# Round 1—Aff vs Wake LW

## 1AC

### 1ac ethics

#### 9/11 presented America with a choice—in our moment of greatest vulnerability, the country could choose to strike back at its newfound enemy or instead take that moment to reflect on vulnerability and the global nature of our community

**Butler 9**—not Judy

(Judith, “Gender is Extramoral”, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2009/butler160509.html>, dml)

J.B.: When the USA was attacked in September 2001, the government set out to quickly construct an idea of the country as sovereign, impermeable, invulnerable, because it was unacceptable that its frontiers had been breached. The system involved creating very powerful images, normally of men: men of the government, men fighting to save people inside the World Trade Center. There was a kind of resurgence of the idea of a strong, efficacious, militarised man, a man whose body will never be destroyed nor affected by anyone, who will be pure action and pure aggression. A certain idea of the subject was produced: who is the American subject? Who is America? A very aggressive affirmation was made about masculine sovereignty, a certain idea of what the body is -- of the masculine body, a certain idea of masculine subjectivity, which also amounts to a national self-comprehension -- and then naturally they annihilated the sovereignty of Iraq, of Afghanistan, they resorted to Guantanamo because it is not under Cuban sovereignty and is also outside the borders of US sovereignty, in such a way that they could do what they wanted. They play with sovereignty; they take a certain kind of sovereignty as a prerogative, but do not respect sovereignty as a principle. Another possibility would have been to say: we have been attacked, we accept the fact that we live in a global community, our frontiers are porous, people can cross them, we have to decide how we want to live this. Instead of defending ourselves, what we need are new international agreements and also to show the USA as being committed to international law, because we should remember that since 2001, and even before, Bush has refused to sign almost any international treaties: the anti-missile treaty, that establishing the International Court; anything to do with international cooperation, including the UN. He exercised his sovereignty over them and against them. Perhaps because international cooperation is an ethos: we are dependent on a global world, we are all vulnerable, there can be accusations and agreements. How do we live together? What kind of agreements do we accept? But it is the nation-states that establish agreements between themselves and the real question is that of the stateless peoples: insurgent populations, people who live within political organisations that are not permitted to participate in international agreements. What kind of connection can be established here? This implies another kind of politics, a global politics, one that does not restrict itself to the nation-states. I am referring to other ways of thinking our vulnerability as nations, our limits as nations, and that include the conception of the subject as being fundamentally dependent or fundamentally social, as well as the forms of political organisation that seek to structure global politics in such a way as to gain recognition of our interdependence.

#### The government made the wrong choice. Instead of opening up space for dissident questioning of democratic accountability, the executive branch asserted its hegemony over all in its ability to combat the nebulous enemy of terrorism—this creates a state of permanent war

**Rowan 5**—University of London Department of Geography, look at the title of this article

(Rory, “Imagine a Boot Stamping on Your Face Indeﬁnitely: The ‘War On Terror’ and Executive Hegemony”, Anamesa vol 3 issue 1, spring 2005, dml)

“Terror” is chosen as an enemy because it signiﬁes a potentially limitless threat that ﬁ rst necessitates an increased centralization of state power in the hands of the executive, and then guarantees not only the potentially limitless continuation, but also the extension of these executive powers, in order to respond to the threat. The lack of clear signiﬁ cation inherent in “terror” leaves the enemy/ object of war potentially limitless in number and character. An enemy that is of uncertain nature and not identiﬁ able by state borders means that any war waged against it will be of uncertain duration. The lack of a precise object of war leaves the war without clear objectives. It cannot be known how or when “terror” is defeated. Just as “terror” is of an uncertain nature, so the war waged against it will be of uncertain duration. Judith Butler argues that during the “war on terror” “state power restructures temporality itself,” as “terror” is not a historically limited problem over which a decisive victory can be scored.17 If the “war on terror” is a mechanism to guarantee an executive hegemony, then this hegemony remains of an uncertain nature and duration. It may be foolish to think it has already been fully realized. The undeﬁ ned duration of the “war on terror” gives a crucial insight into its nature, and its relation to the executive hegemony it justiﬁ es. In its lack of clear objectives, the “war on terror” threatens to continue without end. This makes permanent the executive hegemony it supposedly calls for. It could be seen as an attempt to effect some sort of historical closure, as if the “war on terror” were itself the future.18 The “war on terror” becomes an age. In the initial months after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the phrase “war on terror” appeared alongside “age of terror” in ofﬁ cial discourse. Perhaps “age of terror” would have been a more ﬁ tting way to describe current events. The discourse of a “war on terror” acts as pre-emptive historiography, which according to Zizek ensures that “the loop between present and future is closed.”19 The logic of the Bush Doctrine, the logic of pre-emptive strikes, presupposes “that we can treat the future as something that in a way, has already taken place.”20 The “war on terror” thus displays a logic that uses the threat of future terrorist attacks to justify the extension of the current hegemonic order. This logic presupposes that any measures taken by the executive are always already justiﬁ ed by threats that may be possible in the future. 21 The “war on terror” thus serves to ensure the extension of an executive hegemony for an uncertain duration. This reveals the true nature of the “war” itself. It produces a new era only to regulate it. Through the “war on terror,” the executive positions itself as the regulating body of a new order deﬁ ned by the executive’s hegemony. The “war on terror” is used ﬁ rst to justify, and then to regulate, the executive hegemony. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, in a situation in which a war with no foreseeable end is initiated, war is not a “threat to the existing structure of power, not a destabilizing force, but rather, on the contrary, an active mechanism that constantly creates and reinforces the present global order.”22 War is established not as an exception but as the normalizing force of the new era. The choice of “terror” as the enemy is crucial to establishing war’s regulative role. The “war on terror” allows the “metaphoric universalization of the signiﬁ er ‘terror,’” writes Zizek; “it is elevated to become the hidden point of equivalence between all social ills.”23 It is this logic of equivalence that gives the “war on terror” a hegemonic function. The extension of the name “terror” guarantees the continuation of this new order, producing ever more objects in need of regulation, thus guaranteeing the new executive hegemony. Any opposition to the hegemony of the executive can be equated with terror either directly or through metonymic suggestion. The aim of this process is to dampen any opposition, so that the executive’s hegemony can be maintained and further extended. The executive gives itself the power to accuse any number of suspects of being involved in “terrorist” activities. Any form of opposition movement with an alternative vision of state order can be outlawed by the decision of the executive itself. The opposition movements that are criminalized in this way ﬁ nd themselves delegitimized and ultimately depoliticized. The executive has the power to decide who or what can legitimately enter the ﬁ eld of the political, thus completely encompassing the political in its hegemony. The new judicial powers of the executive with regard to suspected “terrorists” become a political tool for excluding opposition from legitimacy on the basis that they are political enemies of the state and pose a “concrete” threat to security. Opposition can therefore be criminalized on the grounds of being political, but paradoxically be de-politicized in the same gesture. The “war on terror” is so bound up with the regulation of the executive hegemony it initiated that the distinction between war and policing is blurred. The criminalizing of political opposition allows it to become the depoliticized object of regulation. Political opposition is reduced to the status of a “social ill” that is in need of state regulation/ordering through police operations. The exercise of legitimate opposition is rhetorically elevated to the level of a threat to public security. This is true not only of domestic affairs but also on a global level where nation-states such as Afghanistan and Iraq become the objects of a regulative policing/war.24 Here the phrases “rogue state” or “failed state” de-legitimize states that will soon be the objects of war, reducing them to global “ills.” Indeed the “war on terror” is ﬁ rmly rooted in a U.S. tradition of government rhetorically invoking war in programs tackling social problems such as “war on poverty,” “war on crime,” “war on drugs,” and so on. “War” in this case is rhetorically used to justify changes made in the allocation of state powers, to the executive from other branches. This is portrayed as an urgent security requirement, yet is also meant to evoke a sense of underlying security typical of peacetime “wars” on social ills. As Hardt and Negri argue, “the metaphorical discourse of war is invoked as a strategic political maneuver in order to achieve the total mobilization of social forces for a united purpose typical of a war effort.”25 This is a well-worn formula: producing an external enemy to bring internal unity, or to justify measures enforcing it. What is novel about the “war on terror” is that the enemy is so abstract that making any distinction between internal and external becomes difﬁ cult, due to the ambiguity of the signiﬁ er terror. This ambiguity makes it ever harder to locate the limits of the new hegemony. Those obstacles painted both as threats to security that require war as a response, and as “social ills” in need of state regulation are no longer conﬁ ned merely to the domestic arena. The real aim of the “war on terror,” the extension of the executive hegemony at both domestic and global levels, may have yet to reach its fullest extent. This makes the public critique of the “war on terror” and the demand for the accountability of the executive urgent priorities for democracy both within and outside the United States.

#### Things could be different. We present a counter-narrative—one that we cannot, can never, fully understand but can still strive after. We present the story of Harry Ramos—who demonstrates that even when a jetliner crashes into our lives, we can and indeed must act ethically.

**Jovanovic and Wood 4 – \***Communications/Rhetoric Professors @ Denver University and University of North Carolina respectively

(Spoma and Roy, “Speaking from the Bedrock of Ethics,” Philosophy and Rhetoric Vol 37 no 4, 2004, 317-334, dml)

On September 11, 2001, terrorism touched down in the United States. While millions of us were immobilized and left speechless by what we witnessed live on television, thousands of others in the World Trade Center towers, at the Pentagon, and on three airplanes had no such luxury. They were confronted with a reality few could have ever imagined. One man inside World Trade Center One demonstrates that ethics is a lived response of the type Levinas describes. He was not alone, however. Without advance preparation or rules of conduct to follow, the men and women trapped by evil deeds remind us that ethics is a response to the call of the other. Harry Ramos, forty-six, had just returned to work at his office on the eighty-seventh floor after a week’s absence. Within minutes, the building was shaking violently; he braced himself in a doorway for stability. As light fixtures plummeted to the floor and smoke filled the office, Harry had no idea that a jetliner had just crashed into his building, floors above him. However, he knew enough to know that the survival of his office staff was at stake. Harry, the head trader for a small investment bank, the May Davis Group, was in the throes of pandemonium. Yet, he had to act. With the company.s chief financial officer, Harry marshaled the twelve employees in the office to the stairwell to begin the descent down eighty-seven floors, one step at a time. Harry stationed himself at the end of the line, making sure no one was left behind. .Nine floors down, the stairwell ended. Emerging into a hallway to look for the next flight of stairs, the group saw wires dangling from the cracked ceilings. Sparks popped. Small fires burned everywhere. Office workers were milling in confusion. The smoke was thickening . (Walsh 2001, 1). The scene was not promising. As the group continued down, Harry convinced the stragglers to keep moving. Along the way, Harry also stopped to help strangers make their way into the stairwell. At the fifty-third floor, Harry found Victor who, because of his large size or perhaps his profound fear, found it difficult to move. Together with another May Davis employee, they made it to the thirty-ninth floor by way of stairs and a short elevator ride. At one point, Harry let go of Victor, to walk ahead and survey the situation. .Victor cried out in fear. "Harry, please help," he begged. "Don't worry, we’re not leaving you," Mr. Ramos said. (Walsh 2001, 1). Stopping to rest, the building sadistically shook again, and so the trio picked themselves up and walked down further, to the thirty-sixth floor. There, an exhausted Victor proclaimed his energy was spent, that his legs could not carry his frame another step. A firefighter rushing by yelled at Harry to leave Victor behind and run. But Harry did not move, assuring the large stranger, "Victor, don’t worry. I'm with you." Moments later, on television sets tuned in to the scene from all over the world, we saw the avalanche of cement and glass crush to the ground as the World Trade Center towers came tumbling down. As the buildings col lapsed, so did thousands of lives. What the ordinary men and women like Harry Ramos left behind was not only a memory of good deeds, but also a glimpse into ethics and communication that compels us to answer the call of the other. Harry Ramos demonstrates for us the detectable evidence of the saying in everyday discourse. In Harry's response, we begin to recognize something compelling that makes possible the saying, what Levinas refers to as .the trace.. The trace signifies presence in absence, like how we feel someone's company even after they have left the room or when the amputee continues to experience the ache of a phantom limb. And, there is the trace of God who has "walked the earth" though is no longer directly visible. For Levinas, the trace is the vestige of the infinite. The Levinasian trace is nonphenomenological, signifying without manifesting anything (Peperzak 1997). As such, it resists our attempts to analyze it or identify it conclusively. Yet we continue to search for it in the saying, in the human face, and in responsibility. This quest, says Levinas, is a worthy one, indicative of an ethical life. The trace itself challenges logic and rationality; the trace resists comprehension as it .disturbs the order of the world. (1996b, 62). The difficulty of talking about the trace arises from its "enigmatic, equivocal" features that elude our attempts to name it. Levinas explains, "The infinite then cannot be tracked down like game by a hunter. The trace left by the infinite is not the residue of a presence; its very glow is ambiguous. (1998, 12). The trace, then, is not a sign or a concrete feature but a paradoxical function of sociality (Bergo 1999). The trace is palpable yet not tangible, within our reach yet out of our grasp. David Michael Levin describes Levinas's phenomenology as *tracework,* an obsession-sustained meditation on an admittedly hopeless search for the traces .of primordial responsiveness. . The project is hopeless, but not futile; Levin offers, .since the effort, the attempt itself, carries enormous moral merit. (1998, 349). These are powerful ideas.an ethical subject whose ethics are lodged in a place otherwise than being; an ethic that can be conceived as the condition for dialogue in the saying to another; and the possibility of that saying, overwritten in ontology by the said, coming through still as a trace in discourse .like an unheard question. (Bergo 1999, 155). "Harry, please help me," is surely the call of conscience from one terrified and helpless man to a stranger who befriended him. "Don't worry, we're not leaving you," is just as surely the “here I am.” But the repeat at the end, "Don't worry, I'm with you," turns the "here I am" into a deeply exposed and singular commitment. It is no longer "we" but "I" who will be *with* the man who is not going anywhere in the heart of an inferno.

#### We affirm a search for the infinite in the context of the topic. The role of the ballot is to establish the best ethical orientation towards Otherness—we should reject the logic of control represented by executive war powers and begin as strangers to ourselves.

**Fasching 93** (Darrell, professor of religious studies at the University of South Florida, *The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima: Apocalypse or Utopia* pg 5-7, dml)

The best way to describe the "style" of the theology of culture proposed in these books is to suggest that it is a "decentered" or "alienated theology." Alienated theology is the opposite of apologetic theology. Apologetic theology typically seeks to defend the "truth" and ''superiority" of one's own tradition against the "false," "inferior," and "alien" views of other traditions. Alienated theology, by contrast, is theology done "as if" one were a stranger to one's own narrative traditions, seeing and critiquing one's own traditions from the vantage point of the other's narrative traditions. It is my conviction that alienated theology is the appropriate mode for theology in an emerging world civilization-a civilization tottering in the balance between apocalypse and utopia. There are two ways to enter world history, according to the contemporary author John Dunne: you can be dragged in by way of world war or you can walk in by way of mutual understanding. By the first path, global civilization emerges as a totalitarian project of dominance that risks escalating into a nuclear apocalypse. By the second path, we prevent the first, creating global civilization through an expansion of our understanding of what it means to be human. This occurs when we pass over to an other's religion and culture and come back with new insight into our own. Gandhi is an example, passing over to the Sermon on the Mount and coming back to the Hindu Bhagavad Gita to gain new insight into it as a scripture of nonviolence. Gandhi never seriously considered becoming a Christian but his Hinduism was radically altered by his encounter with Christianity. One could say the same (reversing the directions) for Martin Luther King Jr., who was deeply influenced by Gandhi's understanding of nonviolent resistance in the Gita. When we pass over (whether through travel, friendship, or disciplined study and imagination) we become "strangers in a strange land" as well as strangers to ourselves, seeing ourselves through the eyes of another. Assuming the perspective of a stranger is an occasion for insight and the sharing of insight. Such crosscultural interactions build bridges of understanding and action between persons and cultures that make cooperation possible and conquest unnecessary. "Passing over" short circuits apocalyptic confrontation and inaugurates utopian new beginnings-new beginnings for the "post-modern'' world of the coming third millennium. Gandhi and King are symbols of a possible style for a postmodern alienated theology. To be an alien is to be a stranger. To be alienated is to be a stranger to oneself. We live in a world of ideological conflict in which far too many individuals (whether theists or a-theists) practice a "centered theology" in which they are too sure of who they are and what they must do. Such a world has far too many answers and not nearly enough questions and selfquestioning. A world divided by its answers is headed for an inevitable apocalyptic destiny. However, when we are willing to become strangers to ourselves (or when we unwillingly become so), new possibilities open up where before everything was closed and hopeless. At the heart of my position is the conviction that the *kairos* of our time calls forth the badly neglected ethic of "welcoming the stranger" that underlies the biblical tradition and analogously "welcoming the outcast" that underlies the Buddhist tradition. This care for the stranger and the outcast, I shall argue, provides the critical norm for identifying authentic transcendence as self-transcendence. Centered theologies, whether sacred or secular, theist or a-theist, are ethnocentric theologies that can tolerate the alien or other, if at all, only as a potential candidate for conversion to sameness. Centered theologies are exercises in narcissism that inevitably lead down apocalyptic paths like those that led to Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Why? Because such theologies, whether sacred or "secular," cannot permit there to be others in the world whose way of being might, by sheer contrast, cause self-doubt and self-questioning. When as a student I read Paul Tillich, I found it hard to believe him when he said that the questions were more important than the answers. I was so taken with his answers that I was sure he was just trying to be modest. What really mattered were the answers. Since then, I have come to realize that answers always seem more important and more certain to those who have come by them without wrestling with the questions. I know now that Tillich was quite serious and quite rightthe questions are indeed more important. I have come to find a fullness in the doubts and questions of my life, which I once thought could be found only in the answers. After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, I distrust all final answers-all *final solutions*. Mercifully, doubts and questions have come to be so fulfilling that I find myself suspicious of answers, not because they are necessarily false or irrelevant, but because even when relevant and true they are, and can be, only partial. It is doubt and questioning that always lures me on to broader horizons and deeper insights through an openness to the infinite that leaves me contentedly discontent. Alienated theology understands doubt and the questions that arise from it as our most fundamental experience of the infinite. For, our unending questions keep us open to the infinite, continually inviting us to transcend our present horizon of understanding. In a like manner, the presence of the stranger continuously calls us into question and invites us to transcend the present horizon of the egocentric and ethnocentric answers that structure our personal and cultural identities. An alienated theology understands that only a faith which requires one to welcome the alien or stranger is truly a utopian faith capable of transforming us into "new beings" who are capable of creating a new world of pluralistic human interdependence.

#### We are only debaters and this is only one round, but nevertheless we must grapple with questions greater than any one of us. The universe is fundamentally, ontologically, totally doomed—someday the sun will explode and the universe will literally tear itself apart—the only way to make any of this worth it is to put the question of our relationship with Otherness at the forefront of our decision calculus.

**Clark 10 –** Senior Lecturer in Geography at Open University

(Nigel, “Ex-Orbitant Generosity: Gifts of Love in a Cold Cosmos”, Parallax, Vol. 16, No. 1, Pg. 80-95, dml)

Harman has no qualms about positing nonhuman objects that attract and repel each other. 50 He conceives of the elemental surfaces of things as making demands on each other, responding with the same sincerity that Levinas spoke of, all the while concealing their inner depths. In the context of thinking through our inhabitation of a volatile earth, this sort of inquiry is deeply promising. Even if we are not yet enthralled by the issue of the interactions of astral bodies in far-ﬂung galaxies for their own sake, the question of how independently forceful objects encounter each other on – or in the vicinity of – our planet has tremendous implications for the earth-bound beings who are constantly caught in the fallout of these clashes. Though, if we are willing to follow Harman and agree that nonhuman objects have their own imperatives, do we also want to posit that these elemental encounters prompt ethical ﬁdelities amongst themselves – besides those they may or may not incite amongst the vulnerable human bodies transﬁxed in their path? In recent writing on the gift, there have been a number of variations on the theme of Nietzsche’s selﬂess, life-giving solar ﬂux. For Adriaan Peperzak, musing on the heterogeneous character of gift-giving: ‘Not only can the sun, trees, and animals give, but also anonymous forces and unknown sources. Nature, Fortune, Destiny, Moira, the gods, or God may be experienced or imagined as givers’. 51 In a related way, for Genevieve Vaughan, ‘Gaia, our Mother Earth [. . . .] the abundant planet on which we live’ is a preeminent source of the gifts upon which human life depends. 52 While such accounts rarely provide explicit consideration of the relations of give and take that might pertain amongst these generous entities in our absence, there is little to indicate that these bounteous ﬂows switch off whenever their human recipients vacate the scene. Karen Barad, however, is unequivocal. In her extended consideration of the interactive materiality of the universe, Barad boldly insists that the world’s constant becoming raises questions of ethical responsibility at every moment, **whether humans are present or not**: ‘Ethicality is part of the fabric of the world; the call to respond and be responsible is part of what is’. 53 The merger of ontology and ethics that Barad proposes is far from unique. In the current rage for philosophies of immanence, for neo-vitalism and processuality – the insistence on a single ontological plane in which disparate entities engage in streams of transmutation generally presupposes that the ethical is implicated in the all-encompassing creative ﬂux. This does not imply creativity or becoming is painless, however. In Deleuze’s inﬂuential take on pure immanence, life may ﬂow on indomitably, but there is nonetheless plenty of wounding as encounters between bodies trigger violent and unpredictable transformations. Thus: ‘every dynamism is a catastrophe. There is necessarily something cruel in this birth of a world which is a chaosmos’. 54 For Deleuze, and those in his orbit, the ethical is not primarily a response to the suffering that arises out of wrenching change – or any kind of response or obligation at all. As the afﬁrmation of the transformative possibility that inheres in encounters and interactions, ethics is an immanent evaluation of the process of becoming. Although the usual term in Deleuze and Guattari’s writings for the driving force of creative transformation is ‘desire’, John Protevi accentuates the ethical-ontological fusion by picking up those instances in their work when this is referred to as ‘love’: ‘When bodies join in the mutual experimental deterritorialisation that is love, we ﬁnd Deleuze and Guattari’s most adventurous concept: the living, changing, multiplying virtual, the unfolding of the plane of consistency. Love is complexity producing novelty, the very process of life’. 55 In this way, desire or love *is*becoming, and generosity is generativity - which makes it, to borrow a formulation from Ray Brassier, `ontologically ubiquitous’.56 Effectively, there is no need for a distinctive ethics to address the injuries of transmutation, because the catastrophe itself is ultimately productive. With the championing of pure process and incessant becoming that characterises much of the contemporary take on `immanence’, **what counts is not so much the substantive bodies that happen to come into being, so much as the great overarching stream of generative matter-energy from which all individuated forms are bodied forth**.Where the unlimited potential for becoming or change takes precedence over the limited and constrained condition of the actual bodies it gives rise to,**there can be no absolute and irreparable loss**. Whatever dissolution of bodily integrity takes place, **what ever fate befalls actual beings, is less of a termination than a reconfiguration, a temporary undoing that facilitates a renewed participation in the greater flow.** And with this prioritization of process over product, of virtuality over actuality, whatever fidelity is called for is to the `flux of invincible life’ itself - rather than to its interruptions.57 `Catastrophe’, in this sense, is the speedy, if painful, passage to a fresh start, to a new life. If it is a crack that fissures the ontological universe, then it is ultimately a self- suturing one. But for some theorists who take the event of the cataclysm to heart, a non- annihilating disaster is not a disaster worthy of the name. As Edith Wyschogrod concludes of Deleuzo-Guattarian catastrophism: `Because there is nothing but the fullness of desiring production, they cannot, strictly speaking, explain disease and natural catastrophe....’ 58 For Ray Brassier, the fashionable avowal of pure process or immanence raises a more general issue: that of how such philosophies are to account for discontinuity at all, how they are to explain breaks in pure productivity or lapses into inactivity. This is a problem not just for Deleuze, he suggests, `but for any philosophy that would privilege becoming over stasis’.59 Brassier’s engagement with solar extinction returns us to the literal exorbitance of an earth **open and precarious in the face of an inhospitable cosmos and to the Levinasian theme of existence fissured by impassable rifts**. Whereas Harman stresses the innumerable ruptures that punctuate a universe of heterogeneous objects, Brassier zeroes on the quandaries posed by one particular juncture. Against any philosophy that assumes the necessity of a thinking being to make sense of the world, and equally counter to any philosophical stance that posits an incessant stream of becoming, he draws out the significance of the moment when **terrestrial life** might be – or rather, **will be - totally, irredeemably, extinguished**. Playing off a discussion by Jean-François Lyotard about our sun gradually burning out and rendering the earth uninhabitable - an eventuality which scientists have predicted with some confidence – Brassier points up the certainty of non-existence that weighs upon all life.60 For Levinas, the impossibility of self-identity, of synchronicity, and of the closure of reciprocity is signalled by the passage into the time of the other: **the interruption of self- presence by `a time** **without me**’.61 In his working through of the inheritance of Levinas, Derrida observes that love is always a rupture in the living present, haunted by the knowledge that `One of us will see the other die, one of us will live on, even if only for an instant’.62 This is love’s exorbitance, the impossibility of its recuperation into an economy of reciprocal, synchronous or symmetrical gestures. For Brassier, that fact that terrestrial life is eventually doomed by solar catastrophe **promises a time without me, without any of us,** without thought or experience, without even the life that lends death its much-touted significance. **This is a quite literal crack in the ontological edifice of the universe: objective scientific knowledge that propels thought on the impossible task of thinking thought’s own non-being**. As Brassier announces: `Lyotard’s `solar catastrophe’ effectively transposes Levinas’s theologically inflected `impossibility of possibility’ into a natural-scientific register, so that it is no longer the death of the Other that usurps the sovereignty of consciousness, but the extinction of the sun’.63 In the face of the other, in its exposure to the elements, **we catch a glimpse of our own vulnerability and finitude**.64 In the face of a cyclone, or the face of others traumatised by gale-force winds, we see forces strong enough to overwhelm communities, cities, entire regions. We may also in some opaque sense - but in a way that is currently subject to elucidation by the physical sciences - **feel an intimation of energies that could overwhelm an earth. And ultimately annihilate every conceivable entity**. In Brassier’s words: roughly **one** **trillion, trillion, trillion** **years from now, the accelerating expansion of the universe will have disintegrated the fabric of matter itself, terminating the possibility of embodiment. Every star in the universe will have burnt out, plunging the cosmos into a state of absolute darkness and leaving behind nothing but spent husks of collapsed matter**.65 Negating the consolation of endless becoming or ubiquitous self-overflowing, this scenario implies that **ethics too is ultimately doomed**: the gift of the disaster pointing finally to the disaster of the gift. And yet, across a nation state that could have been any patch of the globe, ordinary folk offer beds to complete strangers, the townspeople of a backwater village ladle out lashings of Hurricane Gumbo to dishevelled company, and a million and one other obscure acts of love flare and fade away: tiny sparks of generosity that arc across the cracks in daily life. And keep doing so in spite of, because of, the perishability that characterises the gift, its giver and its recipient alike. For John Caputo, who also gazes directly at the coming solar disaster, **it is the very `face of a faceless cosmos’ that makes of an ethical opening to an other `an act of hyperbolic partiality and defiance’**.66 In this way, it is not just that each gift is an offering of flesh and the giving of a terrain, but that every gift carries the trace of the very extinguishing of existence. In its responsiveness to the inconsistency or the excessiveness of light, each generous reception murmurs against the dying of all light. Somewhere beside or beyond critical thought’s harsh cross-examination of compassion and the neo-vitalist extension of ethical dispositions into every corner of the cosmos, then, runs this other option, propelled by the very exorbitance, diachrony and asymmetry that severs being from thought and unhinges ethics from ontology. **If it negates the radical passivity of generosity to demand that it enacts a moral cost accounting before it sets forth, so too does it rebuke the idea of a responsibility that is primordially receptive to declare that every spontaneous energetic or material discharge is in essence a gift.** Demands might well emit from any object, but not every thing can give in or give out in response to a summons. As biologist Lynn Margulis and science writer Dorion Sagan put it: `**life is matter that chooses’**.67 Which appears to makes choice fairly rare in the known universe, as well as contingent and, in all likelihood, ephemeral. **Like other living creatures, we humans `can turn away from faces as we can turn away from the surfaces of things’**. Or choose not too. Even if it is not unique, **perhaps our particularly pronounced capacity to vacillate between turning toward and turning away has a defining quality**. If not us, then who?

#### It’s not the destination, it’s the journey.

**May 5** – writes a lot of K cards

(Todd, “To change the world, to celebrate life: Merleau-Ponty and Foucault on the body”, Philosophy Social Criticism September 2005 vol. 31 no. 5-6 517-531, dml)

For those among us who seek in philosophy a way to grapple with our lives rather than to solve logical puzzles; for those whose reading and whose writing are not merely appropriate steps toward academic advancement but a struggle to see ourselves and our world in a fresher, clearer light; for those who ﬁnd nourishment among impassioned ideas and go hungry among empty truths: there is a struggle that is often waged within us. It is a struggle that will be familiar to anyone who has heard in Foucault’s sentences the stammering of a fellow human being struggling to speak in words worth hearing. Why else would we read Foucault? We seek to conceive what is wrong in the world, to grasp it in a way that offers us the possibility for change. We know that there is much that is, to use Foucault’s word, ‘intolerable’. There is much that binds us to social and political arrangements that are oppressive, domineering, patronizing, and exploitative. We would like to understand why this is and how it happens, in order that we may prevent its continuance. In short, we want our theories to be tools for changing the world, for offering it a new face, or at least a new expression. There is struggle in this, struggle against ideas and ways of thinking that present themselves to us as inescapable. We know this struggle from Foucault’s writings. It is not clear that he ever wrote about anything else. But this is not the struggle I want to address here. For there is, on the other hand, another search and another goal. They lie not so much in the revisioning of this world as in the embrace of it. There is much to be celebrated in the lives we lead, or in those led by others, or in the unfolding of the world as it is, a world resonant with the rhythms of our voices and our movements. We would like to understand this, too, to grasp in thought the elusive beauty of our world. There is, after all, no other world, except, as Nietzsche taught, for those who would have created another one with which to denigrate our own. In short, we would like our thought to celebrate our lives. To change the world and to celebrate life. This, as the theologian Harvey Cox saw, is the struggle within us.1 It is a struggle in which one cannot choose sides; or better, a struggle in which one must choose both sides. The abandonment of one for the sake of the other can lead only to disaster or callousness. Forsaking the celebration of life for the sake of changing the world is the path of the sad revolutionary. In his preface to Anti-Oedipus, Foucault writes that one does not have to be sad in order to be revolutionary. The matter is more urgent than that, however. One cannot be both sad and revolutionary. Lacking a sense of the wondrous that is already here, among us, one who is bent upon changing the world can only become solemn or bitter. He or she is focused only on the future; the present is what is to be overcome. The vision of what is not but must come to be overwhelms all else, and the point of change itself becomes lost. The history of the left in the 20th century offers numerous examples of this, and the disaster that attends to it should be evident to all of us by now. The alternative is surely not to shift one’s allegiance to the pure celebration of life, although there are many who have chosen this path. It is at best blindness not to see the misery that envelops so many of our fellow humans, to say nothing of what happens to sentient nonhuman creatures. The attempt to jettison world-changing for an uncritical assent to the world as it is requires a self-deception that I assume would be anathema for those of us who have studied Foucault. Indeed, it is anathema for all of us who awaken each day to an America whose expansive boldness is matched only by an equally expansive disregard for those we place in harm’s way. This is the struggle, then. The one between the desire for lifecelebration and the desire for world-changing. The struggle between reveling in the contingent and fragile joys that constitute our world and wresting it from its intolerability. I am sure it is a struggle that is not foreign to anyone who is reading this. I am sure as well that the stakes for choosing one side over another that I have recalled here are obvious to everyone. The question then becomes one of how to choose both sides at once. III Maybe it happens this way. You walk into a small meeting room at the back of a local bookstore. There are eight or ten people milling about. They’re dressed in dark clothes, nothing fancy, and one or two of them have earrings or dreadlocks. They vary in age. You don’t know any of them. You’ve never seen them before. Several of them seem to know one another. They are affectionate, hugging, letting a hand linger on a shoulder or an elbow. A younger man, tall and thin, with an open face and a blue baseball cap bearing no logo, glides into the room. Two others, a man and a woman, shout, ‘Tim!’ and he glides over to them and hugs them, one at a time. They tell him how glad they are that he could make it, and he says that he just got back into town and heard about the meeting. You stand a little off to the side. Nobody has taken a seat at the rectangle of folding tables yet. You don’t want to be the ﬁrst to sit down. Tim looks around the room and smiles. Several other people ﬁlter in. You’re not quite sure where to put your hands so you slide them into your jean pockets. You hunch your shoulders. Tim’s arrival has made you feel more of an outsider. But then he sees you. He edges his way around several others and walks up to you and introduces himself. You respond. Tim asks and you tell him that this is your ﬁrst time at a meeting like this. He doesn’t ask about politics but about where you’re from. He tells you he has a friend in that neighborhood and do you know . . . ? Then several things happen that you only vaguely notice because you’re talking with Tim. People start to sit down at the rectangle of tables. One of them pulls out a legal pad with notes on it. She sits at the head of the rectangle; or rather, when she sits down there, it becomes the head. And there’s something you don’t notice at all. You are more relaxed, your shoulders have stopped hunching, and when you sit down the seat feels familiar. The woman at the head of the table looks around. She smiles; her eyes linger over you and a couple of others that you take to be new faces, like yours. She says, ‘Maybe we should begin.’ IV I can offer only a suggestion of an answer here today. It is a suggestion that brings together some thoughts from the late writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty with those of Foucault, in order to sketch not even a framework for thought, but the mere outlines of a framework. It is not a framework that would seek to ﬁnd the unconscious of each in the writings of the other. Neither thinker ﬁnishes or accomplishes the other. (Often, for example regarding methodology, they do not even agree.) Rather, it is a framework that requires both of them, from their very different angles, in order to be able to think it. My goal in constructing the outlines of this framework is largely philosophical. That is to say, the suggestion I would like to make here is not one for resolving for each of us the struggle of life-celebration and world-changing, but of offering a way to conceive ourselves that allows us to embrace both sides of this battle at the same time. Given the thinkers I have chosen as reference points, it will be no surprise when I say that that conception runs through the body. Let me start with Merleau-Ponty. In his last writings, particularly in The Visible and the Invisible, he offers a conception of the body that is neither at odds nor even entangled with the world, but is of the very world itself. His concept of the ﬂesh introduces a point of contact that is also a point of undifferentiation. The ﬂesh, Merleau-Ponty writes, ‘is the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body, which is attested in particular when the body sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching the things, such that, astangible it descends among them’.2 We must recall this economy of the ﬂesh before we turn to Foucault. There is, for Merleau-Ponty, a single Being. Our world is of that Being, and we are of our world. We are not something that confronts the world from outside, but are born into it and do not leave it. This does not mean that we cannot remove ourselves from the immediacy of its grasp. What it means is that to remove ourselves from that immediacy is neither the breaking of a bond nor the discovery of an original dichotomy or dualism. What is remarkable about human beings is precisely our capacity to confront the world, to reﬂect upon it, understand it, and change it, while still being of a piece with it. To grasp this remarkable character, it is perhaps worth recalling Gilles Deleuze’s concept of the fold. The world is not composed of different parts; there is no transcendent, whether of God or of subjectivity. The world is one. As Deleuze sometimes says, being is univocal. This oneness is not, however, inert or inanimate. Among other things, it can fold over on itself, creating spaces that are at once insides and outsides, at once different from and continuous with one another. The ﬂesh is a fold of Being in this sense. It is of the world, and yet encounters it as if from a perceptual or cognitive distance. It is a visibility that sees, a tangible that touches, an audible that hears. MerleauPonty writes: There is vision, touch when a certain visible, a certain tangible, turns back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part, or when suddenly it ﬁnds itself surrounded by them, or when between it and them, and through their commerce, is formed a Visibility, a Tangible in itself, which belong properly neither to the body qua fact nor to the world qua fact . . . and which therefore form a couple, a couple more real than either of them.3 For Merleau-Ponty, thought and reﬂection do not attach themselves to this ﬂesh from beyond it, but arise through it. As our body is of this world, our thought is of our bodies, its language of a piece with the world it addresses. ‘[I]f we were to make completely explicit the architectonics of the human body, its ontological framework, and how it sees itself and hears itself, we would see the possibilities of language already given in it.’4 This conception of the body as ﬂesh of the world is not foreign to Foucault, although of course the terms Merleau-Ponty uses are not his. We might read Foucault’s politics as starting from here, inaugurated at the point of undifferentiation between body and world. The crucial addition he would make is that that point of undifferentiation is not historically inert. The body/world nexus is inscribed in a history that leaves its traces on both at the same time, and that crosses the border of the ﬂesh and reaches the language that arises from it, and the thought that language expresses. How does this work? V Maybe it doesn’t happen that way. Maybe it happens another way. Maybe you walk into a room at a local community center. The room is large, but there aren’t many people, at least yet. There’s a rectangular table in the center, and everyone is sitting around it. A couple of people look up as you walk in. They nod slightly. You nod back, even more slightly. At the head of the table is someone with a legal pad. She does not look up. She is reading the notes on the pad, making occasional marks with the pen in her right hand. Other people come in and take places at the table. One or two of them open laptop computers and look for an outlet. Eventually, the table ﬁlls up and people start sitting in chairs behind the table. Your feel as though you’re in an inner circle where you don’t belong. You wonder whether you should give up your chair and go sit on the outside with the others who are just coming in now. Maybe people notice you, think you don’t belong there. At this moment you’d like to leave. You begin to feel at once large and small, visually intrusive and an object of scrutiny. You don’t move because maybe this is OK after all. You just don’t know. The room is quiet. A couple of people cough. Then the woman seated at the head of the table looks up. She scans the room as if taking attendance. She says, ‘Maybe we should begin.’ VI Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of the body as ﬂesh is an ontological one. Although he does not see the body as remote from its historical inscription, his discussion does not incorporate the role such inscription plays. For a body to be of the world is also for it to be temporal, to be encrusted in the continuous emerging of the world over time. And this emerging is not abstract; rather, it is concrete. The body/world nexus evolves during particular historical periods. This fold of the ﬂesh, this body, is not nowhere and at any time. It is there, then; or it is here, now. A body is entangled within a web of speciﬁc events and relations that, precisely because it is of this world, are inescapably a part of that body’s destiny. As Merleau-Ponty tells us in Phenomenology of Perception, ‘our open and personal existence rests on an initial foundation of acquired and stabilized existence. But it could not be otherwise, if we are temporality, since the dialectic of acquisition and future is what constitutes time.’5 The medium for the body’s insertion into a particular net of events and relations is that of social practices. Our bodies are not ﬁrst and foremost creatures of the state or the economy, no more than they are atomized wholes distinct from the world they inhabit. Or better, they are creatures of the state and the economy inasmuch as those appear through social practices, through the everyday practices that are the ether of our lives. Social practices are the sedimentation of history at the level of the body. When I teach, when I write this article, when I run a race or teach one of my children how to ride a bicycle, my body is oriented in particular ways, conforming to or rejecting particular norms, responding to the constraints and restraints of those practices as they have evolved in interaction with other practices over time. Through its engagement in these practices, my body has taken on a history that is not of my making but is nevertheless part of my inheritance. It is precisely because, as Merleau-Ponty has written, the body and the world are not separate things but rather in a chiasmic relation that we can think this inheritance. And it is because of Foucault’s histories that we can recognize that this inheritance is granted through speciﬁc social practices. And of course, as Foucault has taught us, social practices are where the power is. It is not, or not simply, at the level of the state or the modes of production where power arises. It is, as he sometimes puts it, at the capillaries. One of the lessons of Discipline and Punish is that, if the soul is the prison of the body, this is because the body is inserted into a set of practices that create for it a soul. These practices are not merely the choices of an individual whose thought surveys the world from above, but instead the fate of a body that is of a particular world at a particular time and place. Moreover, these practices are not merely in service to a power that exists outside of them; they are mechanisms of power in their own right. It is not because Jeremy Bentham disliked the prison population that the Panopticon became a grid for thinking about penal institutions. It is instead because the evolution of penal practices at that time created an opening for the economy of visibility that the Panopticon represented. When Foucault writes that . . . the soul has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished – and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives6 his claim is informed by four other ones that lie behind it: that bodies are of a piece with the world, that the body/world nexus is a temporal one, that the medium of that corporeal temporality is the practices a body is engaged in, and that that medium is political as well as social. The last three claims are, of course, of the framework of Foucault’s thought. The ﬁrst one is the ontological scaffolding provided by Merleau-Ponty. And it is by means of all four that we can begin to conceive things so as to be able to choose both world-changing and lifecelebrating at the same time. VII It could happen yet another way. Increasingly, it does. There is no meeting. There are no tables and no legal pads. Nobody sits down in a room together, at least nobody sits down at a place you know about. There may not even be a leaﬂet. Maybe you just got an email that was forwarded by someone you know slightly and who thought you might be interested. At the bottom there’s a link, in case you want to unsubscribe. If you don’t unsubscribe you get more notices, with petitions to sign or times and places for rallies or teach-ins or marches. Maybe there’s also a link for feedback or a list for virtual conversations or suggestions. If you show up, it’s not to something you put together but to something that was already in place before you arrived. How did you decide on this rally or teach-in? You sat in front of your computer screen, stared at it, pondering. Maybe you emailed somebody you know, asking for their advice. Is it worth going? If it’s on campus you probably did. It matters who will see you, whether you have tenure, how much you’ve published. There are no Tims here. You’ve decided to go. If it’s a teach-in, you’ve got plausible deniability; you’re just there as an observer. If it’s a rally, you can stand to the side. But maybe you won’t do that. The issue is too important. You don’t know the people who will be there, but you will stand among them, walk among them. You will be with them, in some way. Bodies at the same time and place. You agree on the issue, but it’s a virtual agreement, one that does not come through gestures or words but through sharing the same values and the same internet connections. As you march, as you stand there, nearly shoulder to shoulder with others of like mind, you’re already somewhere else, telling this story to someone you know, trying to get them to understand the feeling of solidarity that you are projecting back into this moment. You say to yourself that maybe you should have brought a friend along. There are many ways to conceive the bond between world-changing and life-celebrating. Let me isolate two: one that runs from Merleau-Ponty to Foucault, from the body’s chiasmic relation with the world to the politics of its practices; and the other one running back in the opposite direction. The ontology Merleau-Ponty offers in his late work is one of wonder. Abandoning the sterile philosophical debates about the relation of mind and body, subject and object, about the relation of reason to that which is not reason, or the problem of other minds, his ontology forges a unity of body and world that puts us in immediate contact with all of its aspects. No longer are we to be thought the self-enclosed creatures of the philosophical tradition. We are now in touch with the world, because we are of it. Art, for example, does not appeal solely to our minds; its beauty is not merely a matter of the convergence of our faculties. We are moved by art, often literally moved, because our bodies and the work of art share the same world. As Merleau-Ponty says, ‘I would be at great pains to say where is the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I do a thing; I do not ﬁx it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I see it.’7 It is only because my body is a fold of this world that art can affect me so. But this affection is also a vulnerability. As my look can happen according to a work of art, so it can happen according to a social practice. And even more so in proportion as that social practice and its effects are suffused through the world in which I carry on my life, the world my body navigates throughout the day, every day. I do not have a chance to look according to a painting by Cezanne very often; but I do encounter the effects of normalization as it has ﬁltered through the practices of my employment, of my students’ upbringing, and of my family’s expectations of themselves and one another. The vulnerability of the body, then, is at once its exposure to beauty and its opening to what is intolerable. We might also see things from the other end, starting from politics and ending at the body. I take it that this is what Foucault suggests when he talks about bodies and pleasures at the end of the ﬁrst volume of the History of Sexuality. If we are a product of our practices and the conception of ourselves and the world that those practices have fostered, so to change our practices is to experiment in new possibilities both for living and, inseparably, for conceiving the world. To experiment in sexuality is not to see where the desire that lies at the core of our being may lead us; that is simply the continuation of our oppression by other means. Rather, it is to construct practices where what is at issue is no longer desire but something else, something that might go by the name of bodies and pleasures. In doing so, we not only act differently, we think differently, both about ourselves and about the world those selves are inseparable from. And because these experiments are practices of our bodies, and because our bodies are encrusted in the world, these experiments become not merely acts of political resistance but new folds in the body/ world nexus. To construct new practices is to appeal to aspects or possibilities of the world that have been previously closed to us. It is to offer novel, and perhaps more tolerable, engagements in the chiasm of body and world. Thus we might say of politics what Merleau-Ponty has said of painting, that we see according to it. Here, I take it, is where the idea of freedom in Foucault lies. For Foucault, freedom is not a metaphysical condition. It does not lie in the nature of being human, nor is it a warping, an atomic swerve, in the web of causal relations in which we ﬁnd ourselves. To seek our freedom in a space apart from our encrustation in the world is not so much to liberate ourselves from its inﬂuence as to build our own private prison. Foucault once said: There’s an optimism that consists in saying that things couldn’t be better. My optimism would consist rather in saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are, bound up more with circumstances than with necessities, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex, but temporary, historical circumstances than with inevitable anthropological constraints . . .8 That is where to discover our freedom. IX And what happens from there? From the meetings, from the rallies, from the petitions and the teach-ins? What happens next? There is, after all, always a next. If you win this time – end aid to the contras, divest from apartheid South Africa, force debt-forgiveness by technologically advanced countries – there is always more to do. There is the de-unionization of workers, there are gay rights, there is Burma, there are the Palestinians, the Tibetans. There will always be Tibetans, even if they aren’t in Tibet, even if they aren’t Asian. But is that the only question: Next? Or is that just the question we focus on? What’s the next move in this campaign, what’s the next campaign? Isn’t there more going on than that? After all, engaging in political organizing is a practice, or a group of practices. It contributes to making you who you are. It’s where the power is, and where your life is, and where the intersection of your life and those of others (many of whom you will never meet, even if it’s for their sake that you’re involved) and the buildings and streets of your town is. This moment when you are seeking to change the world, whether by making a suggestion in a meeting or singing at a rally or marching in silence or asking for a signature on a petition, is not a moment in which you don’t exist. It’s not a moment of yours that you sacriﬁce for others so that it no longer belongs to you. It remains a moment of your life, sedimenting in you to make you what you will become, emerging out of a past that is yours as well. What will you make of it, this moment? How will you be with others, those others around you who also do not cease to exist when they begin to organize or to protest or to resist? The illusion is to think that this has nothing to do with you. You’ve made a decision to participate in world-changing. Will that be all there is to it? Will it seem to you a simple sacriﬁce, for this small period of time, of who you are for the sake of others? Are you, for this moment, a political ascetic? Asceticism like that is dangerous. X Freedom lies not in our distance from the world but in the historically fragile and contingent ways we are folded into it, just as we ourselves are folds of it. If we take Merleau-Ponty’s Being not as a rigid foundation or a truth behind appearances but as the historical folding and refolding of a univocity, then our freedom lies in the possibility of other foldings. Merleau-Ponty is not insensitive to this point. His elusive concept of the invisible seems to gesture in this direction. Of painting, he writes: the proper essence of the visible is to have a layer of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence . . . There is that which reaches the eye directly, the frontal properties of the visible; but there is also that which reaches it from below . . . and that which reaches it from above . . . where it no longer participates in the heaviness of origins but in free accomplishments.9 Elsewhere, in The Visible and the Invisible, he says: if . . . the surface of the visible, is doubled up over its whole extension with an invisible reserve; and if, ﬁnally, in our ﬂesh as the ﬂesh of things, the actual, empirical, ontic visible, by a sort of folding back, invagination, or padding, exhibits a visibility, a possibility that is not the shadow of the actual but its principle . . . an interior horizon and an exterior horizon between which the actual visible is a partitioning and which, nonetheless, open indeﬁnitely only upon other visibles . . .10 What are we to make of these references? We can, to be sure, see the hand of Heidegger in them. But we may also, and for present purposes more relevantly, see an intersection with Foucault’s work on freedom. There is an ontology of freedom at work here, one that situates freedom not in the private reserve of an individual but in the unﬁnished character of any historical situation. There is more to our historical juncture, as there is to a painting, than appears to us on the surface of its visibility. The trick is to recognize this, and to take advantage of it, not only with our thoughts but with our lives. And that is why, in the end, there can be no such thing as a sad revolutionary. To seek to change the world is to offer a new form of life-celebration. It is to articulate a fresh way of being, which is at once a way of seeing, thinking, acting, and being acted upon. It is to fold Being once again upon itself, this time at a new point, to see what that might yield. There is, as Foucault often reminds us, no guarantee that this fold will not itself turn out to contain the intolerable. In a complex world with which we are inescapably entwined, a world we cannot view from above or outside, there is no certainty about the results of our experiments. Our politics are constructed from the same vulnerability that is the stuff of our art and our daily practices. But to refuse to experiment is to resign oneself to the intolerable; it is to abandon both the struggle to change the world and the opportunity to celebrate living within it. And to seek one aspect without the other – life-celebration without world-changing, world-changing without life-celebration – is to refuse to acknowledge the chiasm of body and world that is the wellspring of both. If we are to celebrate our lives, if we are to change our world, then perhaps the best place to begin to think is our bodies, which are the openings to celebration and to change, and perhaps the point at which the war within us that I spoke of earlier can be both waged and resolved. That is the fragile beauty that, in their different ways, both MerleauPonty and Foucault have placed before us. The question before us is whether, in our lives and in our politics, we can be worthy of it. XI So how might you be a political body, woven into the fabric of the world as a celebrator and as a changer? You went to the meeting, and then to the demonstration. How was it there? Were the bodies in harmony or in counterpoint? Did you sing with your feet, did your voice soar? Did your mind come alive? Did you see possibilities you had not seen before? Were there people whose words or clothes, or even the way they walked hand in hand (how long has it been since you’ve walked hand in hand with someone out in public?) offer you a possibility, or make you feel alive as well as righteous? And how about those people off to the side, the ones on the sidewalk watching? Maybe they just stared, or maybe nodded as you went past. Or maybe some of them shouted at you to stop blocking the streets with your nonsense. Did you recoil within yourself, see yourself as in a mirror, or as the person at Sartre’s keyhole who’s just been caught? Did you feel superior to them, smug in your knowledge? Or did they, too, show you something you might learn from? Are they you at another moment, a moment in the past or in the future? Are they your parents that you have not explained to, sat down beside, or just shared a meal with? That one over there, the old man slightly stooped in the long overcoat: whom does he remind you of? What message might he have unwittingly brought for you? And why does it have to be a demonstration? You go to a few meetings, a few more demonstrations. You write some letters to legislators. You send an email to the President. And then more meetings. The next thing you know, you’re involved in a political campaign. By then you may have stopped asking why. This is how it goes: demonstrations, meetings with legislators, internet contacts. Does it have to be like this? Are demonstrations and meetings your only means? Do they become, sooner or later, not only means but ends? And what kinds of ends? In some sense they should always be ends: a meeting is a celebration, after all. But there are other ends as well. You go to the meeting because that fulﬁlls your obligation to your political conscience. Does it come to that? There are other means, other ends. Other means/ends. Some people ride bicycles, en masse, slowly through crowded urban streets. You want environmentalism? Then have it. The streets are beautiful with their tall corniced buildings and wide avenues. To ride a bike through these streets instead of hiding in the armor of a car would be exhilarating. If enough of you do it together it would make for a pleasant ride, as well as a little lived environmentalism. Would you want to call it a demonstration? Would it matter? There are others as well who do other things with their bodies, more dangerous things. Some people have gone to Palestine in order to put their bodies between the Palestinians and the Israeli soldiers and settlers who attack them. They lie down next to Palestinians in front of the bulldozers that would destroy homes or build a wall through a family’s olive orchard. They feel the bodies of those they are in solidarity with. They smell the soil of Palestine as they lay there. Sometimes, they are harmed by it. A young woman, Rachel Corrie, was deliberately crushed by a US bulldozer operated by an Israeli soldier as she kneeled in front of a Palestinian home, hoping to stop its demolition. To do politics with one’s body can be like this. To resist, to celebrate, is also to be vulnerable. The world that you embrace, the world of which you are a part, can kill you too. And so you experiment. You try this and you try that. You are a phenomenologist and a genealogist. You sense what is around you, attend to the way your body is encrusted in your political involvements. And you know that that sensing has its own history, a history that often escapes you even as it envelops you. There is always more to what you are, and to what you are involved in, than you can know. So you try to keep vigilant, seeking the possibilities without scorning the realities. It’s a difﬁcult balance. You can neglect it if you like. Many do. But your body is there, woven into the fabric of all the other bodies, animate and inanimate. Whether you like it or not, whether you recognize it or not. The only question is whether you will take up the world that you are of, or leave it to others, to those others who would be more than willing to take your world up for you.

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#### This debate begins with the question of Otherness in the abstract—before we can make arguments about how our identity matters we need to have a metric for how identity originates—only we have a prior explanatory theory—the Other is faceless, it calls to us in ways we cannot understand or predict and shapes who we are whether we are aware of it or not—my identity as an upper-class white jewish male was shaped by my interactions with my parents, the members of my high school and college, and numerous others who only left traces of themselves with me—the point of all of this is that we cannot attempt to cultivate a relationship to a specifically identified other without FIRST placing Otherness prior—this is the holistic relationship they call for

**Jones 9**   
(Rachel, University of Dundee, “On the Value of Not Knowing: Wonder, Beginning Again and Letting Be,” As presented at ‘On Not Knowing’, a Symposium hosted by Kettle’s Yard and New Hall College, Cambridge, 29th June 2009, to accompany the exhibition ‘Material Intelligence’, Kettle’s Yard, 16 May – 12 July 2009)

Thus described, wonder is the passion that can accompany not knowing, providing we recognize that the object we encounter is not the same as what we already do know. Wonder arises **before we know enough to make any utilitarian calculation** about whether an object might be pleasing or useful to us (or not). For Descartes, as for Aristotle, it could therefore be said that philosophy begins in wonder, for this passionate state of not knowing is what makes us think, ask questions, and seek to understand. Wonder is the ‘first of all the passions’ not only because it is our initial response to something new and unknown, but because it implies that other passions will follow, as we find out more about what we have encountered. 3. Although she critiques Descartes’ model of a self-founding subject, Luce Irigaray takes up his notion of wonder in a short essay where she writes (second quote): ‘In order for it [wonder] to affect us, it is necessary and sufficient for it to surprise, to be new, not yet assimilated or disassimilated as known. Still awakening our passion, our appetite, our attraction to that which is not yet (en)coded, our curiosity (but perhaps in all senses: sight, smell, hearing? etc) vis-à-vis that which we have not yet encountered or made ours.’ 3 The as-yet-unknown is here aligned with that which we have ‘not yet encoded’, **not yet translated into the conceptual and symbolic frameworks** we use to make sense of the world; at the same time, the passage hints at an entirely different way of coming to know someone or something, involving an attunement of the senses to that which is other and **irreducible to those frameworks**. While we may still go on to grasp and appropriate the unfamiliar, Irigaray calls on us to cultivate the sense of wonder that can inhabit all our encounters, 4 providing we remain attentive to the unique singularity of others, to the ways in which, no matter how much we know about someone else, they remain irreducibly different from us. Wonder thus remains the first of all the passions, not simply because it is the first we experience, but because **it has an ethical priority**. Cultivating wonder is a way of remaining open to the otherness of the other **without seeking to appropriate or assimilate them**. For Irigaray, the difference to which wonder holds us open is first and foremost the difference between the sexes; sexuate difference is for her the first difference in the same sense as wonder is the first passion. Wonder is thus essential to the possibility of an erotic encounter in which each desires the other without seeking to own or appropriate. However, as well as love, the wonder that arises from not knowing is, she says, ‘the passion that inaugurates … art. And thought.’ 5 4. Art, thought, and not knowing are linked in a long and complex history, from which I have selected only one particular moment here, albeit a particularly influential one. In Kant’s account of genius, he emphasises that genius works without knowing what it is doing, insofar as no rule could be formulated in advance for producing a truly original artwork. Rather, the rule must be abstracted after the fact, to the extent that works of genius come to serve as examples for others. In fact, Kant’s genius works in a delicate balance between knowing and not knowing, for while the artist is unable to use concepts or rules to fully determine what will emerge from their creative activities, for these to be productive of more than mere nonsense, they must nonetheless draw on other kinds of knowledge. This includes the technical knowledge or skills required to work with their materials as well as knowledge of preceding aesthetic traditions – which true genius will always both break and reinvigorate. For those of us not blessed with what Kant calls genius however, not knowing remains an essential component of what he describes as the most intense kind of aesthetic experience, that of the sublime. One trigger for the sublime is the encounter with something which seems infinite to us – an ever-receding mountain range or the vastness of the ocean. Our faculties struggle to grasp such apparent infinities, for the moment we try to take them in and represent them in a single image, we place a limit on them and thereby lose the suggestion of infinity which attracted us to them in the first place. In ways that recall the poster for this symposium, we experience sublimity when we are all at sea (though the image also pokes gentle fun at the overly serious language of the sublime, as it shows someone all at sea in a pedal-boat). On Kant’s account, **even though we cannot represent infinity,** our very failure to grasp it makes us all the more aware of our ability to think that which we cannot know, to have an idea of that which goes beyond anything we can take in via the senses. Thus he writes: ‘[N]othing that can be an object of the senses is to be called sublime. [What happens is that] our imagination strives to progress toward infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality as a real idea, and so [the imagination], our power of estimating the magnitude of things in the world of sense, is inadequate to that idea. Yet this inadequacy itself is the arousal in us of the feeling that we have within us a supersensible power … Sublime is what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense.’ 7 Note the movement that characterises Kant’s account of the sublime, which begins with a sense of awe at nature’s apparent infinities, but ends with a similar sense of awe at our own rational faculties. On Kant’s model, the disruptive moment of not knowing is recuperated in ways that re-affirm the powers of the subject, and reinforce his ability to separate himself from and transcend the material world of the senses. 5. Despite this, the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, writing nearly 200 years after Kant, recognises the potential in Kant’s account of the sublime for a more radical challenge to the knowing subject. For Lyotard, as for Kant, the sublime occurs when we encounter something we cannot represent, but unlike for Kant, this does not have to be the grand horizons of seemingly limitless oceans or mountain ranges. Rather, the infinite is contained within the most immediate and subtle of sensations, insofar as any sensation is infinitely unique, irreplaceable by any other. Hence, any attempt to grasp a sensory event, to make it present to ourselves by re-presenting it, will **inevitably erase** that which we were seeking to capture. Rather than recoup this inability via our power to think the infinite, Lyotard places the emphasis more on the value of this temporary incapacitation. It is only when we are thus undone as knowing subjects that we are able to remain open to the singularity of the material event, which Lyotard describes in terms of: ‘a singular, incomparable quality – unforgettable and immediately forgotten – of the grain of a skin or a piece of wood, the fragrance of an aroma, the savour of a secretion or a piece of flesh, as well as a timbre or a nuance. All these terms … designate the event of a passion, a passability for which the mind will not have been prepared, which will have unsettled it’. ‘Nuance or timbre are the distress and despair of the exact division … From this aspect of matter, one must say that it must be immaterial. … The matter I’m talking about is ‘immaterial’, anobjectable, because it can only ‘take place’ or find its occasion at the price of suspending [the] active powers of the mind.’ 8 Though Lyotard does not describe the sublime in terms of wonder here, perhaps wonder is still present in the ‘passion’ and ‘passability’ that allow us to remain open to the material event. Such events are immaterial to the knowing subject who can only betray their incomparable uniqueness by trying to grasp them via familiar forms and concepts. For Lyotard, as for Irigaray, the moment of not knowing thus holds **an ethical promise**, that of being able to do justice to the singular by **letting go of the desire to know**, and allowing ourselves to be unsettled into bearing witness to the incomparable and irreplaceable. 6. Allowing oneself to be thus undone is, for Lyotard, **the very condition of thought**, and hence, the condition of doing philosophy. Learning how to think means letting go of everything one thought one knew, so as to think again with an open and questioning inventiveness; teaching someone how to think means learning how to unlearn, so as to enter with them on the journey of a question. 9 Teacher and pupil both must be prepared to return to a state of unpreparedness and unknowing that he calls infancy: ‘You cannot open up a question without leaving yourself open to it. You cannot scrutinize a ‘subject’ ... without being scrutinized by it. You cannot do any of these things without renewing ties with the season of childhood, the season of the mind’s possibilities.’ 10 The inventiveness of infancy allows us to judge without criteria, where there are no rules to follow and no one to tell us what to do. Lyotard counsels us to nurture and renew the potency of infancy, the ‘childhood of thought’ that remains with us in adulthood and that grants human beings a capacity to begin again, to find new ways of thinking and being. Such infancy, he argues, is at odds with the contemporary emphasis on ‘performance’ which insists that our inventiveness must be **quantifiably productive** and refuses to tolerate a questioning that **does not know where it is going or whether answers will be found**. What Lyotard calls ‘the stifling busyness of performativity’ 11 cannot bear the idea of not making progress, nor find any value in the possibility of failure: from this perspective, having to begin again is a sign of time wasted, rather than of a capacity for renewal. Yet without the risk of failure, of getting lost or ‘being adrift’, 12 there is no real openness to the unknown, to the new thoughts that might emerge from the as yet unthought: ‘We write before knowing what to say and how to say it, and in order to find out, if possible. … We recommence, but we cannot rely on it getting to the thought itself, there, at the end. For the thought is here, muddled up in the unthought, trying to sort out the impertinent babble of childhood.’ 13 To foreclose this impertinent time of infancy is to foreclose the possibility of recommencing, of thinking again and beginning anew.

#### Now the permutation of our advocacies solves the best—fasching evidence is spot-on, we should constantly remain strangers to ourselves—the aff represents a break from the epistemic certainty characterized by post-9/11 political narratives—recognizing that we are not always right or that what we said isn’t perfect is not a reason to vote neg—it’s a reason to give us the opportunity to learn—this is a prerequisite to coalition building and intralocality that can effectively resist the excesses of whiteness

**Sholock 12** – Chatham University

(Adale, “Methodology of the Privileged: White Anti-racist Feminism, Systematic Ignorance, and Epistemic Uncertainty”, Hypatia Volume 27, Issue 4, pages 701–714, November 2012, dml)

However, something profound happens in The Color of Fear that troubles the epistemological arrogance and self-deception that epitomize normative whiteness. David frustrates everyone to the point where Victor Lewis, an African American man in the group, finally loses his patience and lashes out in anger at David's willful ignorance. This is a climactic moment in the film and one that I find instructive to white anti-racist efforts both feminist and otherwise. Lee Mun Wah, the filmmaker and facilitator of the discussion, gently but skillfully asks David what is keeping him from believing Victor's claims about pervasive racism: “So what would it mean David, then, if life really was that harsh? What if the world was not as you thought, that [racial injustice] is actually happening to lots of human beings on this earth?” He continues, “What if he knew his reality better than you?” What then occurs is best described as a “lightbulb moment”: David says with uncharacteristic thoughtfulness, “Oh, that's very saddening. You don't want to believe that man can be so cruel to himself and his own kind.” David's comment startlingly echoes what James Baldwin has described as the double-bind of white folk: “White America remains unable to believe that Black America's grievances are real; they are unable to believe this because they cannot face what this fact says about themselves and their country” (Baldwin 1985, 536). David's newfound awareness not only challenges his self-assuredness—as Baldwin suggests—but also his very authority as a knower. In other words, David shifts from the cognitive comforts of not knowing that he doesn't know to the epistemic uncertainties of knowing that he doesn't know.

I admit that The Color of Fear has sometimes made me feel a depressing lack of confidence in the ability of the privileged (myself included) to achieve any kind of mutually reciprocal relationship with the racially and geopolitically oppressed. Yet I believe that it is more accurate to view The Color of Fear as an allegory of hope and possibility for the future of feminism without borders. Of course, it is still uncomfortable to watch The Color of Fear and recognize that I might think and act more like David than I can fully comprehend, that his ignorance is structurally related to my own, and that I will not always know better. Nevertheless, I remind myself that it is the very moment when David admits his ignorance that Victor extends the offer, “from here I can work with you.”

David and Victor's breakthrough indicates that effective coalition across racial and other power inequities might actually benefit from epistemic uncertainty among the privileged. Of course, this observation will likely unsettle whites who are conditioned to assert epistemic mastery and authority. As Pratt admits, “to acknowledge … that there are things that I do not know … [is] an admission hard on my pride, and harder to do than it sounds” (Pratt 1984, 42). However, Bernice Johnson Reagon sagely reminds us that comfort is rarely part of coalition-building, as verified by the contentious conversations in The Color of Fear. Coalition work is “some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate the success of the coalition on whether or not they feel good when they get there” (Reagon 1983, 359). Accordingly, a methodology of the privileged might embrace the discomforts of epistemic uncertainty as an indication of effectiveness rather than failure within coalitional politics.

Perhaps more than self-reflexivity or racial sedition, epistemic uncertainty is a methodology that highlights the necessary interdependence of the privileged and the oppressed in struggles to eliminate injustice.12 For instance, when David's intellectual confidence finally wavers, he must rely upon the knowledge claims of non-whites in the group. In other words, it is only through Victor's keen understanding of racial oppression and white privilege that David recognizes his ignorance. According to Harding, in order for anti-racist and transnational solidarity to flourish, white women's reliance on insights developed by women of color feminists is “not a luxury but a necessity” (Harding 1991, 282). This methodological directive is itself evidence of the instruction Harding takes from women of color who assert that the epistemic accomplishments of the oppressed hold the key to the eradication of ignorance within feminist theory and praxis (Collins 1986; Narayan 1989; Anzaldúa, 1987; Sandoval 2000).

#### We think that this topic presents us with a unique opportunity—it allows debate to be a locus to rewrite the narrative of 9/11—let’s not forget the story of harry ramos, instead of acting to lash out against a threat we must reframe the catastrophe of 9/11 as an opportunity to reach out to otherness even in the heart of an inferno—this is critical to addressing violence at home

**Aretxaga 1**—UT-Austin

(Begona, “Terror as Thrill: First Thoughts on the ‘War on Terrorism”, Anthropological Quarterly, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Winter, 2001), pp. 138-150, dml)

From September 11 to the beginning of the bombing in Afghanistan, the news- paper The Austin American Statesman reported the war news daily under the same first page headline: "War on Terrorism: America Resolved." While the pa- per alluded to the determination of the country in its war against terrorism, the headline revealed the fact that the war could be a form of resolution for the ma- jor ailments of the country and the current administration. For a start, the war has produced a passionate nationalist unity and intense feeling of patriotism fo- cused on the charged figure of the American citizen. While the meaning of this patriotic fervor is not yet clear and its direction is still volatile, there is lit- tle question that, for the moment, it has erased from view the scabrous issue of ongoing class and racial violence. It has obscured from view the social aban- donment and police containment of poor communities, and managed to blame terrorism not only for the downturn of the economy but for the layoffs of workers as well. This is, of course not new. Wars often serve the purpose of di- verting social tension. Not only are deeply entrenched inequalities within the U.S. obscured by patriotism, but the surge of nationalist passion has elevated the popularity of an administration whose legitimacy before September 11 was doubtful. Social policies and progressive agendas are falling fast from sight, giving space to a new set of discourses and practices about national security that police dissent and censor information. For the time being, the war is produc- tive for conservative agendas and the security and military industries. The link between patriotic discourses and the machinery of the security is best exem- plified by the battery of counter-terrorist measures for which U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft summoned the most awkward descriptive title ever giv- en to a counter-terrorist package: "Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act 2001," a title which makes sense only when translated into its acronym form: PATRIOT Act 2001. Patriotism and na- tional betrayal are emerging as the organizing terms of political discourse. The bill-scaled down from its initial draft, which called for the indefinite detention of immigrant terrorist suspects-still gives wide authority to the police and se- cret services to arrest suspects, wiretap conversations and monitor e-mail com- munications.13 Other measures proposed by the administration include increasing the militarization of borders, tightening immigration procedures, and expanding the power of intelligence agencies. What all these antiterrorist meas- ures amount to is the suspension of civil liberties characteristic of a state of ex- ception, one that will, no doubt, target some populations more than others. The state of exception, of course, is not new either. How else can we conceptualize the politics of containment, intensive surveillance and industrial imprison- ment of poor inner city communities legitimized by the war on crime and the war on drugs? The question is whether this new state of exception redefines the juridical dimension of the new new world order. And if so, what form will this redefin- ition take? What implications will it have? Some scholars, such as Giorgio Agamben, have already warned about the increasing redefinitions of the law by an ongoing state of exception in late modernity. One of the consequences of this new state of law, is to quote Agamben, "that in the state of exception, it is im- possible to distinguish transgression of the law from execution of the law, such that what violates a rule and what conforms to it coincide without any re- minder" (1998:57).14 This indistinguishability between execution and trans-gression of the law, is also what characterizes the kind of guerrilla warfare that is often grouped under the rubric of terrorism. A war against Terrorism, then, mirrors the state of exception characteristic of insurgent violence, and in so do- ing it reproduces it ad infinitum. The question remains: What politics might be involved in this state of alert as normal state? Would this possible scenario of competing (and mutually constituting) terror signify the end of politics as we know it? Will it mean the subordination of the political to a state of right defined by security demands and military operations, as Toni Negri and Michael Hardt have suggested? And what would constitute the passions that would sustain such an ongoing confrontation? In the poor regions and neighborhoods of the Muslim world, where Islamist radicalism has found resonance, passions might be fueled by a vision of a society in which one is redeemed from suffering, mar- ginality and alienation. But in the U.S., what would feed the passions necessary to endure the suffering and support the violence of an unpredictable war? Would this be the thrill of terror provided by the spectacle of violence itself as it becomes routinized into timeless temporality? If the fundamental question of widening inequalities and growing injustice that this neoliberal globalization is creating is not addressed, and if U.S. foreign and domestic policies are not se- riously reconsidered to stop the massive loss of human life that goes on un- spectacularly behind the scenes, then there is little hope of ending terrorist forms of violence, including those practiced by state or state-like organiza- tions. If military strategy against a fictionalized and absolutized enemy pre- dominates as a convenient and productive scapegoat against untenable everyday violence, then we might find ourselves in a social space characterized by the timeless time of unending war, the fictional realities of a permanent state of exception and the spectacle of violence; this is a scene that is already in place in many areas of the world.

#### This matters in debate too—questions of identity can’t fix the activity alone—we need to look outwards towards the practices of institutions and politics—we must make our responsibilities concretely political

**Simmons ‘2** William Paul Simmons Professor of History and Political Science at Bethany College Towards an Anti-Foundationalist Foundation for Human Rights, March 2002

http://westcgi.west.asu.edu/amnesty/library/EventResources/documents/SimmonsHR2002.pdf

Hospitality, according to Derrida, shares the same phenomenological structure as the gift. That is, it is pre-ontological and an-archical. In addition, hospitality follows the same logic of separation and relation: just like Levinas' oscillation between the saying and the said, hospitality, as a type of pre-ontological saying, must be manifest in the realm of the said and it must be used to check the political. The original hospitality relation must be institutionalized in order to reach those others who are further away. To begin with, Derrida insists on the "impossibility" of hospitality. "In the same way that I have tried to show that the gift supposes a break with reciprocity, exchange, economy and circular movement, I have also tried to demonstrate that hospitality implies such a break; that is, if I inscribe the gesture of hospitality within a circle in which the guest should give back to the host, then it is not hospitality but conditional hospitality" (Derrida, 1999b, 69). So, unconditional hospitality implies that you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest, to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself. Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this. It is terrible to accept this, but that is the condition of unconditional hospitality; that you give up the mastery of your space, your home, your nation. It is unbearable. If, however, there is pure hospitality it should be pushed to this extreme (Derrida, 1999b, 70). This hospitality, must be manifest in the political. "The political task then becomes that of finding the best 'legislative transaction, the best 'juridical' conditions so that in a given situation the ethics of hospitality should not be violated in principle--and should be respected as much as possible. For this, it is necessary to change laws, habits, phantasms, an entire 'culture" (Derrida, 1998, 149). We must do everything precisely so that the laws of hospitality are written into positive law. When this is impossible, everyone should, in soul and conscience, occasionally in a private manner, judge what must be done (when, where, how, to what extent) without the laws or against the laws" (Derrida, 1998, 150). Ethics to Politics: The Third Levinas's philosophy champions the ethical relationship with the Other, but this is not the end of his philosophy. Levinas worries that the ego can become infatuated with the Other to the point of ignoring all others. This embrace of lovers, as Levinas calls it, is interrupted by the simultaneous appearance of another person, "the Third" (le tiers) who also demands an infinite and concrete hospitality. If the ego is confronted with one Other, then ethics is straightforward: the ego is infinitely, and concretely responsible for the Other. However, with the appearance of the Third, the ego's attention is divided: a host of new questions arise. Are both others the Other? How can the ego be infinitely responsible for more than one Other? Which Other should receive its attention first? What if one Other makes war on the other Other? Can the ego defend the Other against attacks from an-Other? If so, can the ego use violence, even kill an-Other in defense of the Other? Levinas, in an infamous interview, said If your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right, and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong (Levinas, 1989). The Third necessitates an extension of the ego's an-archical responsibility into the realm of the said, that is, responsibility must be made concrete in language, justice, and politics. The decisions that must be made between Others, leads to the famous weighing on the scales of justice. Further, with the appearance of the Third, the ego can no longer prioritize those in proximity, it must give attention to all Others. However, it is impossible to have a face-to-face relationship with each member of humanity. Those far away can only be reached indirectly through social and political institutions. Notice that the raison d’etre / reason for being for politics and justice is ethics. And Levinas believes that the modern liberal state can best actualize the ethical. The liberal state, according 14 to Levinas, is always trying to improve itself, trying to be more just, or, in Derrida’s terms, it is “a Democracy-to-Come”. To summarize Levinas' and Derrida’s thought; since "it is impossible to escape the State," they insist that the state be made as ethical as possible. The world of institutions and justice must be held in check by the an-archical responsibility for the Other. Alongside the an-archical responsibility for the Other there is a place for the realm of the said, which includes ontology, justice, and politics. Levinas calls for both the saying and the said, ethics and politics, and anti-foundationalism and justice.

**More evidence—localist ethics are obsolete. Adopting a normative stance about macro-institutional change is vital to engage issues that affect many cultures simultaneously. Debate should educate on these global issues to offset spectatorship to oppression**

**Ruiz and Minguez 2001** Prof. Dr Pedro Ortega Ruiz, Facultad de Educacio´ n, Campus de Espinardo, Universidad de Murcia, “Global Inequality and the Need for Compassion: issues in moral and political education” Journal of Moral Education, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2001

In addition to the reality of the dominant presence of instrumental reason in modern society, another closely linked phenomenon is shaping life at the level of the individual and society, individuals and peoples. We refer to the phenomenon of the increasing globalisation of ways of life in our complex societies which derive as much from the new forms of production as from the influence of science and technology upon life and social organisation (Waters, 1995). This explains the problems we find in guaranteeing a base of social solidarity in a general sense and the provision of forms of identity sufficiently strong for the social agents. It is difficult to represent the society in which we live in a unified manner. As individuals we belong to diverse communities, at times mutually contradictory. It is difficult to escape the need of having to choose between diverse forms of identity and belonging (Bafircena, 1997). The phenomenon of globalisation has **invalidated** the autistic, localist-focused procedures for highlighting and resolving problems because the great part of our social life is determined by global processes; that is to say, in those processes in which the influence of cultures, political economies, media and national frontiers are all weakened. The emergence of globalisation has made it possible to overcome the concept of nation states, giving way to another, wider reality: humanity, world citizenship or human family to foster the birth of new areas of identity beyond that of the nation state (Luhmann, 1997). During the last few decades it could be thought that the relationships and obligations of the citizen started and finished in their local community, in their polis, or at most in their national community. Now, on the other hand, we are concerned by problems occurring far from our frontiers or the conventional established limits. We have become aware that we are immersed in problems of such magnitude (environmental pollution, poverty and marginalisation of a large part of the world’s population, ethnic–cultural conflicts, etc.) that we seriously question localist attempts and have thrown to the winds the recipes so long applied to solve our problems. A new concept of citizenship and the citizen has been imposed on us. Our polis has become too small. The diversity of cultures and national frontiers are **no longer barriers** to the recognition of our **inter-dependency** and implication in problems which we now must share. These features (primacy of instrumental reason and globalisation) cannot go unnoticed in our pedagogy. Youth cannot be educated according to **out-dated localist schemes** already undermined by the real situation; nor offer educational models which place the learners in the position of open-mouthed spectators at what happens around them, distanced from the social reality which is supposedly impossible to change, governed by the implacable laws of market forces. To educate, as we understand it, is above all a praxis orientated towards enabling the learners to “read” and interpret reality and furthermore to take responsibility in the face of this reality. It is to help them grow in responsibility, to honour our obligations toward others.

#### Positioning personal experience as a justification for action creates a insulation from reevaluation--“You can’t criticize how I felt!” This process prevents criticism of the status quo, which can be rendered as purely subjective—“That’s only your experience, it can’t be applied to larger structural problems of social organization.” The project of making experience visible debilitates revolutionary praxis

**Scott 97.** Joan Scott, Professor of History at Princeton, 1997, Feminists Theorize the Political, “Experience”

When the evidence offered is the evidence of “experience,” the claim for referentiality is further buttressed – what could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through? It is precisely this kind of appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an **originary point of explaanation** – as foundation upon which analysis is based – that weakens the critical thrust of histories of difference. By remaining within the epistemological frame of orthodox history, these studies lose the possibility of examining those assumptions and practices that excluded considerations of difference in the first place. They **take as self-evidence the identities** of those whose experience is being documented and thus **naturalize their difference**. They locate resistance outside its discursive construction and reify agency as an inherent attribute of individuals, thus **decontextualizing it.** When experience is taken as the origin or knowledge, **the vision of the individual subject** (the person who had the experience of the historian who recounts it) **becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built**. Questions about **the constructed nature of experience**, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision s structured – about language (or discursive) and history – **are left aside**. The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. To put it another way, the evidence of experience, whether conceived through a metaphor of **visibility** or in any other way that **takes meaning as transparent**, **reproduces rather than contests given ideological systems**- those that assume that the facts of history speak for themselves and, in the case of histories of gender, those that rest on notions of a natural or established opposition between sexual practices and social conventions, and between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Histories that document the hidden world of homosexuality, for example, show the impact of silence and repression on the lives of those affected by it and bring to light the history of their suppression and exploitation. But **the project of making experience visible precludes critical examination** of the workings of the ideological system itself, it's categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origin, and cause. **The project of making experience visible precludes analysis of the workings of this system and of its historicity**; instead **it reproduces its terms**. We come to appreciate the consequences of the closeting of homosexuals and we understand repression as an interested act of power or domination; alternative behaviors and institutions also become available to us. What we don't have is a way of placing those alternatives within the framework of (historically contingent) dominant patterns of sexuality and the ideology that supports them. We know they exists, but not the extent of the critique. Making visible the experience of a different group exposes the existence of repressive mechanisms, **but not their inner workings or logics**; we know that difference exists, but we don't understand it as constituted relationally. For that we need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, **position subjects and produce their experiences.** It is not individuals who have experience, but **subjects who are constituted through experience.** Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is know, but rather what we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. **To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces**. This kind of historicizing represents a reply to the many contemporary historians who have argued that an **unproblematized “experience” is the foundation of their practice**; it is a historicizing that implies **critical scrutiny** of all explanatory categories usually taken for granted, including the category of “experience.”

#### Viewing hip-hop as uniquely emancipatory is depoliticizing

**Gitlin, 97** – professor of journalism and sociology at Columbia(Todd, “The anti-political populism of cultural studies,” Dissent, Spring, proquest)

From the late 1960s onward, as I have said, the insurgent energy was to be found in movements that aimed to politicize specific identities-racial minorities, women, gays. If the "collective behavior" school of once-conventional sociology had grouped movements in behalf of justice and democratic rights together with fads and fashions, cultural studies now set out to separate movements from fads, to take seriously the accounts of movement participants themselves, and thereby to restore the dignity of the movementsonly to end up, in the 1980s, linking movements with fads by finding equivalent dignity in both spheres, so that, for example, dressing like Madonna might be upgraded to an act of"resistance" equivalent to demonstrating in behalf of the right to abortion, and watching a talk show on family violence was positioned on the same plane. In this way, cultural studies extended the New Left symbiosis with popular culture. Eventually, the popular culture of marginal groups (punk, reggae, disco, feminist poetry, hip-hop) was promoted to a sort of counterstructure of feeling, and even, at the edges, a surrogate politics-a sphere of thought and sensibility thought to be insulated from the pressures of hegemonic discourse, of instrumental reason, of economic rationality, of class, gender, and sexual subordination. The other move in cultural studies was to claim that culture continued radical politics by other means. The idea was that cultural innovation was daily insinuating itself into the activity of ordinary people. Perhaps the millions had not actually been absorbed into the hegemonic sponge of mainstream popular culture. Perhaps they were freely dissenting. If "the revolution" had receded to the point of invisibility, it would be depressing to contemplate the victory of a hegemonic culture imposed by strong, virtually irresistible media. How much more reassuring to detect "resistance" saturating the pores of everyday life! In this spirit, there emerged a welter of studies purporting to discover not only the "active" participation of audiences in shaping the meaning of popular culture, but the "resistance" of those audiences to hegemonic frames of interpretation in a variety of forms-news broadcasts (Dave Morley, The `Nationwide ' Audience, 1980); romance fiction (Janice Radway, Reading the Romance, 1984); television fiction (Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, The Export of Meaning, 1990; Andrea Press, Women Watching Television, 1991); television in general (John Fiske, Television Culture, 1987); and many others. Thus, too, the feminist fascination with the fictions and talk shows of daytime "women's television"-in this view, the dismissal of these shows as "trivial," "banal," "soap opera," and so on, follows from the patriarchal premise that what takes place within the four walls of the home matters less than what takes place in a public sphere established (not coincidentally) for the convenience of men. Observing the immensity of the audiences for Oprah Winfrey and her legions of imitators, many in cultural studies upended the phenomenon by turning the definitions around. The largely female audiences for these shows would no longer be dismissed as distracted voyeurs, but praised as active participants in the exposure and therefore politicizing of crimes like incest, spousal abuse, and sexual molestation. These audiences would no longer be seen simply as confirming their "normality" with a safe, brief, wellbounded, vicarious acquaintanceship with deviance. They could be understood as an avant-garde social movement. Above all, in a word, cultural studies has veered into populism. Against the unabashed elitism of conventional literary and art studies, cultural studies affirms an unabashed populism in which all social activities matter, all can be understood, all contain cues to the social nature of human beings. The object of attention is certified as worthy of such not by being "the best that has been thought and said in the world" but by having been thought and said by or for "the people"-period. The popularity of popular culture is what makes it interesting-and not only as an object of study. It is the populism if not the taste of the analyst that has determined the object of attention in the first place. The sociological judgment that popular culture is important to people blurs into a critical judgment that popular culture must therefore be valuable. To use one of the buzzwords of "theory," there is a "slippage" from analysis to advocacy, defense, upward "positioning." Cultural studies often claims to have overthrown hierarchy, but what it actually does is invert it. What now certifies worthiness is the popularity of the object, not its formal qualities. If the people are on the right side, then what they like is good. This tendency in cultural studies-I think it remains the main line-lacks irony. One purports to stand four-square for the people against capitalism, and comes to echo the logic of capitalism. The consumer sovereignty touted by a capitalist society as the grandest possible means for judging merit finds a reverberation among its ostensible adversaries. Where the market flatters the individual, cultural studies flatters the group. What the group wants, buys, demands is ipso facto the voice of the people. Where once Marxists looked to factory organization as the prefiguration of "a new society in the shell of the old," today they tend to look to sovereign culture consumers. David Morley, one of the key researchers in cultural studies, and one of the most reflective, has himself deplored this tendency in recent audience studies. He maintains that to understand that "the commercial world succeeds in producing objects. . . which do connect with the lived desires of popular audiences" is "by no means necessarily to fall into the trap . . . of an uncritical celebration of popular culture." But it is not clear where to draw the line against the celebratory tendency when one is inhibited from doing so by a reluctance to criticize the cultural dispositions of the groups of which one approves. Unabashedly, the populism of cultural studies prides itself on being political. In the prevailing schools of cultural studies, to study culture is not so much to try to grasp cultural processes but to choose sides or, more subtly, to determine whether a particular cultural process belongs on the side of society's angels. An aura of hope surrounds the enterprise, the hope (even against hope) of an affirmative answer to the inevitable question: Will culture ride to the rescue of the cause of liberation? There is defiance, too, as much as hope. The discipline means to cultivate insubordination. On this view, marginalized groups in the populace continue to resist the hegemonic culture. By taking defiant popular culture seriously, one takes the defiers seriously and furthers their defiance. Cultural studies becomes "cult studs." It is charged with surveying the culture, assessing the hegemonic import of cultural practices and pinpointing their potentials for "resistance." Is this musical style or that literary form "feminist" or "authentically Latino"? The field of possibilities is frequently reduced to two: for or against the hegemonic. But the nature of that hegemony, in its turn, is usually defined tautologically: that culture is hegemonic that is promoted by "the ruling group" or "the hegemonic bloc," and by the same token, that culture is "resistant" that is affirmed by groups assumed (because of class position, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on) to be "marginalized" or "resistant." The process of labeling is circular, since it has been predetermined whether a particular group is, in fact, hegemonic or resistant. The populism of cultural studies is fundamental to its allure, and to the political meaning its adherents find there, for cultural studies bespeaks an affirmation of popularity tout court. To say that popular culture is "worth attention" in the scholarly sense is, for cultural studies, to say something pointed: that the people who render it popular are not misguided when they do so, not fooled, not dominated, not distracted, not passive. If anything, the reverse: the premise is that popular culture is popular because and only because the people find in it channels of desire pleasure, initiative, freedom. It is this premise that gives cultural studies its aura of political engagement-or at least political consolation. To unearth reason and value, brilliance and energy in popular culture is to affirm that the people have not been defeated. The cultural student, singing their songs, analyzing their lyrics, at the same time sings their praises. However unfavorable the balance of political forces, people succeed in living lives of vigorous resistance! Are the communities of African-Americans or AfroCaribbeans suffering? **Well, they have rap!** (Leave aside the question of whether all of them want rap.) The right may have taken possession of 10 Downing Street, the White House, and Congress-and as a result of elections, embarrassingly enough!-but at least one is engage in cultural studies. Consolation: here is an explanation for the rise of academic cultural studies during precisely the years when the right has held political and economic power longer and more consistently than at any other time in more than a half century. Now, in effect, "the cultural is political," and more, it is regarded as central to the control of political and economic resources. The control of popular culture is held to have become decisive in the fate of contemporary societies-or at least it is the sphere in which opposition can find footing, find breathing space, rally the powerless, defy the grip of the dominant ideas, isolate the powers that be, and prepare for a "war of position" against their dwindling ramparts. On this view, to dwell on the centrality of popular culture is more than an academic's way of filling her hours; it is a useful certification of the people and their projects. To put it more neutrally, the political aura of cultural studies is supported by something like a "false consciousness" premise: the analytical assumption that what holds the ruling groups in power is their capacity to muffle, deform, paralyze, or destroy contrary tendencies of an emotional or ideological nature. By the same token, if there is to be a significant "opposition," it must first find a base in popular culture-and first also turns out to be second, third, and fourth, since popular culture is so much more accessible, so much more porous, so much more changeable than the economic and political order. With time, what began as compensation hardened-became institutionalized-into a tradition. Younger scholars gravitated to cultural studies because it was to them incontestable that culture was politics. To do cultural studies, especially in connection with identity politics, was the politics they knew. The contrast with the rest of the West is illuminating. In varying degrees, left-wing intellectuals in France, Italy, Scandinavia, Germany, Spain and elsewhere retain energizing attachments to Social Democratic, Green, and other left-wing parties. There, the association of culture with excellence and traditional elites remains strong. But in the Anglo-American world, including Australia, these conditions scarcely obtain. Here, in a discouraging time, **popular culture emerges as a consolation prize**. (The same happened in Latin America, with the decline of left-wing hopes.) The sting fades from the fragmentation of the organized left, the metastasis of murderous nationalism, the twilight of socialist dreams virtually everywhere. Class inequality may have soared, ruthless individualism may have intensified, the conditions of life for the poor may have worsened, racial tensions may have mounted, unions and social democratic parties may have weakened or reached an impasse, but never mind. Attend to popular culture, study it with sympathy, and one need not dwell on unpleasant realities. One need not be unduly vexed by electoral defeats. One need not be preoccupied by the ways in which the political culture's center of gravity has moved rightward-or rather, one can put this down to the iron grip of the established media institutions. One need not even be rigorous about what one opposes and what one proposes in its place. Is capitalism the trouble? Is it the particular form of capitalism practiced by multinational corporations in a deregulatory era? Is it patriarchy (and is that the proper term for a society that has seen an upheaval in relations between women and men in the course of a half-century)? Racism? Antidemocracy? Practitioners of cultural studies, like the rest of the academic left, are frequently elusive. Speaking cavalierly of "opposition" and "resistance" permits-rather, cultivates-a certain sloppiness of thinking, making it possible to remain "left" without having to face the most difficult questions of political selfdefinition. The situation of cultural studies conforms to the contours of our political moment. It confirms-and reinforces-the current paralysis: the incapacity of social movements and dissonant sensibilities to imagine effective forms of public engagement. It substitutes an obsession with popular culture for coherent economic-political thought or a connection with mobilizable populations outside the academy and across identity lines. One must underscore that this is not simply because of cultural studies' default. The default is an effect more than a cause. It has its reasons. The odds are indeed stacked against serious forward motion in conventional politics. Political power is not only beyond reach, but functional majorities disdain it, finding the government and all its works contemptible. Few of the central problems of contemporary civilization are seriously contested within the narrow band of conventional discourse. Unconventional politics, such as it is, is mostly fragmented and self-contained along lines of racial, gender, and sexual identities. One cannot say that cultural studies diverts energy from a vigorous politics that is already in force. Still, insofar as cultural studies makes claims for itself as an insurgent politics, the field is presumptuous and misleading. Its attempt to legitimize the ecstasies of the moment confirms the collective withdrawal from democratic hope. Seeking to find political energies in audiences who function as audiences, rather than in citizens functioning as citizens, the dominant current in cultural studies is pressed willy-nilly toward an uncritical celebration of technological progress. It offers no resistance to the primacy of visual and nonlinear culture over the literary and linear. To the contrary: it embraces technological innovation as soon as the latest developments prove popular. It embraces the sufficiency of markets; its main idea of the intellect's democratic commitment is to flatter the audience. Is there a chance of a modest redemption? Perhaps, if we imagine a harder headed, less wishful cultural studies, free of the burden of imagining itself to be a political practice. A chastened, realistic cultural studies would divest itself of political pretensions. It would not claim to be politics. It would not mistake the academy for the larger society. It would be less romantic about the world-and about itself. Rigorous practitioners of cultural studies should be more curious about the world that remains to be researchedand changed. We would learn more about politics, economy, and society, and in the process, appreciate better what culture, and cultural study, do not accomplish. If we wish to do politics, let us organize groups, coalitions, demonstrations, lobbies, whatever; let us do politics. Let us not think that our academic work is already that.

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Having traced a major strand in the development of CRT, we turn now to the strands' effect on the relationships of CRATs with each other and with outsiders. As the foregoing material suggests, the central CRT message is not simply that minorities are being treated unfairly, or even that individuals out there are in pain - assertions for which there are data to serve as grist for the academic mill - but that **the minority scholar** himself or herself hurts and hurts badly.

An important problem that concerns the very definition of the scholarly enterprise now comes into focus. What can an academic trained to [\*694] question and to doubt n72 possibly say to Patricia Williams when effectively she announces, "I hurt bad"? n73 "No, you don't hurt"? "You shouldn't hurt"? "Other people hurt too"? Or, most dangerously - and perhaps most tellingly - "What do you expect when you keep shooting yourself in the foot?" If the majority were perceived as having the well- being of minority groups in mind, these responses might be acceptable, even welcomed. And they might lead to real conversation. But, writes Williams, the failure by those "cushioned within the invisible privileges of race and power... to incorporate a sense of precarious connection as a part of our lives is... ultimately obliterating." n74

"Precarious." "Obliterating." These words will clearly invite responses only from fools and sociopaths; they will, by **effectively precluding objection**, disconcert and disunite others. "I hurt," in academic discourse, has three broad though interrelated effects. First, it demands priority from the reader's conscience. It is for this reason that law review editors, waiving usual standards, have privileged a long trail of undisciplined - even silly n75 - destructive and, above all, self-destructive arti [\*695] cles. n76 Second, by emphasizing the emotional bond between those who hurt in a similar way, "I hurt" discourages fellow sufferers from abstracting themselves from their pain in order to gain perspective on their condition. n77

[\*696] Last, as we have seen, it precludes the possibility of **open and structured conversation** with others. n78

[\*697] It is because of this conversation-stopping effect of what they insensitively call "first-person agony stories" that Farber and Sherry deplore their use. "The norms of academic civility hamper readers from challenging the accuracy of the researcher's account; it would be rather difficult, for example, to criticize a law review article by questioning the author's emotional stability or veracity." n79 Perhaps, a better practice would be to put the scholar's experience on the table, along with other relevant material, but to subject that experience to the same level of scrutiny.

If through the foregoing rhetorical strategies CRATs succeeded in limiting academic debate, why do they not have greater influence on public policy? Discouraging white legal scholars from entering the national conversation about race, n80 I suggest, has generated a kind of cynicism in white audiences which, in turn, has had precisely the reverse effect of that ostensibly desired by CRATs. It drives the American public to the right and ensures that anything CRT offers is reflexively rejected.

In the absence of scholarly work by white males in the area of race, of course, it is difficult to be sure what reasons they would give for not having rallied behind CRT. Two things, however, are certain. First, the kinds of issues raised by Williams are too important in their implications  [\*698]  for American life to be confined to communities of color. If the lives of minorities are heavily constrained, if not fully defined, by the thoughts and actions of the majority elements in society, it would seem to be of great importance that white thinkers and doers participate in open discourse to bring about change. Second, given the lack of engagement of CRT by the community of legal scholars as a whole, the discourse that should be taking place at the highest scholarly levels has, by default, been displaced to faculty offices and, more generally, the streets and the airwaves.

#### Their arguments about personal agency are ultimately conservative and de-politicizing – arguments for localizing activism within the purview of social location are the equivalent of privatizing social change, creating us as dependent on the necessity of their advocacy. The more successful their strategy is the more damage it does by making institutions necessary to our understanding of social change

Hershock '99, East-West Center, 1999.  [“Changing the way society changes”, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 6, 154; <http://jbe.gold.ac.uk/6/hershock991.html>]

The trouble is that, like other technologies biased toward control, the more successful legislation becomes, the more it renders itself necessary. Because it aims at rigorous definition -- at establishing hard boundaries or limits -- crossing the threshold of legislative utility means creating conditions under which the definition of freedom becomes so complex as to be self-defeating. Taken to its logical end, legally-biased social activism is thus liable to effect an infinite density of protocols for maintaining autonomy, generating a matrix of limits on discrimination that would finally be conducive to what might be called "axiological entropy" -- a state in which movement in any direction is equally unobstructed *and* empty of dramatic potential. Contrary to expectations, complete "freedom of choice" would not mean the elimination of all impediments to meaningful improvisation, but rather an erasure of the latter's conditions of possibility. The effectiveness and efficiency of "hard," control-biased technologies depend on our using natural laws -- horizons of possibility -- as fulcrums for leveraging or dictating changes in the structure of our circumstances. Unlike improvised contributions to changes taking place in our situation, dictating the terms of change effectively silences our situational partners. Technological authority thus renders our circumstances mute and justifies ignoring the contributions that might be made by the seasons or the spiritual force of the mountains to the meaning -- the direction of movement -- of our ongoing patterns of interdependence. With the "perfection" of technically-mediated control, our wills would know no limit. We would be as gods, existing with no imperatives, no external compulsions, and no priorities. We would have no reason to do one thing first or hold one thing, and not another, as most sacred or dear. Such "perfection" is, perhaps, as fabulous and unattainable as it is finally depressing. Yet the vast energies of global capital are committed to moving in its direction, for the most part quite uncritically. The consequences -- as revealed in the desecration and impoverishing of both 'external' and 'internal' wilderness (for instance, the rainforests and our imaginations) -- are every day more evident. The critical question we must answer is whether the "soft" technologies of legally-biased and controlled social change commit us to an equivalent impoverishment and desecration. The analogy between the dependence of technological progress on natural laws and that of social activism on societal laws is by no means perfect. Except among a scattering of philosophers and historians of science, for example, the laws of nature are not viewed as changeable artifacts of human culture. But for present purposes, the analogy need only focus our attention on the way legal institutions -- like natural laws -- do not prescriptively determine the shape of all things to come, but rather establish generic limits for what relationships or states of affairs are factually admissible. Laws that guarantee certain "freedoms" necessarily also prohibit others. Without the fulcrums of *unallowable* acts, the work of changing a society would remain as purely idealistic as using wishful thinking to move mountains. Changing legal institutions at once forces and enforces societal reform. By affirming and safeguarding those freedoms or modes of autonomy that have come to be seen as generically essential to 'being human',

a legally-biased social activism cannot avoid selectively limiting the ways we engage with one another. The absence of coercion may be a basic aim of social activism, but if our autonomy is to be guaranteed both fair and just, its basic strategy must be one of establishing non-negotiable constraints on how we co-exist. Social activism is thus in the business of striking structural compromises between its ends and its means -- between particular freedoms and general equality, and between practical autonomy and legal anonymity. By shifting the locus of freedoms from unique persons to generic citizens -- and in substantial sympathy with both the Platonic renunciation of particularity and the scientific discounting of the exceptional and extraordinary -- social activist methodology promotes dramatic anonymity in order to universally realize the operation of 'blind justice'. Much as hard technologies of control silence the contributions of wilderness and turn us away from the rewards of a truly joint improvisation of order, the process of social activism reduces the relevance of the always unique and unprecedented terrain of our interdependence. This is no small loss. The institutions that guarantee our generic independence effectively pave over those vernacular relationships through which our own contributory virtuosity might be developed and shared -- relationships out of which the exceptional meaning of our immediate situation might be continuously realized. In contrast with Buddhist emptiness -- a practice that entails attending to the mutual relevance of all things -- both the aims and strategies of social activism are conducive to an evacuation of the conditions of dramatic virtuosity, a societal depletion of our resources for meaningfully improvised and liberating intimacy with all things.