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# Postmodernism

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That postmodernism is indefinable is a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning.

The term "postmodernism" first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-François Lyotard. I therefore give Lyotard pride of place in the sections that follow. An economy of selection dictated the choice of other figures for this entry. I have selected only those most commonly cited in discussions of philosophical postmodernism, five French and two Italian, although individually they may resist common affiliation. Ordering them by nationality might duplicate a modernist schema they would question, but there are strong differences among them, and these tend to divide along linguistic and cultural lines. The French, for example, work with concepts developed during the structuralist revolution in Paris in the 1950s and early 1960s, including structuralist readings of Marx and Freud. For this reason they are often called "poststructuralists." They also cite the events of May 1968 as a watershed moment for modern thought and its institutions, especially the universities. The Italians, by contrast, draw upon a tradition of aesthetics and rhetoric including figures such as Giambattista Vico and Benedetto Croce. Their emphasis is strongly historical, and they exhibit no fascination with a revolutionary moment. Instead, they emphasize continuity, narrative, and difference within continuity, rather than counter-strategies and discursive gaps. Neither side, however, suggests that postmodernism is an attack upon modernity or a complete departure from it. Rather, its differences lie within modernity itself, and postmodernism is a continuation of modern thinking in another mode.

Finally, I have included a summary of Habermas's critique of postmodernism, representing the main lines of discussion on both sides of the Atlantic. Habermas

argues that postmodernism contradicts itself through self-reference, and notes that postmodernists presuppose concepts they otherwise seek to undermine, e.g., freedom, subjectivity, or creativity. He sees in this a rhetorical application of strategies employed by the artistic avant-garde of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an avant-garde that is possible only because modernity separates artistic values from science and politics in the first place. On his view, postmodernism is an illicit aestheticization of knowledge and public discourse. Against this, Habermas seeks to rehabilitate modern reason as a system of procedural rules for achieving consensus and agreement among communicating subjects. Insofar as postmodernism introduces aesthetic playfulness and subversion into science and politics, he resists it in the name of a modernity moving toward completion rather than self-transformation.

# 1. Precursors

The philosophical modernism at issue in postmodernism begins with Kant's "Copernican revolution," that is, his assumption that we cannot know things in themselves and that objects of knowledge must conform to our faculties of representation (Kant 1964). Ideas such as God, freedom, immortality, the world, first beginning, and final end have only a regulative function for knowledge, since they cannot find fulfilling instances among objects of experience. With Hegel, the immediacy of the subject-object relation itself is shown to be illusory. As he states in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, "we find that neither the one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*" (Hegel 1977, 59), because subject and object are both instances of a "this" and a "now," neither of which are immediately sensed. So-called immediate perception therefore lacks the certainty of immediacy itself, a certainty that must be deferred to the working out of a complete system of experience. However, later thinkers point out that Hegel's logic pre-supposes concepts, such as identity and negation (see Hegel 1969), which cannot themselves be accepted as immediately given, and which therefore must be accounted for in some other, non-dialectical way.

The later nineteenth century is the age of modernity as an achieved reality, where science and technology, including networks of mass communication and transportation, reshape human perceptions. There is no clear distinction, then, between the natural and the artificial in experience. Indeed, many proponents of

postmodernism challenge the viability of such a distinction *tout court*, seeing in achieved modernism the emergence of a problem the philosophical tradition has repressed. A consequence of achieved modernism is what postmodernists might refer to as de-realization. De-realization affects both the subject and the objects of experience, such that their sense of identity, constancy, and substance is upset or dissolved. Important precursors to this notion are found in Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche. Kierkegaard, for example, describes modern society as a network of relations in which individuals are leveled into an abstract phantom known as "the public" (Kierkegaard 1962, 59). The modern public, in contrast to ancient and medieval communities, is a creation of the press, which is the only instrument capable of holding together the mass of unreal individuals "who never are and never can be united in an actual situation or organization" (Kierkegaard 1962 , 60). In this sense, society has become a realization of abstract thought, held together by an artificial and all-pervasive medium speaking for everyone and for no one. In Marx, on the other hand, we have an analysis of the fetishism of commodities (Marx 1983, 444-461) where objects lose the solidity of their use value and become spectral figures under the aspect of exchange value. Their ghostly nature results from their absorption into a network of social relations, where their values fluctuate independently of their corporeal being. Human subjects themselves experience this de-realization because commodities are products of their labor. Workers paradoxically lose their being in realizing themselves, and this becomes emblematic for those professing a postmodern sensibility.

We also find suggestions of de-realization in Nietzsche, who speaks of being as "the last breath of a vaporizing reality" and remarks upon the dissolution of the distinction between the "real" and the "apparent" world. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he traces the history of this distinction from Plato to his own time, where the "true world" becomes a useless and superfluous idea (Kaufmann (ed.) 1954, 485-86). However, with the notion of the true world, he says, we have also done away with the apparent one. What is left is neither real nor apparent, but something in between, and therefore something akin to the virtual reality of more recent vintage.

The notion of a collapse between the real and the apparent is suggested in Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 1967a), where he presents Greek tragedy as a synthesis of natural art impulses represented by the gods Apollo and Dionysus. Where Apollo is the god of beautiful forms and images, Dionysus is the god of frenzy and intoxication, under whose sway the spell of individuated existence is broken in a moment of undifferentiated oneness with nature. While tragic art is life-affirming in joining these two impulses, logic and science are built upon Apollonian representations that have become frozen and lifeless. Hence, Nietzsche believes only a return of the Dionysian art impulse can save modern society from sterility and nihilism. This interpretation presages postmodern concepts of art and representation, and also anticipates postmodernists' fascination with the prospect of a revolutionary moment auguring a new, anarchic sense of community.

Nietzsche is also a precursor for postmodernism in his genealogical analyses of fundamental concepts, especially what he takes to be the core concept of Western metaphysics, the "I." On Nietzsche's account, the concept of the "I" arises out of a moral imperative to be responsible for our actions. In order to be responsible we must assume that we are the cause of our actions, and this cause must hold over time,

retaining its identity, so that rewards and punishments are accepted as consequences for actions deemed beneficial or detrimental to others (Kaufman (ed.) 1954, 482-83; 1967b, 24-26, 58-60). In this way, the concept of the "I" comes about as a social construction and moral illusion. According to Nietzsche, the moral sense of the "I" as an identical cause is projected onto events in the world, where the identity of things, causes, effects, etc., takes shape in easily communicable representations. Thus logic is born from the demand to adhere to common social norms which shape the human herd into a society of knowing and acting subjects.

For postmodernists, Nietzsche's genealogy of concepts in "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (Nietzsche 1979, 77-97) is also an important reference. In this text, Nietzsche puts forward the hypothesis that scientific concepts are chains of metaphors hardened into accepted truths. On this account, metaphor begins when a nerve stimulus is copied as an image, which is then imitated in sound, giving rise, when repeated, to the word, which becomes a concept when the word is used to designate multiple instances of singular events. Conceptual metaphors are thus lies because they equate unequal things, just as the chain of metaphors moves from one level to another. Hegel's problem with the repetition of the "this" and the "now" is thus expanded to include the repetition of instances across discontinuous gaps between kinds and levels of things.

In close connection with this genealogy, Nietzsche criticizes the historicism of the nineteenth century in the 1874 essay, "On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life" (Nietzsche 1983, 57-123). On Nietzsche's view, the life of an individual and a culture depend upon their ability to repeat an unhistorical moment, a kind of forgetfulness, along with their continuous development through time, and the study of history ought therefore to emphasize how each person or culture attains and repeats this moment. There is no question, then, of reaching a standpoint outside of history or of conceiving past times as stages on the way to the present. Historical repetition is not linear, but each age worthy of its designation repeats the unhistorical moment that is its own present as "new." In this respect, Nietzsche would agree with Charles Baudelaire, who describes modernity as "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent" that is repeated in all ages (Cahoone 2003, 100), and postmodernists read Nietzsche's remarks on the eternal return accordingly.

Nietzsche presents this concept in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974, 273), and in a more developed form in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1954, 269-272). Many have taken the concept to imply an endless, identical repetition of everything in the universe, such that nothing occurs that has not already occurred an infinite number of times before. However, others, including postmodernists, read these passages in conjunction with the notion that history is the repetition of an unhistorical moment, a moment that is always new in each case. In their view, Nietzsche can only mean that the new eternally repeats as new, and therefore recurrence is a matter of difference rather than identity. Furthermore, postmodernists join the concept of eternal return with the loss of the distinction between the real and the apparent world. The distinction itself does not reappear, and what repeats is neither real nor apparent in the traditional sense, but is a phantasm or simulacrum.

Nietzsche is a common interest between postmodern philosophers and Martin Heidegger, whose meditations on art, technology, and the withdrawal of being they

regularly cite and comment upon. Heidegger's contribution to the sense of de-realization of the world stems from oft repeated remarks such as: "Everywhere we are underway amid beings, and yet we no longer know how it stands with being" (Heidegger 2000, 217), and *"precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence"* (Heidegger 1993, 332). Heidegger sees modern technology as the fulfillment of Western metaphysics, which he characterizes as the metaphysics of presence. From the time of the earliest philosophers, but definitively with Plato, says Heidegger, Western thought has conceived of being as the presence of beings, which in the modern world has come to mean the availability of beings for use. In fact, as he writes in *Being and Time*, the presence of beings tends to disappear into the transparency of their usefulness as things ready-to-hand (Heidegger 1962, 95-107). The essence of technology, which he names "the enframing," reduces the being of entities to a calculative order (Heidegger 1993, 311-341). Hence, the mountain is not a mountain but a standing supply of coal, the Rhine is not the Rhine but an engine for hydro-electric energy, and humans are not humans but reserves of manpower. The experience of the modern world, then, is the experience of being's withdrawal in face of the enframing and its sway over beings. However, humans are affected by this withdrawal in moments of anxiety or boredom, and therein lies the way to a possible return of being, which would be tantamount to a repetition of the experience of being opened up by Parmenides and Heraclitus.

Heidegger sees this as the realization of the will to power, another Nietzschean conception, which, conjoined with the eternal return, represents the exhaustion of the metaphysical tradition (Heidegger 1991a, 199-203). For Heidegger, the will to power is the eternal recurrence as becoming, and the permanence of becoming is the terminal moment of the metaphysics of presence. On this reading, becoming is the emerging and passing away of beings within and among other beings instead of an emergence from being. Thus, for Heidegger, Nietzsche marks the end of metaphysical thinking but not a passage beyond it, and therefore Heidegger sees him as the last metaphysician in whom the oblivion of being is complete (Heidegger 1991a, 204-206; 1991b, 199-203). Hope for a passage into non-metaphysical thinking lies rather with Hölderlin, whose verses give voice to signs granted by being in its withdrawal (Heidegger 1994, 115-118). While postmodernists owe much to Heidegger's reflections on the non-presence of being and the de-realization of beings through the technological enframing, they sharply diverge from his reading of Nietzsche.

Many postmodern philosophers find in Heidegger a nostalgia for being they do not share. They prefer, instead, the sense of cheerful forgetting and playful creativity in Nietzsche's eternal return as a repetition of the different and the new. Some have gone so far as to turn the tables on Heidegger, and to read his ruminations on metaphysics as the repetition of an original metaphysical gesture, the gathering of thought to its "proper" essence and vocation (see Derrida 1989). In this gathering, which follows the lineaments of an exclusively Greco-Christian-German tradition, something more original than being is forgotten, and that is the difference and alterity against which, and with which, the tradition composes itself. Prominent authors associated with postmodernism have noted that the forgotten and excluded "other" of the West, including Heidegger, is figured by the Jew (see Lyotard 1990, and Lacoue-Labarthe 1990). In this way, they are able to distinguish their projects from Heidegger's thinking and to critically account for his involvement with National Socialism and his silence about the Holocaust, albeit in terms that do not address these as personal

failings. Those looking for personal condemnations of Heidegger for his actions and his "refusal to accept responsibility" will not find them in postmodernist commentaries. They will, however, find many departures from Heidegger on Nietzsche's philosophical significance (see Derrida 1979), and many instances where Nietzsche's ideas are critically activated against Heidegger and his self-presentation.

## 2. The Postmodern Condition

The term "postmodern" came into the philosophical lexicon with the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (English: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984), where he employs Wittgenstein's model of language games (see Wittgenstein 1953) and concepts taken from speech act theory to account for what he calls a transformation of the game rules for science, art, and literature since the end of the nineteenth century. He describes his text as a combination of two very different language games, that of the philosopher and that of the expert. Where the expert knows what he knows and what he doesn't know, the philosopher knows neither, but poses questions. In light of this ambiguity, Lyotard states that his portrayal of the state of knowledge "makes no claims to being original or even true," and that his hypotheses "should not be accorded predictive value in relation to reality, but strategic value in relation to the questions raised" (Lyotard 1984, 7). The book, then, is as much an experiment in the combination of language games as it is an objective "report."

On Lyotard's account, the computer age has transformed knowledge into information, that is, coded messages within a system of transmission and communication. Analysis of this knowledge calls for a pragmatics of communication insofar as the phrasing of messages, their transmission and reception, must follow rules in order to be accepted by those who judge them. However, as Lyotard points out, the position of judge or legislator is also a position within a language game, and this raises the question of legitimation. As he insists, "there is a strict interlinkage between the kind of language called science and the kind called ethics and politics" (Lyotard 1984, 8), and this interlinkage constitutes the cultural perspective of the West. Science is therefore tightly interwoven with government and administration, especially in the information age, where enormous amounts of capital and large installations are needed for research.

Lyotard points out that while science has sought to distinguish itself from narrative knowledge in the form of tribal wisdom communicated through myths and legends, modern philosophy has sought to provide legitimating narratives for science in the form of "the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth," (Lyotard 1984, xxiii). Science, however, plays the language game of denotation to the exclusion of all others, and in this respect it displaces narrative knowledge, including the meta-narratives of philosophy. This is due, in part, to what Lyotard characterizes as the rapid growth of technologies and techniques in the second half of the twentieth century, where the emphasis of knowledge has shifted from the ends of human action to its means (Lyotard 1984, 37). This has eroded the speculative game of philosophy and set each science free to develop independently of philosophical grounding or systematic organization. "I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward meta-narratives," says Lyotard (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). As a result, new, hybrid disciplines develop without

connection to old epistemic traditions, especially philosophy, and this means science only plays its own game and cannot legitimate others, such as moral prescription.

The compartmentalization of knowledge and the dissolution of epistemic coherence is a concern for researchers and philosophers alike. As Lyotard notes, "Lamenting the 'loss of meaning' in postmodernity boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative" (Lyotard 1984, 26). Indeed, for Lyotard, the de-realization of the world means the disintegration of narrative elements into "clouds" of linguistic combinations and collisions among innumerable, heterogeneous language games. Furthermore, within each game the subject moves from position to position, now as sender, now as addressee, now as referent, and so on. The loss of a continuous meta-narrative therefore breaks the subject into heterogeneous moments of subjectivity that do not cohere into an identity. But as Lyotard points out, while the combinations we experience are not necessarily stable or communicable, we learn to move with a certain nimbleness among them.

Postmodern sensibility does not lament the loss of narrative coherence any more than the loss of being. However, the dissolution of narrative leaves the field of legitimation to a new unifying criterion: the performativity of the knowledge-producing system whose form of capital is information. Performative legitimation means maximizing the flow of information and minimizing static (non-functional moves) in the system, so whatever cannot be communicated as information must be eliminated. The performativity criterion threatens anything not meeting its requirements, such as speculative narratives, with de-legitimation and exclusion. Nevertheless, capital also demands the continual re-invention of the "new" in the form of new language games and new denotative statements, and so, paradoxically, a certain *paralogy* is required by the system itself. In this regard, the modern paradigm of progress as new moves under established rules gives way to the postmodern paradigm of inventing new rules and changing the game.

Inventing new codes and reshaping information is a large part of the production of knowledge, and in its inventive moment science does not adhere to performative efficiency. By the same token, the meta-prescriptives of science, its rules, are themselves objects of invention and experimentation for the sake of producing new statements. In this respect, says Lyotard, the model of knowledge as the progressive development of consensus is outmoded. In fact, attempts to retrieve the model of consensus can only repeat the standard of coherence demanded for functional efficiency, and they will thus lend themselves to the domination of capital. On the other hand, the paralogical inventiveness of science raises the possibility of a new sense of justice, as well as knowledge, as we move among the language games now entangling us.

Lyotard takes up the question of justice in *Just Gaming* (see Lyotard 1985) and *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (see Lyotard 1988), where he combines the model of language games with Kant's division of the faculties (understanding, imagination, reason) and types of judgment (theoretical, practical, aesthetic) in order to explore the problem of justice set out in *The Postmodern Condition*. Without the formal unity of the subject, the faculties are set free to operate on their own. Where Kant insists that reason must assign domains and limits to the other faculties, its dependence upon the unity of the subject for the identity of concepts as laws or rules de-legitimizes its

juridical authority in the postmodern age. Instead, because we are faced with an irreducible plurality of judgments and "phrase regimes," the faculty of judgment itself is brought to the fore. Kant's third *Critique* therefore provides the conceptual materials for Lyotard's analysis, especially the analytic of aesthetic judgment (see Kant 1987)..

As Lyotard argues, aesthetic judgment is the appropriate model for the problem of justice in postmodern experience because we are confronted with a plurality of games and rules without a concept under which to unify them. Judgment must therefore be reflective rather than determining. Furthermore, judgment must be aesthetic insofar as it does not produce denotative knowledge about a determinable state of affairs, but refers to the way our faculties interact with each other as we move from one mode of phrasing to another, i.e. the denotative, the prescriptive, the performative, the political, the cognitive, the artistic, etc. In Kantian terms, this interaction registers as an aesthetic feeling. Where Kant emphasizes the feeling of the beautiful as a harmonious interaction between imagination and understanding, Lyotard stresses the mode in which faculties (imagination and reason,) are in disharmony, i.e. the feeling of the sublime. For Kant, the sublime occurs when our faculties of sensible presentation are overwhelmed by impressions of absolute power and magnitude, and reason is thrown back upon its own power to conceive Ideas (such as the moral law) which surpass the sensible world. For Lyotard, however, the postmodern sublime occurs when we are affected by a multitude of unpresentables without reference to reason as their unifying origin. Justice, then, would not be a definable rule, but an ability to move and judge among rules in their heterogeneity and multiplicity. In this respect, it would be more akin to the production of art than a moral judgment in Kant's sense.

In "What is Postmodernism?," which appears as an appendix to the English edition of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard addresses the importance of avant-garde art in terms of the aesthetic of the sublime. Modern art, he says, is emblematic of a sublime sensibility, that is, a sensibility that *there is* something non-presentable demanding to be put into sensible form and yet overwhelms all attempts to do so. But where modern art presents the unpresentable as a missing content within a beautiful form, as in Marcel Proust, postmodern art, exemplified by James Joyce, puts forward the unpresentable by forgoing beautiful form itself, thus denying what Kant would call the consensus of taste. Furthermore, says Lyotard, a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern, for postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, that is, at the moment it attempts to present the unpresentable, "and this state is constant" (Lyotard 1984, 79). The postmodern, then, is a repetition of the modern as the "new," and this means the ever-new demand for another repetition.

## 3. Genealogy and Subjectivity

The Nietzschean method of genealogy, in its application to modern subjectivity, is another facet of philosophical postmodernism. Michel Foucault's application of genealogy to formative moments in modernity's history and his exhortations to experiment with subjectivity place him within the scope of postmodern discourse. In the 1971 essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault spells out his adaptation of the genealogical method in his historical studies. First and foremost, he says, genealogy "opposes itself to the search for 'origins'" (Foucault 1977, 141). That is,

genealogy studies the accidents and contingencies that converge at crucial moments, giving rise to new epochs, concepts, and institutions. As Foucault remarks: "What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity" (Foucault 1977, 142). In Nietzschean fashion, Foucault exposes history conceived as the origin and development of an identical subject, e.g., "modernity," as a fiction modern discourses invent after the fact. Underlying the fiction of modernity is a sense of temporality that excludes the elements of chance and contingency in play at every moment. In short, linear, progressive history covers up the discontinuities and interruptions that mark points of succession in historical time.

Foucault deploys genealogy to create what he calls a "counter-memory" or "a transformation of history into a totally different form of time" (Foucault 1977, 160). This entails dissolving identity for the subject in history by using the materials and techniques of modern historical research. Just as Nietzsche postulates that the religious will to truth in Christianity results in the destruction of Christianity by science (see Nietzsche 1974, 280-83), Foucault postulates that genealogical research will result in the disintegration of the epistemic subject, as the continuity of the subject is broken up by the gaps and accidents that historical research uncovers. The first example of this research is *Histoire de la folie à l'age classique*, published in 1961, translated in abridged form as *Madness and Civilization*, in 1965. Here, Foucault gives an account of the historical beginnings of modern reason as it comes to define itself against madness in the seventeenth century. His thesis is that the practice of confining the mad is a transformation of the medieval practice of confining lepers in lazar houses. These institutions managed to survive long after the lepers disappeared, and thus an institutional structure of confinement was already in place when the modern concept of madness as a disease took shape. However, while institutions of confinement are held over from a previous time, the practice of confining the mad constitutes a break with the past.

Foucault focuses upon the moment of transition, as modern reason begins to take shape in a confluence of concepts, institutions, and practices, or, as he would say, of knowledge and power. In its nascency, reason is a power that defines itself against an other, an other whose truth and identity is also assigned by reason, thus giving reason the sense of originating from itself. For Foucault, the issue is that madness is not allowed to speak for itself and is at the disposal of a power that dictates the terms of their relationship. As he remarks: "*What is originative is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason's subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point*" (Foucault 1965, x). The truth of reason is found when madness comes to stand in the place of non-reason, when the difference between them is inscribed in their opposition, but is not identical to its dominant side. In other words, the reason that stands in opposition to madness is not identical to the reason that inscribes their difference. The latter would be reason without an opposite, a free-floating power without definite shape. As Foucault suggests, this free-floating mystery might be represented in the ship of fools motif, which, in medieval times, represented madness. Such is the paradoxical structure of historical transformation.

In his later writings, most notably in *The Use of Pleasure* (Foucault 1985), Foucault employs historical research to open possibilities for experimenting with subjectivity,

by showing that subjectivation is a formative power of the self, surpassing the structures of knowledge and power from out of which it emerges. This is a power of thought, which Foucault says is the ability of human beings to problematize the conditions under which they live. For philosophy, this means "the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known" (Foucault 1985, 9). He thus joins Lyotard in promoting creative experimentation as a leading power of thought, a power that surpasses reason, narrowly defined, and without which thought would be inert. In this regard, Foucault stands in league with others who profess a postmodern sensibility in regard to contemporary science, art, and society. We should note, as well, that Foucault's writings are a hybrid of philosophy and historical research, just as Lyotard combines the language games of the expert and the philosopher in *The Postmodern Condition*. This mixing of philosophy with concepts and methods from other disciplines is characteristic of postmodernism in its broadest sense.

## 4. Productive Difference

The concept of difference as a productive mechanism, rather than a negation of identity, is also a hallmark of postmodernism in philosophy. Gilles Deleuze deploys this concept throughout his work, beginning with *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962, English 1983), where he sets Nietzsche against the models of thinking at work in Kant and Hegel. Here, he proposes to think *against* reason in resistance to Kant's assertion of the self-justifying authority of reason alone (Deleuze 1983b, 93). In a phrase echoed by Foucault, he states that the purpose of his critique of reason "is not justification but a different way of feeling: another sensibility" (Deleuze 1983b, 94). Philosophical critique, he declares, is an encounter between thought and what forces it into action: it is a matter of sensibility rather than a tribunal where reason judges itself by its own laws (see Kant 1964, 9). Furthermore, the critique of reason is not a method, but is achieved by "culture" in the Nietzschean sense: training, discipline, inventiveness, and a certain cruelty (see Nietzsche 1967b). Since thought cannot activate itself as *thinking*, Deleuze says it must suffer violence if it is to awaken and move. Art, science, and philosophy deploy such violence insofar as they are transformative and experimental.

Against Hegel, Deleuze asserts that while dialectic is structured by negation and opposition within a posited identity, "difference is the only principle of genesis or production" (Deleuze 1983b, 157). Opposition occurs on the same logical plane, but difference moves across planes and levels, and not only in one direction. Furthermore, where Hegel takes the work of the negative to be dialectic's driving power, Deleuze declares that difference is thinkable only as repetition repeating itself (as in Nietzsche's eternal return), where difference affirms itself in eternally differing *from* itself. Its movement is productive, but without logical opposition, negation, or necessity. Instead, chance and multiplicity are repeated, just as a dice-throw repeats the randomness of the throw along with every number. On the other hand, dialectic cancels out chance and affirms the movement of the negative as a working out of identity, as in the *Science of Logic* where being in its immediacy is posited as equal only to itself (Hegel 1969, 82). For Deleuze, however, sensibility introduces an aleatory moment into thought's development, making accidentality and contingency conditions for thinking. These conditions upset logical identity and opposition, and place the limit of thinking beyond any dialectical system.

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968, English 1994), Deleuze develops his project in multiple directions. His work, he says, stems from the convergence of two lines of research: the concept of difference without negation, and the concept of repetition, in which physical and mechanical repetitions are masks for a hidden differential that is disguised and displaced. His major focus is a thoroughgoing critique of representational thinking, including identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance (Deleuze 1994, 132). For Deleuze, "appearances of" are not representations, but sensory intensities free of subjective or objective identities (Deleuze 1994, 144). Without these identities, appearances are simulacra of an non-apparent differential he calls the "dark precursor" or "the in-itself of difference" (Deleuze 1994, 119). This differential is the non-sensible *being* of the sensible, a being not identical to the sensible, or to itself, but irreducibly problematic insofar as it forces us to encounter the sensible as "given."

Furthermore, any move against representational thinking impinges upon the identity of the subject. Where Kant founds the representational unity of space and time upon the formal unity of consciousness (Kant 1964, 135-137), difference re-distributes intuitions of past, present, and future, fracturing consciousness into multiple states not predicable of a single subject. Intensive qualities are individuating by themselves, says Deleuze, and individuality is not characteristic of a self or an ego, but of a differential forever dividing itself and changing its configuration (Deleuze 1994, 246, 254, 257). In Nietzschean fashion, the "I" refers not to the unity of consciousness, but to a multitude of simulacra without an identical subject *for whom* this multitude appears. Instead, subjects arise and multiply as "effects" of the intensive qualities saturating space and time. This leads Deleuze to postulate multiple faculties for subjectivity, which are correlates of the sensible insofar as it gives rise to feeling, thought, and action. "Each faculty, including thought, has only involuntary adventures," he says, and "involuntary operation remains embedded in the empirical" (Deleuze 1994, 145). Subjectively, the paradox of the differential breaks up the faculties' common function and places them before their own limits: thought before the unthinkable, memory before the immemorial, sensibility before the imperceptible, etc. (Deleuze 1994, 227). This fracturing and multiplying of the subject, he notes, leads to the realization that "schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought" (Deleuze 1994, 148), thus expanding the term into a philosophical concept, beyond its clinical application.

The dissolution of the subject and its implications for society is the theme of *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which Deleuze published with Félix Guattari in 1972 (English 1983). The book, in large part, is written against an established intellectual orthodoxy of the political Left in France during the 1950s and 1960s, an orthodoxy consisting of Marx, Freud, and structuralist concepts applied to them by Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan. Deleuze and Guattari argue that this mixture is still limited by representational thinking, including concepts of production based upon lack, and concepts of alienation based upon identity and negation. Furthermore, the Oedipus concept in psychoanalysis, they say, institutes a theater of desire in which the psyche is embedded in a family drama closed off from the extra-familial and extra-psychic forces at work in society. They characterize these forces as "desiring machines" whose function is to connect, disconnect, and reconnect with one another without meaning or intention.

The authors portray society as a series of "territorializations" or inscriptions upon the "body without organs,"or the free-flowing matter of intensive qualities filling space in their varying degrees. The first inscriptions are relations of kinship and filiation structuring primitive societies, often involving the marking and scarring of human bodies. As an interruption and encoding of "flows," the primitive inscriptions constitute a nexus of desiring machines, both technical and social, whose elements are humans and their organs. The full body of society is the sacred earth, which appropriates to itself all social products as their natural or divine precondition, and to whom all members of society are bound by direct filiation (Deleuze 1983b, 141-42). These first inscriptions are then de-territorialized and re-coded by the "despotic machine," establishing new relations of alliance and filiation through the body of the ruler or emperor, who alone stands in direct filiation to the deity (Deleuze 1983b, 192) and who institutes the mechanism of the state upon pre-existing social arrangements. Finally, capitalism de-territorializes the inscriptions of the despotic machine and re-codes all relations of alliance and filiation into flows of money (Deleuze 1983b, 224-27). The organs of society and the state are appropriated into the functioning of capital, and humans become secondary to the filiation of money with itself.

Deleuze and Guattari see in the capitalist money system "an axiomatic of abstract quantities that keeps moving further and further in the direction of the deterritorialization of the socius" (Deleuze 1983a, 33), which is to say that capital is inherently schizophrenic. However, because capital also re-territorializes all flows into money, schizophrenia remains capitalism's external limit. Nevertheless, it is precisely that limit against which thinking can subject capitalism to philosophical critique. Psychoanalysis, they say, is part of the reign of capital because it re-territorializes the subject as "private" and "individual," instituting psychic identity through images of the Oedipal family. However, the Oedipal triangle is merely a representational simulacrum of kinship and filiation, re-coded within a system of debt and payment. In this system, they insist, flows of desire have become mere representations of desire, cut off from the body without organs and the extra-familial mechanisms of society. A radical critique of capital cannot therefore be accomplished by psychoanalysis, but requires a *schizoanalysis* "to overturn the theater of representation into the order of desiring-production" (Deleuze 1983b, 271). Here, the authors see a revolutionary potential in modern art and science, where, in bringing about the "new," they circulate de-coded and de-territorialized flows within society without automatically re-coding them into money (Deleuze 1983a, 379). In this revolutionary aspect, *Anti-Oedipus* reads as a statement of the desire that took to the streets of Paris in May of 1968, and which continues, even now, to make itself felt in intellectual life.

# 5. Deconstruction

The term "deconstruction," like "postmodernism," has taken on many meanings in the popular imagination. However, in philosophy, it signifies certain strategies for reading and writing texts. The term was introduced into philosophical literature in 1967, with the publication of three texts by Jacques Derrida: *Of Grammatology* (English 1974), *Writing and Difference* (English 1978), and *Speech and Phenomena* (English 1973). This so-called "publication blitz" immediately established Derrida as a major figure in the new movement in philosophy and the human sciences centered in Paris, and brought the idiom "deconstruction" into its vocabulary. Derrida and deconstruction

are routinely associated with postmodernism, although like Deleuze and Foucault, he does not use the term and would resist affiliation with "-isms" of any sort. Of the three books from 1967, *Of Grammatology* is the more comprehensive in laying out the background for deconstruction as a way of reading modern theories of language, especially structuralism, and Heidegger's meditations on the non-presence of being. It also sets out Derrida's difference with Heidegger over Nietzsche. Where Heidegger places Nietzsche within the metaphysics of presence, Derrida insists that "reading, and therefore writing, the text were for Nietzsche 'originary' operations," (Derrida 1974, 19), and this puts him at the closure of metaphysics (not the end), a closure that liberates writing from the traditional logos, which takes writing to be a sign (a visible mark) for another sign (speech), whose "signified" is a fully present meaning.

This closure has emerged, says Derrida, with the latest developments in linguistics, the human sciences, mathematics, and cybernetics, where the written mark or signifier is purely technical, that is, a matter of function rather than meaning. Precisely the liberation of function over meaning indicates that the epoch of what Heidegger calls the metaphysics of presence has come to closure, although this closure does not mean its termination. Just as in the essay "On the Question of Being" (Heidegger 1998, 291-322) Heidegger sees fit to cross out the word "being," leaving it visible, nevertheless, under the mark, Derrida takes the closure of metaphysics to be its "erasure," where it does not entirely disappear, but remains inscribed as one side of a difference, and where the mark of deletion is itself a trace of the difference that joins and separates this mark and what it crosses out. Derrida calls this joining and separating of signs *différance* (Derrida 1974, 23), a device that can only be read and not heard when *différance* and *différence* are pronounced in French. The "a" is a written mark that differentiates independently of the voice, the privileged medium of metaphysics. In this sense, *différance* as the spacing of difference, as archi-writing, would be the *gram* of grammatology. However, as Derrida remarks: "There cannot be a science of difference itself in its operation, as it is impossible to have a science of the origin of presence itself, that is to say of a certain non-origin" (Derrida 1974, 63). Instead, there is only the marking of the trace of difference, that is, deconstruction.

Because at its functional level all language is a system of differences, says Derrida, all language, even when spoken, is writing, and this truth is suppressed when meaning is taken as an origin, present and complete unto itself. Texts that take meaning or being as their theme are therefore particularly susceptible to deconstruction, as are all other texts insofar as they are conjoined with these. For Derrida, written marks or signifiers do not arrange themselves within natural limits, but form chains of signification that radiate in all directions. As Derrida famously remarks, "there is no outside-text" (Derrida 1974, 158), that is, the text includes the difference between any "inside" or "outside." A text, then, is not a book, and does not, strictly speaking, have an author. On the contrary, the name of the author is a signifier linked with others, and there is no master signifier (such as the phallus in Lacan) present or even absent in a text. This goes for the term *"différance"* as well, which can only serve as a supplement for the productive spacing between signs. Therefore, Derrida insists that "*différance* is literally neither a word nor a concept" (Derrida 1982, 3). Instead, it can only be marked as a wandering play of differences that is both a spacing of signifiers in relation to one another and a deferral of meaning or presence when they are read.

How, then, can *différance* be characterized? Derrida refuses to answer questions as to "who" or "what" differs, because to do so would suggest there is a proper name for difference instead of endless supplements, of which "*différance*" is but one. Structurally, this supplemental displacement functions just as, for Heidegger, all names for being reduce being to the presence of beings, thus ignoring the "ontological difference" between them. However, Derrida takes the ontological difference as one difference among others, as a product of what the idiom "*différance*" supplements. As he remarks: "*différance*, in a certain and very strange way, (is) 'older' than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being" (Derrida 1982, 22). Deconstruction, then, traces the repetitions of the supplement. It is not so much a theory about texts as a practice of reading and transforming texts, where tracing the movements of *différance* produces other texts interwoven with the first. While there is a certain arbitrariness in the play of differences that result, it is not the arbitrariness of a reader getting the text to mean whatever he or she wants. It is a question of function rather than meaning, if meaning is understood as a terminal presence, and the signifying connections traced in deconstruction are first offered by the text itself. A deconstructive reading, then, does not assert or impose meaning, but marks out places where the function of the text works against its apparent meaning, or against the history of its interpretation.

# 6. Hyperreality

Hyperreality is closely related to the concept of the simulacrum: a copy or image without reference to an original. In postmodernism, hyperreality is the result of the technological mediation of experience, where what passes for reality is a network of images and signs without an external referent, such that what is represented is representation itself. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) (English 1993), Jean Baudrillard uses Lacan's concepts of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real to develop this concept while attacking orthodoxies of the political Left, beginning with the assumed reality of power, production, desire, society, and political legitimacy. Baudrillard argues that all of these realities have become simulations, that is, *signs* without any referent, because the real and the imaginary have been absorbed into the symbolic.

Baudrillard presents hyperreality as the terminal stage of simulation, where a sign or image has no relation to any reality whatsoever, but is "its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 1994, 6). The real, he says, has become an operational effect of symbolic processes, just as images are technologically generated and coded before we actually perceive them. This means technological mediation has usurped the productive role of the Kantian subject, the locus of an original synthesis of concepts and intuitions, as well as the Marxian worker, the producer of capital though labor, and the Freudian unconscious, the mechanism of repression and desire. "From now on," says Baudrillard, "signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real" (Baudrillard 1993, 7), so production now means signs producing other signs. The system of symbolic exchange is therefore no longer real but "hyperreal." Where the real is "*that of which it is possible to provide an equivalent reproduction*," the hyperreal, says Baudrillard, is "*that which is always already reproduced*" (Baudrillard 1993, 73). The hyperreal is a system of simulation simulating itself.

The lesson Baudrillard draws from the events of May 1968 is that the student movement was provoked by the realization that "*we were no longer productive*" (Baudrillard 1993, 29), and that direct opposition within the system of communication and exchange only reproduces the mechanisms of the system itself. Strategically, he says, capital can only be defeated by introducing something inexchangeable into the symbolic order, that is, something having the irreversible function of natural death, which the symbolic order excludes and renders invisible. The system, he points out, simulates natural death with fascinating images of violent death and catastrophe, where death is the result of artificial processes and "accidents." But, as Baudrillard remarks: "Only the death-function cannot be programmed and localized" (Baudrillard 1993, 126), and by this he means death as the simple and irreversible finality of life. Therefore he calls for the development of "fatal strategies" to make the system suffer reversal and collapse.

Because these strategies must be carried out within the symbolic order, they are matters of rhetoric and art, or a hybrid of both. They also function as gifts or sacrifices, for which the system has no counter-move or equivalence. Baudrillard finds a prime example of this strategy with graffiti artists who experiment with symbolic markings and codes in order to suggest communication while blocking it, and who sign their inscriptions with pseudonyms instead of recognizable names. "They are seeking not to escape the combinatory in order to regain an identity," says Baudrillard, "but to turn indeterminacy against the system, to turn *indeterminacy* into *extermination*" (Baudrillard 1993, 78). Some of his own remarks, such as "I have nothing to do with postmodernism," have, no doubt, the same strategic intent. To the extent that "postmodernism" has become a sign exchangeable for other signs, he would indeed want nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, his concepts of simulation and hyperreality, and his call for strategic experimentation with signs and codes, bring him into close proximity with figures such as Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida.

# 7. Postmodern Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, the science of textual interpretation, also plays a role in postmodern philosophy. Unlike deconstruction, which focuses upon the functional structures of a text, hermeneutics seeks to arrive at an agreement or consensus as to what the text means, or is about. Gianni Vattimo formulates a postmodern hermeneutics in *The End of Modernity* (English 1988), where he distinguishes himself from his Parisian counterparts by posing the question of post-modernity as a matter for ontological hermeneutics. Instead of calling for experimentation with counter-strategies and functional structures, he sees the heterogeneity and diversity in our experience of the world as a hermeneutical problem to be solved by developing a sense continuity between the present and the past. This continuity is to be a unity of meaning rather than the repetition of a functional structure, and the meaning is ontological. In this respect, Vattimo's project is an extension of Heidegger's inquiries into the meaning of being. However, where Heidegger situates Nietzsche within the limits of metaphysics, Vattimo joins Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics with Nietzsche's attempt to think beyond nihilism and historicism with his concept of eternal return. The result, says Vattimo, is a certain distortion of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, allowing Heidegger and Nietzsche to be interpreted through one another (Vattimo 1988, 176). This is a significant point of difference between Vattimo and the French

postmodernists, who read Nietzsche against Heidegger, and prefer Nietzsche's textual strategies over Heidegger's pursuit of the meaning of being.

On Vattimo's account, Nietzsche and Heidegger can be brought together under the common theme of overcoming. Where Nietzsche announces the overcoming of nihilism through the active nihilism of the eternal return, Heidegger proposes to overcome metaphysics through a non-metaphysical experience of being. In both cases, he argues, what is to be overcome is modernity, characterized by the image that philosophy and science are progressive developments in which thought and knowledge increasingly appropriate their own origins and foundations. Overcoming modernity, however, cannot mean progressing into a new historical phase. As Vattimo observes: "Both philosophers find themselves obliged, on the one hand, to take up a critical distance from Western thought insofar as it is foundational; on the other hand, however, they find themselves unable to criticize Western thought in the name of another, and truer, foundation" (Vattimo 1988, 2). Overcoming modernity must therefore mean a *Verwindung*, in the sense of twisting or distorting modernity itself, rather than an *Überwindung* or progression beyond it.

While Vattimo takes post-modernity as a new turn in modernity, it entails the dissolution of the category of the new in the historical sense, which means the end of universal history. "While the notion of historicity has become ever more problematic for theory," he says, "at the same time for historiography and its own methodological self-awareness the idea of history as a unitary process is rapidly dissolving" (Vattimo 1988, 6). This does not mean historical change ceases to occur, but that its unitary development is no longer conceivable, so only local histories are possible. The de-historicization of experience has been accelerated by technology, especially television, says Vattimo, so that "everything tends to flatten out at the level of contemporaneity and simultaneity" (Vattimo 1988, 10). As a result, we no longer experience a strong sense of teleology in worldly events, but, instead, we are confronted with a manifold of differences and partial teleologies that can only be judged aesthetically. The truth of postmodern experience is therefore best realized in art and rhetoric.

The Nietzschean sense of overcoming modernity is "to dissolve modernity through a radicalization of its own innate tendencies," says Vattimo (Vattimo 1988, 166). These include the production of "the new" as a value and the drive for critical overcoming in the sense of appropriating foundations and origins. In this respect, however, Nietzsche shows that modernity results in nihilism: all values, including "truth" and "the new," collapse under critical appropriation. The way out of this collapse is the moment of eternal recurrence, when we affirm the necessity of error in the absence of foundations. Vattimo also finds this new attitude toward modernity in Heidegger's sense of overcoming metaphysics, insofar as he suggests that overcoming the enframing lies with the possibility of a turn within the enframing itself. Such a turn would mean deepening and distorting the technological essence, not destroying it or leaving it behind. Furthermore, this would be the meaning of being, understood as the history of interpretation (as "weak" being) instead of a grounding truth, and the hermeneutics of being would be a distorted historicism. Unlike traditional hermeneutics, Vattimo argues that reconstructing the continuity of contemporary experience cannot be accomplished without unifying art and rhetoric with information from the sciences, and this requires philosophy "to propose a 'rhetorically

persuasive', unified view of the world, which includes in itself traces, residues, or isolated elements of scientific knowledge" (Vattimo 1988, 179). Vattimo's philosophy is therefore the project of a postmodern hermeneutics, in contrast to the Parisian thinkers who do not concern themselves with meaning or history as continuous unities.

# 8. Postmodern Rhetoric and Aesthetics

Rhetoric and aesthetics pertain to the sharing of experience through activities of participation and imitation. In the postmodern sense, such activities involve sharing or participating in differences that have opened between the old and the new, the natural and the artificial, or even between life and death. The leading exponent of this line of postmodern thought is Mario Perniola. Like Vattimo, Perniola insists that postmodern philosophy must not break with the legacies of modernity in science and politics. As he says in *Enigmas*, "the relationship between thought and reality that the Enlightenment, idealism, and Marxism have embodied must not be broken" (Perniola 1995, 43). However, he does not base this continuity upon an internal essence, spirit, or meaning, but upon the continuing effects of modernity in the world. One such effect, visible in art and in the relation between art and society, is the collapse of the past and future into the present, which he characterizes as "Egyptian" or "baroque" in nature. This temporal effect is accomplished through the collapse of the difference between humans and things, where "humans are becoming more similar to things, and equally, the inorganic world, thanks to electronic technology, seems to be taking over the human role in the perception of events" (Perniola 1995, *viii*). This amounts to a kind of "Egyptianism," as described by Hegel in his *Aesthetics* (see Hegel 1975, 347-361), where the spiritual and the natural are mixed to such a degree that they cannot be separated, as, for example, in the figure of the Sphinx. However, in the postmodern world the inorganic is not natural, but already artificial, insofar as our perceptions are mediated by technological operations.

Likewise, says Perniola, art collections in modern museums produce a "baroque effect," where "The field that is opened up by a collection is not that of cultivated public opinion, nor of social participation, but a space that attracts precisely because it cannot be controlled or possessed" (Perniola 1995, 87). That is, in the collection, art is removed from its natural or historical context and creates a new sense of space and time, not reducible to linear history or any sense of origin. The collection, then, is emblematic of postmodern society, a moment of its "truth." Furthermore, Perniola insists that baroque sensibility is characteristic of Italian society and culture in general. "The very idea of truth as something essentially naked," he says, "is at loggerheads with the Baroque idea, so firmly rooted in Italy, that truth is something essentially clothed" (Perniola 1995, 145). This corresponds to a sensibility that is intermediate between internal feelings and external things. "The Italian enigma," he says, "lies in the fact that the human component is equipped with an external emotionality that does not belong to him or her intimately, but in which they nonetheless participate" (Perniola 1995, 145). To account for this enigmatic experience, the philosopher must become "the intermediary, the passage, the transit to something different and foreign" (Perniola 1995, 40). Hence, philosophical reading and writing are not activities of an identical subject, but processes of mediation and indeterminacy between self and other, and philosophical narrative is an overcoming of their differences.

These differences cannot be overcome, in Hegelian fashion, by canceling them under a higher-order synthesis, but must be eroded or defaced in the course of traversing them. In *Ritual Thinking*, Perniola illustrates this process through the concepts of transit, the simulacrum, and ritual without myth. Transit derives from a sense of the simultaneity of the present, where we are suspended in a state of temporariness and indeterminacy, and move "from the same to the same"; the simulacrum is the result of an endless mimesis in which there are only copies of copies without reference to an original; and ritual without myth is the repetition of patterns of action having no connection to the inner life of a subject or of society. Thus Perniola sees social and political interaction as repetitive patterns of action having no inherent meaning but constituting, nonetheless, an intermediary realm where oppositions, particularly life and death, are overcome in a to-and-fro movement within their space of difference.

To illustrate these concepts Perniola refers to practices associated with Romanism, particularly Roman religion. "Ritual without myth," he says, "is the very essence of Romanism" (Perniola 2001, 81). It is a passage between life and death via their mutual simulation, for example, in the labyrinthine movements of the ritual known as the *troiae lusus*. These movements, he says, mediate between life and death by reversing their pattern of natural succession, and mediate their difference through actions having no intrinsic meaning. Unlike Vattimo's project of constructing meaning to overcome historical differences, Perniola's concept of transit into the space of difference is one of "art" in the sense of artifice or technique, and is not aimed at a synthesis or unification of opposing elements. In this respect, Perniola has an affinity with the French postmodernists, who emphasize functional repetition over the creation of meaning. However, as Perniola's notion of ritual without myth illustrates, the functional repetitions of social interaction and technology do not disseminate differences, but efface them. This is clear in his account of the ritualized passage between life and death, as compared with Baudrillard, who calls for strategies introducing the irreversibility of death into the system of symbolic exchange. In this respect, Perniola's postmodernism is strongly aesthetic, and remains, with Vattimo, in the aesthetic and historical dimensions of experience.

# 9. Habermas's Critique

The most prominent and comprehensive critic of philosophical postmodernism is Jürgen Habermas. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Habermas 1987), he confronts postmodernism at the level of society and "communicative action." He does not defend the concept of the subject, conceived as consciousness or an autonomous self, against postmodernists' attacks, but defends argumentative reason in inter-subjective communication against their experimental, avant-garde strategies. For example, he claims that Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault commit a performative contradiction in their critiques of modernism by employing concepts and methods that only modern reason can provide. He criticizes Nietzsche's Dionysianism as a compensatory gesture toward the loss of unity in Western culture that, in pre-modern times, was provided by religion. Nietzsche's sense of a new Dionysus in modern art, moreover, is based upon an aesthetic modernism in which art acquires its experimental power by separating itself from the values of science and morality, a separation accomplished by the modern Enlightenment, resulting in the loss of organic unity Nietzsche seeks to restore via art itself (see Habermas 1987, 81-105). Habermas sees Heidegger and Derrida as heirs to this "Dionysian messianism."

Heidegger, for example, anticipates a new experience of being, which has withdrawn. However, says Habermas, the withdrawal of being is the result of an inverted philosophy of the subject, where Heidegger's destruction of the subject leads to hope for a unity to come, a unity of nothing other than the subject that is now missing (Habermas 1987, 160). Derrida, he says, develops the notion of *différance* or "archi-writing" in similar fashion: here, we see the god Dionysus revealing himself once again in his absence, as meaning infinitely deferred (Habermas 1987, 180-81).

Habermas also criticizes Derrida for leveling the distinction between philosophy and literature in a textualism that brings logic and argumentative reason into the domain of rhetoric. In this way, he says, Derrida hopes to avoid the logical problem of self-reference in his critique of reason. However, as Habermas remarks: "Whoever transposes the radical critique of reason into the domain of rhetoric in order to blunt the paradox of self-referentiality, also dulls the sword of the critique of reason itself" (Habermas 1987, 210). In similar fashion, he criticizes Foucault for not subjecting his own genealogical method to genealogical unmasking, which would reveal Foucault's re-installation of a modern subject able to critically gaze at its own history. Thus, he says, "Foucault cannot adequately deal with the persistent problems that come up in connection with an interpretive approach to the object domain, a self-referential denial of universal validity claims, and a normative justification of critique" (Habermas 1987, 286).

Habermas's critique of postmodernism on the basis of performative contradiction and the paradox of self-reference sets the tone and the terms for much of the critical debate now under way. While postmodernists have rejected these criticisms, or responded to them with rhetorical counter-strategies. Lyotard, for example, rejects the notion that intersubjective communication implies a set of rules already agreed upon, and that universal consensus is the ultimate goal of discourse (see Lyotard 1984, 65-66). That postmodernists openly respond to Habermas is due to the fact that he takes postmodernism seriously and does not, like other critics, reject it as mere nonsense. Indeed, that he is able to read postmodernist texts closely and discursively testifies to their intelligibility. He also agrees with the postmodernists that the focus of debate should be upon modernity as it is realized in social practices and institutions, rather than upon theories of cognition or formal linguistics as autonomous domains. In this respect, Habermas's concern with inter-subjective communication helps clarify the basis upon which the modernist-postmodernist debates continue to play out.

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