group for its own alternative goals. In confirming a pattern of suppressive social relations, new sociology clings to an objectivist epistemology that reinforces the reifying logic of liberal-realist discourse. Although new sociology calls for critical reflexivity, this is claimed by Wexler to be a matter of personal awareness, consonant with the 'idealist subjectivism' of liberal individualism. Conflict is not properly theorised and studied 'as a struggle over the forces of societal self-production' - that is, as a collective, relational struggle against 'commodified' institutional meaning.<sup>179</sup> The ontology of representational realism is antithetical to such practical struggles, obscuring the fact that prevalent social conditions are not definitive but are the mutable products of a 'refiguring' labour. On two grounds, then, new sociology has proved critically ineffectual, in Wexler's view: by not encoding resistance in terms of specific contextual and collective struggle; and by promoting a realist ontology that overlooks the signifying, discursive labour by which collective figures of order are actively produced, in accordance with changeable perceptions and needs. Its emphasis on a general critical consciousness belittles the prerequisite of contextualised understanding and its discursive constitution through processes of historical movement.

It is in reaction to these imputed failings of the new sociology - its unwanted adoption of liberal-encoded terms of debate, and consequent impotence in the context of a rightist resurgence - that Wexler seeks in post-structuralist discourse theory a means of restoring transformative movement to an over-commodified social context. This is not self-evidently an anti-Enlightenment project on his part, but it is 'an Enlightenment not of reason but of movement'.<sup>180</sup> Concepts and theories are understood as socially-produced cultural 'tools', devised for specific communal purposes. It is a sense of socio-historical and symbolic movement that counteracts the 'givenness' of society and its naturalised truths, giving impetus to collective self-production and a new responsiveness to contingent experience. Post-structuralism, with its stress on the differential deferment of meaning along an unstable chain of contingent signifiers is regarded as the herald of movements in which 'discourse, language, meaning and knowledge' are bent to the formative will of collective subjects through a process of ongoing 'hermeneutic conversation'. It is the open mutuality of interactional speech that enables the symbolic re-formation of collective subjects and the knowledge appropriate to changing contexts. A new social and educational politics arises from an understanding of social knowledge as being mediated, and constituted, by de-reified symbolic activity or signifying labour,

rather than as corresponding with essential realities. It is collective, reciprocal activity that makes transformative knowledge possible. Wexler calls this post-structural re-writing 'textualism': an anti-reifying theory of practice for the post-industrial age (this is a time in which dispersed networks of information bear a counterhegemonic potential despite their use also as mobile instruments of system control).<sup>181</sup> Textualism is a 'theoretical icon of the semiotic society', with its contradictory tendencies towards the symbolic incapacitation of the 'spectatorially incorporated subject' and, in contrast, the democratic appropriation and reconstitution of discourse through open cultural negotiation. Awareness of semiosis as a generative condition of social knowledge and of diverse 'cultural narratives' therefore offers to 'unchain the means of signification from traditional emplacements' and, through 'discursive procedures of communicational interaction', to engage a recuperated conscious collectivity in the reorganisation of their ongoing relational narrative. A more 'democratic informationalism' may thus be secured, in opposition to prestructured commodified meaning, by redeeming the discursive dynamics of 'relational speech' and 'responsible dialogic conversation'.<sup>182</sup> Through this process of maximally unrestrained conversation an 'identity politics' can gain an entry, not in terms of a single authoritarian model of relationships but in the variable and renegotiable terms of self-defining collective subjects. There will always be a dialectical tension between a newly defined narrative identity and further transgressive rewriting, between de-reification and recommodification; but it is in the nature of textualism as an historicised theory of postmodern political practice that the symbolic movement it defines be always the occasion for 'decomposition' and democratic reinscription.<sup>183</sup>

With regard to education, Wexler conceives of schools as sites of collective self-formation, where conventional disciplinary boundaries and authorised truths are exposed to meaningful reconstitution. Both right-liberal meritocratic individualism and left-liberal critical formalism give way to the learners' relational struggle for power over generative symbolic resources. As Wexler writes, 'it is becoming clearer in the struggle over knowledge production that education means the capacity to control, to generate, refigure, configure and extrapolate the signifier', and to 'rationally reappropriate the discursive means of signification, speech, identity and social relations'.<sup>184</sup> Wexler thus highlights the creative value of destabilisation, transgression and movement, while implicitly retaining a dependency on 'form': there is a necessary dialectic between process and stasis, becoming and being, transformation and discipline - a creative dialectic that relies for its power on both co-ordinate poles. The role of reason in articulating appropriate truths for specific contexts is preserved, but as always subject to the de-reifying role of a provocative 'other'; equally, change is itself made possible by a

normative presence, against which it presses its creative force. Where Wexler's postmodern argument is particularly valuable, however, is in opening up the field of debate to meet the conditions of an inclusive participatory democracy. No 'other' is excluded, *a priori*, from the process of knowledge production and social construction; dynamic interrelationship is emphasised as a condition of democratic action and of maximal rational consensus. It is only through this conversational inclusiveness that criteria for the contextually most helpful, just or true course of collective action may be determined. But criteria entail a degree of system, of regulation, and of conditional symbolic commodification. Whether in the form of imaginative experimental hypotheses or provisionally integrated theory, such systematic construals are assumed to bear relevantly on a mutually intelligible 'real' state of affairs, and so to be the occasion of an appropriate response. The claims of realism, objectivism and stable identity are not entirely discredited by being conceived as mobile discursive constructs; instead, if discourse is made to retain a plasticity coequal to the historical contingency of those through whom it comes to effect, then these traditional sources of stability may be redeemed from authoritarian fixity, and serve as suitably supple heuristic and pragmatic dimensions of collective self-production.

Wexler's qualified incorporation of the realist paradigm in the very processes of what this thesis terms a 'postmodern democracy' emerges at various points in his argument. Thus, his 'new contextualism' stresses a version of 'knowing' as an historical cultural practice, in the course of which concepts and actions are produced in the service of theorisable communal purposes.<sup>185</sup> The singularity of any collective subject - in keeping with an Enlightenment of movement - is said to be grounded in people's 'common processual location' or in a 'similar trajectory motion'. The experience of particular groups may manifest a 'logic' serving to define a 'collective mode of being', which places them on the same 'wave length' on important issues, and which enables their mobilisation around 'the same principles of articulation, configuration and self-defining gestalt-formation'.<sup>186</sup> Yet these theorisable 'principles' come to effect through a pre-theoretical 'process of movement' through which functional ideologies are 'revealed' and socially effective resources are 'located'. Thus, a social and symbolic 'economy of identity' is manifested and brought to critical consciousness, demanding a judiciously 'balanced mixture of identity-commitments and deprivations', with due regard for contemporary, communicable needs.<sup>187</sup> This presupposes the dialogic activity of mutually decentering and constitutive social agents, who are oriented to prospective agreement concerning an actual state of affairs, and to interventions that will have specific desired consequences. A logic of postmodern realism and objectivism is clearly

implicit in this process of collective knowledge production and will formation, notwithstanding the willingness to question entrenched assumptions and to re-vision the social good in utopian terms. The danger of authoritarian, technocratic control is guarded against, however, by the continuance of a maximally open public conversation that exposes existing interpretations to a denaturalising dynamism. Nonetheless, the prosecution of any communal narrative or struggle entails strategies that rely for their potential effect on the delineation of structural positions, in relation to which purposive initiatives and counter-movements may be marshalled. Wexler's opposition to the theoretical mapping of structural relations (as attributed to 'new' sociological critical formalism, for example) does not overcome this abstract representational technique but merely incorporates it into a more supple and largely unpredictable process of ongoing struggle. His claim that an emphasis on 'historical movement' makes possible a 'non-ideological' sociology<sup>188</sup> is misleading, therefore, if it is taken to imply the total absence of provisionally stabilised concepts as representations of a contextually naturalised truth. While he is right to see in symbolic reification the would-be 'naturalizing' work of a mystificatory ideology, it seems necessary to distinguish the enabling, liberating necessity of democratically ratified (but never final) certainty, from the disabling pseudo-rational representations of a complacent authoritarianism. Wexler's formulation rests on precisely this distinction, but in a way that complicates rather than replaces the customary reliance on a language of credible theory and objective certainty. Hence, the alliances that develop, unpredictably, around issues of common concern, engendering the largely unpremeditated formation of self-producing collective subjects, are the spontaneous crucibles of 'inchoate' theories that are subsequently discerned to be 'integral' to the new movements, validating a certain systematic 'prioritization of knowledge and identity' as the 'vanguard elements' in its emergent self-directed struggle. These systematized vanguard elements are the implicit nub of a distinctive socio-ideological theory, giving conscious coherence to the activity of collective re-formation.<sup>189</sup> (Associated with this is, of course, the problematic prospect of a structured education programme, designed with specific valued objectives in mind.) The fact that knowledge production is held by Wexler to be a post-structuralist 'series of editings and recordings' en route to 'the social definition of a product' does not entirely undermine the traditional concern of Enlightenment rationalism with justifiable principles as the integrating basis of a collectively unifying philosophy of life or programme of action. The fact that 'reality' is *made* rather than reflected or revealed does not render the language of transparency untenable but crucially relativises its foundations, exposing them to discursive re-positioning.

Although textualism is, potentially, a purely academic discourse about decentered discourse in general, it is redeemed in Wexler's view by the fitness of its current historical appropriation - in the face of unwarranted cultural commodification and symbolic reification. Its strategic fitness, in this perspective, is counter-cultural; yet it is also underwritten, paradoxically, by the versatile symbolic networking of our contemporary semiotic society. The consumerist individualism that serves to promote commodity production is also seen as an internal source of opposition: 'Production-required autonomy and the ethos of freedom pass beyond expected bounds of organisational containment.'<sup>190</sup> However, if the reality of general symbolic movement (as reflected in the abstract theory of 'textualism') may be used by reflective individuals to substantive critical effect, it would seem unnecessary to maintain a view of new sociological critical theory as a purely 'rhetorical' paradigm, as Wexler does, intrinsically hypostatized in the hands of its academically institutionalised proponents. Wexler's willingness to defend and espouse a desublimating social reading of academic semiotic theory (as a 'theory of practice') but not an equally optimistic desublimating reading of new sociological critical theory is unconvincing. If textualism may inspire contextual movement, it could equally be argued that new sociological critical theory, despite its formal abstractions, may inspire a substantive critical practice. The crucial factor is a continual responsiveness to contingent pressures and perspectives: if new sociological critical theory is indeed only retrospective - unimaginatively detached from social processes - then Wexler's objection to it as purposeless and historically impotent is justified; if, however, critical theory is inherently amenable to contextual refiguring, as an ongoing process, then there is little to distinguish it from Wexler's postmodern social analysis. An imaginative, *prospective* orientation is considered by Wexler to be a 'reluctant' potential of critical theory but a distinguishing characteristic of symbolic theory. While new sociology is 'reminiscent', rationalising 'historical memory' as a practice of 'negation', social analysis is considered 'anticipatory':

My claim is: theories which operate in the realm of symbolic processes and discourse, that might broadly be called 'literary' or symbolic theories, are representations of new forms of critical social practice.<sup>191</sup>

Wexler contradictorily distinguishes post-structuralist social analysis from critical theory in terms of its focus on discursive instability - the vital means of producing new understandings and practices - in contrast to the 'reified products' that both old and new sociological liberalism take for 'things' or 'ideas'.<sup>192</sup> But the counterhegemonic drive towards 'new forms of social practice' is only effectuated through the process of recoding

that leads to the ratification of a new social 'product'. This Wexler explicitly acknowledges: '... where symbolic communicational or discursive practices begin to be understood as socially important, they are not left to their own anti-metaphysical play';<sup>193</sup> the 'formative, active role of symbolic processes' only takes effect as critical practice, therefore, by way of a justifiable choice to close down on dispersion and difference. But this acknowledgement appears to dilute the force of Wexler's association of social analysis with process - as its distinguishing feature - and with an Enlightenment of 'movement'. His symbolic economy of identity (like Foucault's) clearly requires provisionally 'fixed' centres, derived through and justified by contextualised processes of dialogic conversation. The 'real', Wexler writes, comes to definition as 'the discursive procedures of communicational interaction';<sup>194</sup> it is through these 'procedures' that the 'common processual location' of a collective subject can be ascertained. The valuable portrayal of reality and identity in terms of dynamic process and interactive procedure should not obscure the evident importance of the 'real' as collectively shaped 'product', reflecting the articulable 'logic' of a collective 'mode of being'. A common 'trajectory of motion' towards some anticipated goal is clearly discernible as such only in terms of communicable, integrating principles. The orientation to a common future (which Wexler finds lacking in new sociological critical theory) goes hand in hand with a commitment to democratic conversation between free and equal, mutually decentering and constitutive, dialogic partners. This is a commitment to realising an imagined future that correlates with mutually acceptable anticipatory ideals. These are adumbrated in concrete terms as socially relevant hypotheses, cognate with experimental public policies, and are exposed to the test of ongoing experience and its attendant discursive renditions, on the evidence of which they will either be communicatively reaffirmed, revised or rejected.

Implicit even in the post-structuralist textualism of Wexler's symbolic social theory, therefore, is the outline of a neo-positivist paradigm, according to which proposed ideals, beliefs and actions are subjected to an ongoing democratic process of empirical testing, interpretation and evaluation with critical regard to communal ideals, needs and objectives. This highlights the challenge of political management: the constitutive labour of an active body politic should not succumb to a rigid 'technology of control' but must keep collective practices and goals open to democratic renovation and revaluation. The terms in which communal significance is made will clearly be relative to the discursive frameworks of 'the people' - a fact which suggests both limitation and possibility. This depends on the participants' capacity to reach beyond the circle of their customary discursive preferences, and to entertain the disorienting and reorienting perspectives of others. It is the inconsistencies and discontinuities between available discourses that

justifies ongoing conversation in pursuit of an always elusive perfect concord. A residual desire for complete integration is valuably nurtured and simultaneously thwarted by ruptures and gaps in the interdiscursive weave that sustains the liminal imagination. These aporia are testimony of imperfection, yet they equally fuel a politics of hope, oriented to universal harmony. The ideal goal of rational mastery, of perfect understanding, of universal truth, is valuable as a permanent provocation, precisely because it is metaphysically elusive, utopian and 'unrealistic'. It is nonetheless discernible as a tacit factor in any attempt to express an intelligible thought or attitude about life; the very use of signs presupposes their signifying coherence and their integration in a symbolic system constituted as such by a logic of some perceptible kind. Potential agreement or mutual understanding within vitally reciprocal relationships is a necessary co-implicate of all discourse (as Habermas contends), and it is this which makes the repressive exclusion of otherness an act of self-curtailed as well. Permanently commodified discourse ceases to be discourse in any meaningful sense, but becomes a mute 'object', detached from any enlarging community of debate and from the destabilising provocation and self-renewing hope that it provides.

## CHAPTER FOUR : EDUCATION FOR A POSTMODERN DEMOCRACY

Through the preceding discussion of certain contemporary debates in social philosophy, this thesis has sought to highlight the diversely articulated interrelation of radical openness and collaborative coherence, as maintained through an ongoing process of democratic dialogue and decision-making. 'Strong' democratic hypothesis-formation is sustained through its continued susceptibility to the unsettling provocations of the 'liminal imagination'; equally, the normative and theoretical implications of the 'successful' experimental testing of public hypotheses must themselves remain exposed to the counterhegemonic 'movement' of discourse, as engendered by the diverse encipherings of distinct interpretative communities. The need to submit positive communal knowledge to the ongoing challenge of postmodern 'rewriting' entails a view of truth as ever-subject to the test of unconstrained debate. No ideological options are excluded *a priori* from this process; nor is it subordinated finally to any dominant ideological consensus (if it is to serve the public culture of a democratic society). No substantive belief-commitments should be excluded from this realm of open debate, but all such truth-perspectives must be advanced only as *part* of the process of mutually enlarging public reflection. No public policy need ever arrogate to itself the right permanently to delimit the sphere of open public discourse. The empirical and transcendental 'moments' must remain valuably distinct, in Habermas's sense, to allow for unforeseeable changes in public conceptions of relevant truth.

In what follows, speculative inferences for education and public life will be drawn from the arguments presented in the preceding chapters, with some reference once again to the particular tendencies of Christian National Education, liberal theory of education, and People's Education. It will be contended here that a distinction must be made between teachers' specifically educative responsibility, and their personal civic responsibility as sharers in the process of public talk and decision-making. The former is regarded here as having two dimensions: as publicly accountable servants of society, teachers may be expected to induct learners into communally-valued cultural knowledge; equally, in the interests of the learners' eventual independence of thought, teachers should induct learners into the non-coercive, open process of participatory dialogue and critical reflection. It is possible, and necessary, to distinguish between the teachers' answerability to democratically-ratified educational expectations, reflected perhaps in substantive curricular content, and their responsibility to the students' increasingly autonomous dialogic power. Further, a distinction should be maintained between political democracy, on the one hand, as a public process in which the educators as

citizens are assumed to share as communicative equals; and, on the other hand, education *for* political democracy, in which learners gradually acquire the discursive ability to participate socially as mutually formative yet self-responsible agents. The teacher's relatively superior capacity as a discursively-empowered, reflexive political agent must not impinge with indoctrinating force (however well-intentioned) on the learners as relatively vulnerable, less reflexive, culturally dependent beings. A qualification is necessary, however, pertaining to the adverse impact of existing political structures on this desired process of education for participatory democracy. It is at this interface between counterhegemonic educational process and established political practice that the ideal of a postmodern democracy suggests a contextually appropriate but ideologically non-coercive 'position' for teachers to advance, in the longer-term interests of an enlarged and self-responsible democratic citizenry.

Philip Wexler, as has been shown, regards 'textualism' as an appropriate desublimating theory of practice in a semiotic society. However, owing to the inevitability of a degree of symbolic 'commodification' in *any* stable cultural context, and the attendant danger of metadiscursive closure, the counterhegemonic potential of textualism's reciphering power is a valuable social and educational asset for every society that aspires to dynamically representative self-government. It is a contextually appropriate, strategic resource in any potentially fixed symbolic collectivity or determinate 'society', and it has ideological implications owing to its counterhegemonic promise. Nonetheless, it is ideologically non-coercive, in that although the redeeming of collective signifying activity bears signal implications for political self-government it does not predict or prescribe the belief-content of substantive decisions to be made by a self-formative citizenry.

There are difficult issues and qualifications to be explored, however, particularly for education. Crucially, one wishes to know what this all means for the practice of teaching in an ideologically-riven context such as our own. Primarily, it seems to require a responsibility to education as a process of symbolic 'making' by increasingly self-reflective, interdependent social agents. Problematically, this responsibility to an anti-manipulative educational process is inseparable from a responsibility to defend this process from determinable threat, and to mediate the cultural knowledge which the education system, by democratic consent, might be communally mandated to purvey. In South Africa, harmful socio-ideological structures clearly constitute a threat to the formation of the free and equal relationships that sustain a democratic society. Harmful factors are both material (associated, for example, with economic deprivation and

exploitation) and attitudinal (such as racial or cultural prejudice). Loyalty to the educative process must therefore entail an exposure of the substantive contextual limits placed upon it by such unjust structures of conventional belief and action. This exposure is fully consonant with the teachers' personal civic responsibility *beyond* the classroom and curriculum - that is, with their role as sharers in the process of public talk and policy making. Inside the classroom, however, the teachers' exposure of limits that condition the learners' perception requires a different circumspection, in view of the learners' relative vulnerability to authoritarian influence and possible manipulation.

Inside the classroom, the teachers' awareness of socio-ideological influences on the desired process of equitable communicative interaction coexists with the dual responsibility to induct learners into a field of valued cultural knowledge - in accordance with the prevailing public will - and also to expose the nature of such valued knowledge as a non-absolute, potentially revisable construction. By purveying curricular content in accordance with publicly endorsed norms and standards, teachers evince accountability to the specifications of the communal will (which they 'represent', in the educational context); but by exposing such content as a non-absolute construction, designed for supposedly enabling purposes, they will also evince some accountability to the ongoing democratic process by enhancing the learners' capacity for reflexive thought and critique. Awareness of curricular content as a non-absolute - albeit conventionally valued - cultural construction should enable learners to enter distinct or new discursive domains without regarding them as perfectly definitive, unquestionable or self-evident. Acquaintance with any *new* discursive dimension will entail a relatively naive, primary receptiveness in the learner, as a prerequisite of further, more discriminating engagement and possible reconstruction; but what is essential, if the learner is not to *remain* naive and uncritical, is the presence of a discursive terrain or arena where both new and customary languages and perspectives may be entertained and subjected to interactive assessment. This requires a degree of dialogic flexibility for learners, relatively free of authoritarian direction and coercion. However, where the curricular agenda calls for a clear distinction between right and wrong, there must be a point at which the teacher enters the arena to assist students in arbitrating between available options, in terms of the rules of the pertinent curricular or academic game. In any process of education accountable to democratically warranted needs and priorities, the learners' freedom will be qualified by a regard for the norms and standards held to be justified by the larger community. This constitutes a practical and ethical limitation on the freedom allowed to teachers and learners, within the game rules of any democratically ratified education system. *This does not mean a completely decentralised*

'system' of education marked by unrestrained heterogeneity and unorthodox relationships may not be justified and initiated, but even this preference will need to express a democratic consensus, to which teachers will be mandated to give representative effect. The preceding discussion attempts to indicate a means by which even fairly centralised and standardised education systems can be held accountable to democratically ratified but revisable norms pertaining to freedom and authority, while also fostering the learners' awareness of limits as non-absolute and as the potential occasion and stimulus of collaborative 'rewriting'.

The crucial question, therefore, is whether an education process that is disciplined in conventional ways (in keeping with communal norms) is also compatible with the formation of learners' reflective autonomy, in the longer-term interests of 'strong-democratic' well-being. As suggested above, it is by coming to terms with predetermined curricular 'knowledge' with reflexive awareness of its conditioned construction that learners might meet the requirements of democratically prespecified standards and at the same time be equipped to view prescribed knowledge with some critical detachment and imaginative independence. With the gradual acquisition of a more richly inclusive and versatile conceptual framework, learners will also acquire their own interactive command of the 'veil of ignorance' en route to their attainment of an independent but revisable 'overlapping consensus'. The teachers' presence *within* this process of communicative grappling need not counteract its strong-democratic, mutually-decentering promise but can enhance it, in the spirit of the kinds of leadership advocated by Barber ('moral', 'transitional' and 'facilitating') - promoting and inspiring the co-operative virtues rather than adherence to settled, apodictic truths. A difficult line to maintain, therefore, is that between provocation and advocacy, between the unsettling of boundaries and their redefinition. In their role as 'transitional' and 'moral' leaders, non-manipulative teachers manifest a paradox: their first commitment is to facilitating an open educative process; yet it is also one from which they must be able to detach themselves, at least as equal participants with the learners. This 'detaching' is not to reinforce their superiority, but precisely the opposite - expediently to remove their authoritative presence from the learners' embryonic democratic culture. This self-effacement is expedient inasmuch as debate is thereby not made the occasion of substantive ideological conflict or consensus between the person of the teacher (as a significant authority figure) and the learners; but it is a democratically empowering tactic for the learners themselves, inasmuch as they are encouraged to engage on equal terms with each other, in probing the liminal spaces and ideological positions available to them. Teachers are able to modulate their part in the course of the learners' discursive struggle,

strategically deploying the veil of ignorance (effacing their 'known' superiority) to the benefit of the learners' dialogic capacity. This tactical effacement applies most obviously to areas of the study programme that invite debate, but also - less obviously - to reflection on customary disciplinary boundaries and curricular construction, where these are brought to critical awareness. Such effacement will not apply, however, to the kind of leadership role advocated by Barber (albeit, paradoxically, partially self-effacing in character) - a role that is given to facilitating active, equitable relationship in a process of reciprocal communication. In this way the roles of moral/transitional/facilitating leader are filled, while, at the same time, students are encouraged to reorient *themselves* equitably within an altered symbolic field, with due regard for the norms of an ideal speech situation, promoting free and equal communication amongst themselves in the search for representative decisions and 'forms' of relevant knowledge.

The peculiar character of the teachers' role might be clarified, perhaps, with reference to the contrast between the thin-liberal minimalist's passive recognition of plurality, and the 'strong' democrat's wrestling *with* plurality. Teachers, faced with a dual interest in an anti-manipulative educational task and in contextual social justice must give self-subsuming priority to the former (in the classroom) in the longer-term cause of the (undictated) latter. As has been indicated, however, the educative task comprises a concern both for the learners' developing critical autonomy *and* for the curricular dimension of communally valued knowledge. Barber's insight into the potential of the minimalist disposition of thin liberal democracy for conversion into the collective symbolic action of strong democracy is suggestive here, intimating the nature of the teacher's role as a transitional, catalytic 'leader' in educative relationships. Where controversial issues of local importance are concerned, which happen not to be subject to prescribed curricular resolution, teachers should restrain their personal ideological interest in the outcome of the learners' exploratory debate, but without necessarily forsaking their role as *agent provocateur* of the liminal imagination, which stimulates the intrinsically counterhegemonic potential of self-produced meaning. This ideological restraint amounts to a tactical acceptance of the minimalist's stance of non-participation and tolerance, but in the longer-term cause of a more genuine participatory autonomy (by the learners) in the future. The 'modus vivendi' relationship, too, suggests this suspension of full-blooded ideological contestation - but in the cause of the participants' developing capacity for constructive mutual engagement. Thus the problematization and interrogation of assumptions, in the educational context, should wherever possible (without controverting the teachers' educational accountability) be pursued by the learners themselves. The modus vivendi and minimalist positions, although clearly not

the desired *fruits* of an education for democracy, are therefore, in this view, necessary tactical and ethical positions for teachers in their partially self-effacing effort to give effect to the learners' reflective autonomy. In this way the dual educative responsibility - for promoting approved curricular knowledge *and* the critical 'reasoning' aptitude of interactive agents - might be met. This dual educative task insists on the distinction between an enabling capacity for reflective awareness, in the interests of democratic empowerment, and a complacent reliance on instructions concerning what is good. Accordingly, an education for a postmodern democracy, while it does not eschew the prospect of salvific contextual truth, insists on educative leadership that retains a respect for the line between judiciously reticent provocation and substantive advocacy, in the longer-term democratic cause of positive collaboration amongst self-responsible citizens. Although teachers might fairly be expected to fulfil their obligation to a community in purveying the cultural knowledge embodied in curricular content (assuming that this is at the community's democratic behest), they must, equally, not forego a concern for the reflectively enlarging (and therefore democratically enabling) capacity of the learners' liminal imagination and the variousness on which it thrives. It is this that underlies the renovating capacity of a self-cultivating public sphere, whatever the local exigencies might happen to be. The counterhegemonic power of this transgressive, visionary, associative faculty is what sustains a postmodern democracy and the collective symbolic movement deemed appropriate to different times and places. The teachers' responsibility for education as the medium of communally sanctioned knowledge should not be travestied by inducing in learners a relationship of dependency on foreordained authority. What needs to be nurtured through education is the discursive capacity that will enable learners - as potential citizens - to place pre-existent boundaries and categories under threat of cancellation or collaborative redefinition, notwithstanding their initial reliance on such formative and delimiting categories for primary enculturation.

The various arguments considered in this thesis all give credence to the need for positive public knowledge but also for openness to 'difference' as an ever-necessary prerequisite of critically-reflexive hypothesis-formation. Democratic representativeness is incompatible with the totalising claims of an unrevisable order of truth. Unreflective discourse-censorship in accordance with received wisdom conflicts with a respect for human agency, as manifested in the strong-democratic talk that maintains an experimental 'fluid edge' between opening and closing, limits and transgression. For this reason, an education for a postmodern democracy must not be reduced to a 'transmission' or 'social engineering' model of education, despite teachers' accountability

to the will of the community in respect of needful cultural knowledge. If strong-democratic communal life is to survive as a credible option, teachers ought to show a signal regard for the learners' gradual understanding of both the enabling and repressing effects of unstable symbolic codes. Established belief-systems are equally two-edged, threatening to confine as well as to express a formative will, for both 'adults' and 'children'. There is a valuable and necessary distinction, and relation, between radical uncertainty and conditional certainty, which is reminiscent of the unsettling cyclical interdependence of 'phases' characteristic of the empirico-analytic research paradigm - a phase of maximal openness (receptiveness to relatively unsystematised 'data'), a phase of publicly accessible hypothesis-formation and experimental 'testing', and a phase of theory-formation with regard to publicly attestable 'results'. This thesis argues that an education for a postmodern democracy is dedicated to the health of the first phase, despite its necessary regard also for approved curricular content finding its warrant in collective experience and prevailing opinion. The health of the first phase, sustaining the critical animus of Foucauldian 'thought', demands a degree of flexibility in the learners' frameworks of meaning, permitting the reflexive decentering that conduces to self-responsible interdiscursive relations, in the process of participatory hypothesis-formation in specific contexts of need. Attendant communal experience of experimental public policies might well 'confirm' the wisdom and virtue of the chosen options, thereby contributing to the induction of provisionally stable or 'certain' public knowledge. Postmodern insights concerning the socially relative construction of the subject and of 'rational' knowledge do not therefore negate the salutary binding force of conditionally verified theory. Rather, they insist that such stabilising certainties, threatening a future commodification of culture, must be perpetually exposed to the cancelling test of otherness or difference, as sponsored by an openness to unforeseen data, alternative perspectives, and new languages of possibility. The capacity and willingness to engage *this* phase is the particular concern of an education for a postmodern democracy, allowing all citizens to acknowledge the 'essential' contestability and revisability of established beliefs and practices, and to anticipate creative alternatives. Although this liminal imagination must bear contextually relevant consequences, engendering relatively determinate *forms* of social practice, teachers should orient their efforts not merely to producing or reproducing a sanctioned cultural or ideological formation but to activating in their students the less directed power of reciprocal *formativeness*. This, while it is the necessary co-implicate of more definitive 'forms' of belief and practice, is also the invigorating occasion of transgressive and reformative movement. In education, the products of this critically formative capacity should, ideally, be given substantive content by the learners themselves, as the outcome

of self-made discussion. In reality, however, they will often lack the discursive and conceptual means of engaging meaningfully with topical or novel issues, and will depend on the teacher for appropriate stimulation. Further, where learners remain appreciably unaware of the codes and values inhering in their beliefs and practices - and specifically where these counteract the equal reciprocity of strong-democratic dialogue - it behoves teachers as equitable facilitating 'leaders' to expose them to reflective consciousness as significant conditioning factors, in the interests of the formal 'process' of education as manifested in, and qualified by, its particular historical context. This is a dangerous moment, at which the student might well passively succumb to the preferences of the teacher. There is no guarantee that covert manipulation of this kind will not occur; the most that can be done, perhaps, is to emphasise the self-defeating nature and undemocratic consequences of a practice that merely replaces one form of uncritical dependency for another.

It was noted in Chapter Two that despite an expressed opposition to authoritarian fixity by the proponents of different educational and social theories in South Africa, they all nonetheless resort to substantive position-taking as an educational *a priori* in our historical context. Proponents of Christian National Education qualify their recognition of contingency and neighbourliness by an affirmation of inflexible racial boundaries; proponents of liberal education endorse a broad oppositional alliance against the injustice of apartheid and, less obviously, against associated forms of inequality; and certain proponents of People's Education endorse specified group or class leadership roles in the name of democratic justice. The problematic issue is the degree to which a pre-specified political affiliation forecloses on autonomous thought, despite being propounded in the avowed cause of democratic enlargement. In defence of an open educative and political process sides must be taken, in an unjust context; yet the taking of sides *in defence of a counterhegemonic autonomy* must not be wholly equated with substantive factionalism. The conditional reconciliation of a formal 'openness' with the taking of sides in a given context can only be through respect for a communicative ideal which accommodates diversity as fuel for the strong-democratic deliberation that validates public hypotheses as the expression of a revisable democratic will. Only in this way will the dangers of doctrinaire dictatorship and unself-critical habit be guarded against. The arguments considered in this thesis give collective warrant for affirming the necessary distinction, and relation, between substantive contextual solutions to specific inequities, and the non-prescriptive yet legitimating 'norms' of a 'formal' communicative or discourse ethic. The two are liable to be reductively equated in particular contexts, threatening to result in the complacent reification of hegemonic frames; the

counterhegemonic force of the liminal imagination is thus 'contained' by dominant interpretations of social experience. A monologic conflation of the empirical and transcendental 'moments' of validity claims is indeed an ever-dangerous threat. The two are not finally co-extensive, however, and it is this reductive equation that an education for a postmodern democracy must help to avoid, without denying the 'obligatory' moment of empirical decision, with its substantively normative effects (as the product of democratic dialogue). It is, of course, through approved curricula that such normative knowledge, supposedly bearing democratic warrant, is partly mediated, in accordance with the cultural mandate and office of the teacher, as a servant of the community.

Clearly the liminal imagination takes meaningful effect only to the degree that situated social actors are concretely liberated into truly free and equal participatory relations with their fellows. Its transgressive formativeness is anomalous in abstraction; reference to its transcendent, non-substantive and mobile character is not intended to remove it from the realm of social practice but to insist on its materially underdetermined iconoclasm, transgradience and vision. The freedom it bespeaks is not ever wholly unconditioned; instead it acknowledges the dispersed symbolic network in which signifying labour is partially and fallibly done, and it brings back into the field of serious play what is marginalised and occluded, so desublimating the orders of meaning encoded in customary discriminatory practices and relations. It exploits gaps, aporia, fracta, indeterminacies and inconsistencies to undermine the foundations and crack the smooth facade of established wisdom, in whatever historical context it happens to be. It is the implicit stimulus of communicative action, sustaining the critical and creative collaboration of social agents, who expose dominant discursive practices to the threat of perpetual morphogenesis by continuously shaping the democratic will and submitting it to the ongoing 'test' of public experience, dialogically defined. The formal-procedural 'educating' proposed by Morrow as suitably anti-manipulative and non-technicist accords well with the unprogrammable dynamism that is at issue here. Equally compatible with the revisionary power of the liminal imagination is Barrett's idea of 'reasoning' as the indeterminative goal of education - a reasoning capacity that is 'not a respecter of cultural boundaries'. Its counterhegemonic force is clearly a source of ideological or cultural vigour, while being intrinsically of no self-evident party. It enables the reflexive bracketing of customary ground motives, so giving more concrete meaning to the open neighbourliness advocated by Heyns and others. The cross-cutting connection it makes possible, and on which it thrives, has much in common with the 'paralogy' that inspires the Lyotardian 'incredulity towards metanarratives'; yet it also has much in common with the Habermasian 'ideal speech situation', soliciting a continual striving for wider

agreement - a striving that 'bursts every provinciality asunder', so subjecting them to more broadly legitimated (but never final) change. Habermas's conception of 'philosophy' as the 'placeholder' guarantor of the openness and transdiscursive movement of communicative action is compatible - despite apparent rhetorical differences - with Lyotard's 'general agonistics', born of dissension and difference, expressing a dynamic struggle for meaning. Foucault's depiction of the work of 'thought', too, is pertinent here, as the mark of an intransigent freedom - a recalcitrance, scepticism and critical detachment - that sponsors the 'agonism' of interactive self-production. This 'critical ontology' of ourselves is typified by an 'attitude' that puts us in the position of 'always beginning again', a notion reminiscent of Rawls's 'original position', insisting that we put our customary social perspectives and roles under erasure, by deploying the 'veil of ignorance', in an ongoing effort to challenge and enlarge our collective lives. The metaphoric unsettling of boundaries and the heterogeneity of 'language games' which prompt Rorty's 'aesthetic pragmatism' can be reconciled with Habermas's 'universal pragmatics' (despite rhetorical differences) in respect of their orientation to the relational openness that secures the prospect of alternative, unpredictable conjunctions. MacIntyre's desire for virtuous action reflecting shared understandings of narrative purpose arrived at through the experience of conflict implies, too, a capacity of imaginative sympathy and self-revision that presupposes the self-subsuming power of the liminal imagination, notwithstanding inevitable social limits on individual freedom. Wexler's productive 'textualism' is clearly to the point as well for its redeeming of signifying activity and joint refiguring labour. Our responsiveness to the unembodied future is indicated as much by transcendental and utopian ideas as by the serious play of discursive mobility and inter-animation, and our mutual capacity to control, generate, refigure, configure and extrapolate the signifier.

The theoretically cognate notions juxtaposed above reflect different but not incompatible efforts to describe a reciprocal openness to provocative 'otherness', as the prerequisite of maximally enlarged and 'justified' communal perceptions, whether or not an achieved social coherence is conceived of as an imaginative or a rational 'product'. The legitimacy of such democratically validated knowledge will have to serve as a conservative counterweight - but, to the learner, an initially enabling counterweight - to incessant uncertainty and transformation. The 'reasoning' process advocated by Barrett, characterised as not being a 'respector of cultural boundaries', must clearly be tempered by respect for such provisionally ratified products of open debate. The teachers' role must be seen not merely as that of a destabilising *provocateur*, but necessarily also as that of a publicly accountable mediator of communally valued

perceptions. However, these communal perceptions should themselves be the uncoerced products of a maximally inclusive process of social conversation and struggle. This normative, ethical dimension of mutual, self-responsible openness is expressed, as has appeared, in terms of an ideal reciprocity and symmetry of communicative relationship, despite the disparate rhetoric of different writers. It is this formal ideal of a (trans)formative, but never wholly formed, signifying capacity that an education for a postmodern democracy should nurture, notwithstanding the limits of prescribed curricular material. As has been stated, this cannot mean complete detachment from contextual dependencies or socio-ideological pressures; but it is a signal contention of this thesis that autonomous participation in the process of democratic decision-making requires the reflexive decentering of self in the cause of a critically justified solidarity with others. This self-subsuming capacity will necessarily find its fulfilment in the heat of actual social struggle; but it will be nullified and defrauded by the precipitate ideological direction of well-meaning but indirectly manipulative authority figures, whose formulations may well pre-empt rather than provoke non-dependent, interactive 'thought', and so habituate learners en masse to a 'following' role and to a mystified or presumptuous parochialism.

An education for a postmodern democracy is thus intended to sow the seeds of the strong-democratic participation that communitarians such as Barber and MacIntyre regard as the enabling virtue of the Enlightenment. Although they eschew Enlightenment 'rationalism' (glossed as objectivist and instrumentalist) in favour of socially-embedded narrative 'struggles' for meaning, their stance ought not to be unsympathetic to Habermas's 'communicative rationality', which is held by him to redeem the counterhegemonic potential of modern reason - what he calls the 'counterdiscourse of modernity'. Education must give due respect to the learners' enactment of a gradual 'fall' from innocence: their possible distancing from the unquestioned authority of any conventional framework, so testifying to the non-absolute, socially conditioned nature of its structured cultural significance. The learners' increasing ability to negotiate their own perspective through dialogic struggle is especially necessary in historical contexts such as our own, which invite easy side-taking at the cost of the more testing reciprocal receptiveness that engenders reflective independence. This is not to say that a relation between a moral concern for social justice in the present, and a non-prescriptive dedication to the educative 'process' and the learners' anticipated autonomy as self-reflective agents, may not be held to coincide with a specific ideological alliance; but as this thesis has argued, such a contextually relevant alliance is best propounded - in respect of an education for a postmodern democracy - not in defence

of a determinate political faction but rather in continued defence of a largely non-coercive ideal speech situation, manifesting a normative reciprocity that unsettles and decentres even as it aspires to a perfect, not-yet-embodied consensus.

This 'ecological' dynamism between openness and hypothetical closure is not an easy relation to maintain (as Muller, Fay and Bowers have stressed); but if the dangers of authoritarian omniscience are to be withstood, the reality of contingency and fallibility must be built into our culture of democratic decision-making, and particularly into education, that must enhance learners' refiguring engagement with language. This will enable them to contribute purposively to socially formative speech and collective symbolic action, in changeable contexts of need. The discursive constitution of social understanding is best fostered, therefore, by the open mutuality of interactive speech that illuminates the networking of lifeworld structures and the normalizing effects of 'biopower' in specific structured situations. Such hermeneutic attunement to an internally stratified narrative culture nurtures the liminal imagination and the differential reasoning power of Habermas's communicative rationality. These provide a rich and expansive 'data base' for the shaping of context-relative, public hypotheses as the fruit of an ongoing 'state of discussion' marked by provisional 'overlapping' agreements. Social 'virtue' thus attains concrete meaning through a shared exploration of narrative purpose, without forsaking the necessary legitimating condition of exposure to critical interrogation and possible transformation. A postmodern democracy does not neglect the necessary co-ordinating role of larger theoretical structures and unifying categories, but sees these, crucially, as subject to ongoing collaborative reinscription by mutually decentering and mutually constitutive citizens.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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31. *Ibid.*, p.216.
32. *Ibid.*, p.220.
33. Segregation in education is reaffirmed in the *White Paper on the Provision of Education in the Republic of South Africa, 1983*, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1983. However, the present Minister of National Education, Gerrit Viljoen, gives evidence of the recent change in official rhetoric on education, in emphasising South Africans' 'commonality' rather than their racial-cultural differences, and commenting on the need for a single national education policy and syllabuses that will serve the interests of all. Viljoen attempts to justify this new spirit in technicist vein, however: 'everyone contributes towards the outputs of an integrated economy' and 'by virtue of this commonality of interests the different groups clearly share a common destiny'. Quoted in the *Cape Argus*, Thursday 11 January 1990 ('Commonality in education the new watchword'). Also symptomatic of the new trend is the announcement of a policy review, by the Minister of Education and Culture, Piet Clase, which could entail the opening of white State schools to all races. Reported in the *Weekend Argus*, Saturday 10 February 1990 ('White State schools may open to all races').
34. See, for instance, the views of S.C.W. Duvenhage, 'Authority and discipline at institutions for higher education', in *Christian Higher Education: the Contemporary Challenge, op.cit.* (note 30), pp.266 - 287.
35. Penelope Anne Enslin, *In Defence of Liberal Theory of Education* (D. Phil. thesis), Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1986, p.153.
36. On this point see also the articles by Kenneth A. Bruffee, 'Social construction, language and the authority of knowledge: a bibliographical essay', *College English*, 48:8, 1986, pp. 773 - 790, and 'Liberal education and the social justification of belief', *Liberal Education*, 68, 1982, pp.95-104.
37. Barrett, 'An independent analysis', *op.cit.* (note 19), pp.4,5.
38. Penny Enslin, 'Can Marxism offer a coherent notion of education?' *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 21:1, 1987, pp.59-74.
39. Penny Enslin, 'Is the dominant tradition in studies of education in South Africa a liberal one?' *Perspectives in Education*, 8:3, 1985, pp.129-153.
40. Jane Hofmeyr, 'Liberals and the education crisis', in *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa* (Ed. J. Butler *et al*) Cape Town: David Philip, 1987, pp.311, 316 - 7.
41. Charles Simkins, *Reconstructing South African Liberalism*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1986.
42. F. Van Zyl Slabbert, 'Incremental change or revolution?' in *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa, op.cit.* (note 40), pp.401 - 2.
43. Richard Turner, *The Eye of the Needle: an Essay on Participatory Democracy*, Johannesburg, Spro-cas, 1972, p.33.
44. C.A. Bowers, *Elements of a Post-Liberal Theory of Education*, New York: Columbia University, Teachers College Press, 1987, p.157.

45. Jack Simons, 'People's Education for People's Power', in *Education for Liberation; the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College: 10 years 1979 - 1989*, Lusaka: ANC Department of Education, 1989, p.6.
  46. Recommendations of the Harare Conference on Teacher Unity, April 1988, in 'Documents on teacher unity, 1985 - 1988', *Perspectives in Education*, 10:2, 1988/9, p.115.
  47. National Education Crisis Committee discussion papers on the formation of a Mass Education Movement, 1989 (mimeos); more precise bibliographic details not apparent.
  48. Eric Molobi, 'Academics and the struggle for a democratic education', *The Kenton Conference, Salt Rock, October 1989* (Kenton-on-the-Rocks), p.14
  49. NECC discussion papers on a Mass Education Movement, *op.cit.* (note 47).
  50. NECC, A perspective on the need for teachers' unity, Conference on Teacher Unity, October 1987, in 'Documents on teacher unity, 1985 - 1988', *op.cit.* (note 46), pp.118 - 9.
  51. Ian Moll, 'Towards one South African teachers' union', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 14:1, April 1989, p.74.
  52. Jay Naidoo, A speech on teacher unity, Western Cape Teachers' Union Annual General Meeting, in 'Documents on teacher unity, 1985 - 1988' *op.cit.* (note 46), pp.116 - 7.
  53. Jakes Gerwel (interviewed), 'A non-racial, democratic South Africa is the goal, says Gerwel', *Frontline* (supplement on *UWC 30 Years*), October 1989, p.9.  
It would not be fair to imply Gerwel's support for a racially biased concept of democratic justice, in the light of his stress on the need for a 'non-racial' democratic South Africa. Indeed, he regards the epithet 'non-racial' as tautologous in conjunction with 'democracy'. The two words are said to 'belong to one concept in the idiom in which we speak' (*Ibid.*, p.8). This implies that his reference to African leadership is not racially weighted. However, in reference to UWC's student body, Gerwel distinguishes between 'African' and 'coloured' students, and, in keeping with the Congress tradition, affirms the necessity of non-racialism 'under African leadership'. Here, presumably, 'African' is tautologous in conjunction with 'leadership', yet it bears crucial qualifying force for Gerwel's argument, in the context of South Africa's political history.
  54. Fatima Meer, 'Time we stopped this name-calling' (extracts from a speech), *Weekly Mail*, October 13 - 19, 1989, p.15.
  55. Moichopari Segwai, 'South Africa: beyond student power', *Links* (quarterly publication of Third World First), 31, 1988, p.19.
  56. Jakes Gerwel, Extracts from his inaugural address as rector of UWC, 5 June 1987, 'Intellectual home of the Left?', *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, 15, June 1988, pp.34 - 35.
  57. Franklin Sonn (interviewed), 'Ons het 'n "job" om te doen', *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, *ibid.*, pp.17 - 18.
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58. Gerwel, inaugural address, *op.cit.* (note 56); also the papers by Gerwel and Neville Alexander at the seminar on 'Political Tasks of Academic Work Today' (Centre for Research on Africa, UWC), *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, 15, June 1988, pp.34 - 37.
59. Ken Hartshorne, 'Education - the laboratory of South Africa's future', *Sash*, September 1988, p.10.
60. Hartshorne, 'The current crisis in education against the background of the ideological-political situation in South Africa', Potchefstroom: IRS, February 1988, p.22 (mimeo).
61. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy; Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
62. *Ibid.*, p.193.
63. Alan Paton, in his honorary acceptance speech at Yale University, quoted in a review of his *Journey Continued*, the *Argus*, 2 May 1988 ('Paton's journey is moving passion').
64. Barber, *op.cit.* (note 61), p.150.
65. *Ibid.*, p.xii.
66. *Ibid.*, pp.237 - 242.
67. *Ibid.*, pp.180 - 182 (on agenda-setting).
68. *Ibid.*, p.169.
69. Anthony Giddens, 'Action, subjectivity, and the constitution of meaning', in *The Aims of Representation; Subject/Text/History* (Ed. Murray Krieger), New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p.168.
70. *Ibid.*, p.164.
71. Johan Muller, 'On the edge: the university-community relationship', *The Kenton Conference, Salt Rock, October 1987*, pp.232 - 242.
72. *Ibid.*, p.237.
73. *Ibid.*, p.239.
74. *Ibid.*, p.241.
75. *Ibid.*, p.241.
76. Brian Fay, *Critical Social Science; Liberation and its Limits*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987, p.205.
77. *Ibid.*, p.212.
78. *Ibid.*, pp.214 - 5.
79. Johan Muller, *op.cit.* (note 71), pp.237, 241.
80. Fay, *op.cit.* (note 76), p.205.

81. For a general discussion of social philosophy from the Enlightenment to the present century, see Frank Hearn, *Reason and Freedom in Sociological Thought*, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1985.
82. Richard Rorty, 'Habermas and Lyotard on postmodernity', in *Habermas and Modernity* (Ed. Richard J. Bernstein), Cambridge: Polity Press/Basil Blackwell, 1985.
83. Cornelis Disco, 'Critical theory as ideology of the new class; rereading Jürgen Habermas', *Theory and Society*, 8:2, 1979.
84. *Ibid.*, pp.183, 172 - 4.
85. Jürgen Habermas, 'An alternative way out of the philosophy of the subject: communicative versus subject-centred reason', in his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity; Twelve Lectures* (Trans. Frederick Lawrence) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987, pp.294 - 326.
86. *Ibid.*, pp.310 - 312.
87. *Ibid.*, pp.312 - 314.
88. *Ibid.*, pp.298 - 300.
89. *Ibid.*, p.322.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 317.
91. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp.284 - 5.
92. Habermas, *op.cit.* (note 85), pp.322 - 3.
93. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity - an incomplete project', in *The Anti-Aesthetic; Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Ed. Hal Foster) Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983, p.8.
94. Habermas, *op.cit.* (note 85), p.326.
95. *Ibid.*, p.323.
96. *Ibid.*, p.300.
97. *Ibid.*, pp.303 - 4.
98. Kenneth Baynes *et al* (Eds.), Introduction to 'Jürgen Habermas', in *After Philosophy, op.cit.* (note 1), pp.292-3.
99. Michel Foucault, 'Truth and power' - an interview conducted by A. Fontana and P. Pasquino, reprinted from Foucault's *Power/Knowledge*, in *The Foucault Reader* (Ed. Paul Rabinow) Penguin, 1986, pp.56 - 57.
100. *Ibid.*, pp.60 - 61.
101. *Ibid.*, pp.63 - 64.

102. Foucault, 'The means of correct training', reprinted from his *Discipline and Punish*, in *The Foucault Reader, op.cit.* (note 99), pp.196, 203 - 4.
103. Foucault, 'Docile bodies', reprinted from his *Discipline and Punish*, in *The Foucault Reader, op.cit.* (note 99), pp.181 - 3.
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105. Foucault, 'Truth and power', *op.cit.* (note 99), p. 68.
106. *Ibid.*, p.70.
107. *Ibid.*, pp.73 - 74.
108. *Ibid.*, p.59.
109. *Ibid.*, p.74.
110. *Ibid.*, p.74.
111. Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in *The Foucault Reader, op.cit.*, (note 99), p. 42.
112. *Ibid.*, p.46.
113. *Ibid.*, p.46.
114. *Ibid.*, p.47.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
116. Foucault, 'Politics and ethics: an interview', in *The Foucault Reader, op.cit.* (note 99), p.374.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
119. Foucault, 'Polemics, politics, and problemizations (*sic*); an interview with Michel Foucault' (May 1984), in *The Foucault Reader, op.cit.* (note 99), p. 381.
120. *Ibid.*, pp.381, 382.
121. *Ibid.*, p.385.
122. *Ibid.*, pp.386-7.
123. *Ibid.*, p.388.
124. *Ibid.*, pp.388-9.
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 389 - 90.
126. Foucault, 'The subject and power' - Afterword, *op.cit.* (note 104), p.217.
127. *Ibid.*, p.222.

128. Fredric Jameson, 'Foreword' to *The Postmodern Condition* by J-F. Lyotard, Manchester University Press, 1986, p.vii.
129. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* (Trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi) Manchester University Press, 1986, pp. xxiii - xxiv.
130. *Ibid.*, p.xxv.
131. *Ibid.*, p.10.
132. *Ibid.*, p.16.
133. *Ibid.*, p.19.
134. *Ibid.*, p.27.
135. *Ibid.*, pp.31 - 36.
136. *Ibid.*, pp.40 - 41.
137. *Ibid.*, pp.60 - 67.
138. *Ibid.*, p.65.
139. *Ibid.*, p.66.
140. Fredric Jameson, *op.cit.* (note 128), pp.xvii - xix.
141. Kenneth Baynes *et al*, Introduction to 'Jürgen Habermas', in *After Philosophy, op.cit.* (note 1), pp.292 - 3.
142. *Ibid.*, p.293.  
See also Habermas, 'Philosophy as stand-in and interpreter', in *After Philosophy, op.cit.* (note 1), pp.296 - 315.
143. Jürgen Habermas, 'Philosophy as stand-in and interpreter', *ibid.*, p.313.
144. Habermas, 'Questions and counterquestions', in *Habermas and Modernity, op.cit.* (note 82), p.196.
145. John Rawls, 'Justice as fairness: political not metaphysical', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14, 1985, pp.223 - 251.
146. *Ibid.*, p.235.
147. *Ibid.*, p.236.
148. *Ibid.*, p.237.
149. Rawls's use of the original position and veil of ignorance as the decentering prerequisites of credible and representative decision-making correlates with Lyotard's view that it is the 'quest for paralogy' that 'validates the adoption of rules' in any language game. See *The Postmodern Condition, op.cit.* (note 129), p.66.

150. The writing of Jacques Derrida is of particular note, in this respect; for example, *Positions* (1981), *Writing and Difference* (1978) and *Margins of Philosophy* (1982) - University of Chicago Press.
151. John Rawls, 'Justice as fairness', *op.cit.* (note 145), p.236 - 9.
152. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination; Four Essays* (Ed. M. Holquist; trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist) Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Also *Rabelais and his World* (Trans. H. Iswolsky) Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968.
153. Rawls, *op.cit.* (note 145), p.230.
154. *Ibid.*, p.230.
155. *Ibid.*, p.231.
156. *Ibid.*, pp.246-7.
157. *Ibid.*, p.227.
158. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London: Duckworth, 1981, pp.232 - 3.
159. *Ibid.*, p.216.
160. *Ibid.*, pp.232 - 3.
161. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* University of Notre Dame Press, 1988, pp.337, 179.
162. Richard Rorty, 'The priority of democracy to philosophy', in *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (Eds. M.D. Peterson and R.C. Vaughan) Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp.257-282.
163. *Ibid.*, p.258.
164. *Ibid.*, p.259.
165. *Ibid.*, p.269.
166. Richard Rorty, 'Thugs and theorists; a reply to Bernstein', *Political Theory*, 15:4, 1987, p.569.
167. John Rawls, 'The idea of an overlapping consensus', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 7:1, 1987, pp.1 - 25.
168. *Ibid.*, p.9.
169. *Ibid.*, p.12.
170. *Ibid.*, p.14.
171. *Ibid.*, p.17.
172. *Ibid.*, p.19.

173. *Ibid.*, pp.20 - 21.  
So, by suspending the state of emergency and the armed struggle, and by moving towards initial terms of social co-operation through public talk, South Africa's political groupings might make room for the 'essential co-operative virtues' to develop and give rise to mutual understanding and agreement. This is what seems to be implied by the most recent conciliatory moves on the local political scene.
174. Philip Wexler, *Social Analysis of Education: After the New Sociology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.
175. *Ibid.*, p.19.
176. *Ibid.*, p.4.
177. *Ibid.*, p.99.
178. *Ibid.*, pp.6, 12.
179. *Ibid.*, pp. 80 - 83.
180. *Ibid.*, p.139 (see also pp. 15, 127, 183).
181. *Ibid.*, pp.154 - 7.
182. *Ibid.*, pp.152, 161 - 8, 177.
183. *Ibid.*, pp.148 - 9.
184. *Ibid.*, pp.174 - 5.
185. *Ibid.*, p.84.
186. *Ibid.*, p.173.
187. *Ibid.*, p.180.
188. *Ibid.*, p.88.
189. *Ibid.*, pp.94 - 5.
190. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
191. *Ibid.*, p.127.
192. *Ibid.*, p.134.
193. *Ibid.*, p.148.
194. *Ibid.*, p.152.

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