

Image and Imagination in Fascist Ideology'

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Abstract: There are many ways by which politics is rationalized. Any time ideology must find a reason for its program, it may yield to the temptation that it has discovered a truth about human life or society. What begins as a convenience may end as a ritual. Its effect is one of both doctrine and dogma, and its character is always fascist. This paper explores some of the elemental relationships between the political imagination and any ideology which strays into the routinization of fascism, including the problem of cross-cultural knowledge claims, the power of dominant discourses, and the ways in which fascism imagines the other to itself is persons, society, and politics.

Key words: fascism, other, imagination, tradition, Nazism, truth

INTRODUCTION

The idea must fit the ideology of the institute that is supposed to absorb it and must agree with the ways research is done there. And there is no individual human being to whom he could explain his suggestion and whom he could educate in the ways of thinking - there are anonymous committees, often stacked with incompetents who regard their own ignorance as the measure of things. (Feyerabend, op. cit. 254).

Citizens, not one-thousandth of whom he knows, not one-hundredth of whom he ever saw, and the great mass of whom belong to classes having habits and modes of thought of which he has but dim notions, he feels sure will act in ways he foresees, and fulfill ends he wishes. (Spencer, op. cit. 117).

As a matter of fact, two axioms seem to have guided the advance of Western civilization from the outset: the first maintains that true societies unfold in the protective shadow of the State; the second states a categorical imperative: man must work. (Clastres, op. cit. 193)

Apparent Relativity of Cultural Claims:

Human consciousness is not one thing alone. Singular in the universe through the diversity of natural selection and environment does not give it the structure of internal singularity. What we share today is an affect of a specific history, a series of events that cannot be exactly repeated. Human life is such that it not only engenders a variety of modes of being and thinking, but that each of us, thrown into the on-running of such an *erlebnis*, each within a lifeworld and a social reality not of his or her own creation, must confront living on from the very moment of existence. It is this confrontation that sparks our imaginations, with the persistent theme of overcoming what exists, of getting beyond the life that is shown to be the one into which we have been thrown. Even in social contract societies, the youth seek to join the community, for it is this collective sensibility that represents the radical difference between culture and nature. In our own complexity, the choices seem endless. Yet we learn through often bitter experience that our lot is not so different from that of our ancient ancestors. We too must curb our imaginations, we too must embody the shared vision of whatever collective representation invites us, sometimes with menace as much as with love, to 'join in'. Only through these others can the self attain itself, and this irony never ceases to leave its mark upon our imaginations. This abiding tension between our desires, also socially constructed and often in opposition to what is plausible in that self-same society, and the modes of life that allow, and indeed proclaim the superiority of, normative forms, drives our faculties of the possible towards new values, rather than the goals we have come to either respect or disdain: "With man, the teleologically emergent element not only appears as separate from all purpose, but in doing so it frequently disturbs and injures our purposive processes. This can only have a meaning, though, for creatures that can place themselves beyond life." (Simmel, op. cit. 29). What exactly is the life against which we aspire in this way, that which we desire to transcend in manners which, on the face of it, might well take us beyond our own humanity? This vision, that not only can I overcome my cultural background and its norms and forms, but that in doing so, I can create life anew, is hardly an invention of fascism. Its primordially is, however, a major characteristic of the vision of a culture that wishes to re-imagine itself as a super-culture, or the men who would become 'super-men', and of all followers who desire to become leaders.

What immeasurably aided the Nazi version of self-overcoming was the modern sensibility that there was not only an alternative to traditional modes of thought and practice, but that this new imagination, historically emerging over the past four hundred years in its contemporary form, held that these traditions had no real substance and were part of an inferior process of thinking. All at once, the idea of progress and leaving the

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inferior behind coalesced in an image of overcoming. Indeed, these two elements were the foundations for the meaning of overcoming. Beyond good and evil, perhaps, but more effectively, beyond the world as it had been, beyond the provinciality of forces which always and already ran up against other forces of the same character. The religions, their denominations, their opposing cultures, and their bitter struggles and ironically hypocritical and sadistic conquests, were the institutions that were the hallmark of the traditions Nazism sought to overcome, though as often as not by using their methods. But it was the advent of the scientific worldview and its attendant *cosmic* imagination that cleared the ontological space for such ideas: "What is extraordinary about this fact is that it relativizes the distinctions among the great world religions. Each of them must certainly continue to hold that its own doctrine and its own faith are the true doctrine and the true faith, and yet scientific atheism and its political organization represent a viewpoint from which - politically considered - all the differences amongst religions seem less serious." (Gadamer 1998:89 [1983]). Cast in this way, modern knowledge appears to be but the fruit of a new and highly successful competitor to agrarian metaphysics, one that has territorialized much away from the latter. But this is not quite accurate. The correct attitude of the empirical scientist is one of a kind of agnosticism, and not atheism, which, as we have already seen, is a specific form of religious- based fervor apparently appropriate to the post-Darwinian period. Science proper is more like the thought of Marx and Engels, proper, as 'for the communist man the question of god cannot arise'. As against Feuerbachian atheism, Marx reminds us that a truly revolutionary consciousness no longer thinks of matters in the old binary of either there is a god or there is not. This is patently an eighteenth century question, and one, after Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, seems to have less value today. This is where atheists of all stripes make an historical error. They seem to wish to turn the clock back on the metaphysical debate a few centuries, and in this they participate as much in their own version of religion as those they rail against. Even so, if agnosticism is both the more reasoned and ethical form of thinking concerning the other world, the question of its existence or its non-existence are still somewhere in our minds. I think this will be the case unless and until technical evolution as a specific aspect of the cultural evolution humans have been subject to since the earliest of the hominids developed technology, language, and the community of humanity, pushes us into a new species with indefinite lifetimes.

Long before atheism or agnosticism would have been accepted as normative forms of socialization, however, scientists were prone to act in a religious tone: "Galileo did not simply ask for the freedom to publish his results, he wanted to impose them on others. In this respect he was a pushy and totalitarian as many modern prophets of science - and as uninformed. He simply took it for granted that the special and very restricted methods of astronomers [] were the correct way of getting access to Truth and Reality." (Feyerabend, op. cit. 249). This is but one example. It is plausible that due to the authoritarian manner that emanates from the institutions of revealed religion, those who wish to provide alternate forms of knowing and perceiving fall into the trap of becoming alternate acolytes of their new religion. Even relying on 'the evidence' is, as we have seen massively subject to local political forces and other kinds of normative bigotries. To say something is real based on the 'obvious;' facts of the case presupposes that human beings can be objective judges of both the case and its attendant facts. The human amalgam of subjectivity and objectivity cannot be ignored simply because it is inconvenient. All credos have attempted to ignore the vicissitudes of human perception, both of self and of the cosmos. For science to do so, for it to deny the very core of its distinctive discourse which not only has relativized the apparent truth claims of human cultural diversity but also has, built into its own architecture, the method of radical doubt as part of its tool-chest, is an oversight worse than any religious bias. Its ancient heritage, first explored by the Greeks in a variety of ways that eventually led to seemingly polar oppositions in Western consciousness, was one of experiment and speculation. It replaced the narrative of myth with the narrative of method. It acceded to human reason and to human observation the language necessary to stake a new kind of claim, one in which it was a given that the order of the universe was something both natural and timeless. That human beings were a product of this nature lent them the ability to probe its depths. Each question regarding the cosmos, as Sagan has famously intoned, is also fundamentally a question about ourselves: "It is by rational thought that we are to find the standards of moral conduct, and it is reason, and reason alone, that can give them their authority." (Cassirer, op. cit. 81). The timelessness of cosmic order takes the idea of following a rule to a completely different level. One no longer decides to be this or that way, in the sense of being what one is as a human being in the universe. One can no longer adopt a metaphysics of one's favor, or indeed, follow indiscriminately this or that worldview due to its fashion or its political arbitration. The empiricity of science, the patterns it reveals, and the logic of its mathematical language, brook no dissension. Ironically, taken out of its own methodological context, science can be used as the epitome of authoritarian dogma: "In contrast with this Greek *intellectualism* prophetic religion is characterized by its deep and resolute *voluntarism*. God is a person - and that means a will." (ibid:81-2, italics the text's). It is through the notorious insensitivity of the human institutions that claim to be representative of the divine will that one's own personal will is made into the obeisance of a slave. So it is said, at least, and, ever since William James, we are, in our own time more likely to understand this difference with some sensitivity, rather than immediately arming ourselves with the equally self-righteous and 'godly' drivel of an unreflective atheism which in turn abuses the evidence of the sciences in its own name.

One advantage that the modern period has constructed for itself in the light of the retreat of agrarian metaphysics is a sensibility concerning the *partiality* - in both senses, that it is incomplete and that it favors this or that view of things - of history. Even for the Greeks of the Hellenic period, this was something that was not fully developed, and the scions of that neo-Platonic discourse tended to quash its influence altogether. Speaking of the scholastics, Cassirer suggests that: "They did not care for historical truth. They only knew and acknowledged symbolic truth. They had no critical or philological standards of interpretation; they used the medieval method of allegorical and spiritual interpretation." (ibid:88). The givenness of the metaphysical source of all things was too much of a given for the modern ear to find appealing. It is almost as if we would rather confront the ambience of a diffuse truth regarding our self-consciousness - the diversity of biography, even the 'changes of heart and mind' that at once plague us and also free us, could indeed seem like the essence of things - and human history with a grimace and a wince than take up the stridency and self-sacrifice that revealed religion as an ultimatum to humanity requires. On the one hand, this may well be seen as a maturation of the species. The ongoing 'privatization' of religion in all quarters of the globe, with some regional exceptions in the Islamic world, perhaps, is further evidence that we prefer to take what is sacred to us into a greater intimacy. Religious belief is no longer about the maintenance of community, even if religious behavior still serves that social function. At the same time, and on the other hand, this new understanding of the radical discontinuity of forms of historical knowledge and experience can lend itself to exactly the opposite outcomes than what we had hoped. One could simply deny an interpretation, if all we know is but the product of interpretation: "If the offensive thrust of such neo-Nazi revisionists is that the Holocaust never happened, their first line of legal defense is more sophisticated, namely that this denial is as historically valid as any account that states the opposite." (Browning 1992:31). One then must immediately raise the question regarding the standard of evidence. Holocaust denial accedes to no such normative standards as to be recognizable, but the problem does not end there. There are plenty of much more specific kinds of experiences and accounts, often calculated at the time by the posterity conscious SS, that muddy some of the waters. The actions of 'Sonderkommando 1005' are just one example of this. Anything that makes it more difficult, especially over the long term to decipher the empirical quality of historical events makes our perception of them, not less clear, but less like what must have actually occurred for the people living in these times. We struggle with historical events that are more than three centuries old, for example, simply because the highly rationalized documentation of the modern nation-state apparatus was non-existent. The more ancient the period, the more speculative is our reconstruction of it. This is inevitable, given our technology, and unless or until time machines are built we are prisoners of our own age, and no other. Fortunately, in the age of film, more recent events have less doubt about them. Certainly, events both horrifying and joyous can be staged, but it has been relatively easy to tell which part of the remaining Nazi archive was propaganda and which was document.

What is most sobering about the historical imagination involves us in the phenomenological effort to understand someone else's subjective experience of the past as now a memory within the framework of the wider historical context, a context which continues to exert its resonance and even its sheer immanence in our own time: "The existential experience of the victims does not readily allow for the transposition of their specific, historically subjective classification of the events onto a more general plane. It would constitute an embarrassing anomaly if, in fact, persons belonging to the collective implicated in the crimes were to classify those anti-Jewish measures that were anterior to, and thus seemingly in contrast with, the mass extermination as being rational." (Diner 1992:132). The idea that rationality, given that it too must be taken at first as a relativistic and historical construction that might well be redefined pending political circumstances, can give way to evil is not so much an anomaly as one of a diversity of potential outcomes. Indeed, it would have been more rational for the Reich to use its marginal 'human resources' differently. Rather than expend energy in extermination programs, those that were regarded as sub-human could have been combat trained and sent into dangerous situations to provide support for the rest of the military. 'Even' women could have been used in this way. This would have added perhaps eight or more millions of troops to a Germany that was faced with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of Russians. No doubt this would have been sufficient, given other factors such as quality of executive decision making most importantly, to assure victory. Nothing in the ideological component of the Reich would have had to have been adjusted for this occur, and the remaining marginal types could have been murdered afterwards. Rationality can in fact encompass its own version of evil.

The war against 'The Jews' was, militarily and politically speaking, a wasted effort with absolutely no relevance to rationality. This does not mean, however, that rationality could not have satisfied in other ways, even taking it as a form of perception and logic that in itself would satisfy different cultural suasions. This kind of thesis always dances on its own proto-fascist precipice, as with science, such a rationality that makes universalist claims is subject to not only dogma but also meaning transcendentalized, taken outside of history and culture. If a form of relativism was used in the Nazi imagination as a defense against cultural critique, then the idea that there should be a more objective way of judging such events and actions must rather cautiously tread the waters of another kind of meaningfulness, that making statements concerning human values which may well not hold over time and space. Human suffering cannot be put aside, but perhaps 'rationality' is not the

best place to begin. Instead, bereft of all rationality and logic, the meaning of the victims' experiences *does* communicate itself to us across the gulf of biography and history, and this is an ability that has been within the ambit of human experience since the beginning: "Meaning persists, detached from any message, and it is its absolute permanence that supplies the ground on which speech can stand as value and nothing else. Language can be language no longer without dissolving by that fact into senselessness, and anyone can understand the song..." (Clastres, op. cit. 125). If one cannot generalize the subjectivity of history, one can certainly do so with suffering, loss, trauma, and regret. If nothing else, one can do so in a manner sufficient to recreate a like message, the kerygmatic kernel of a sorrow that, in the face of an evil, resists until death. Sorrow, evil, death, remembrance are all part of an eminently generalizable frame of human experience, and one need not appeal to rationality or to relativism to make a case for the availability of concerned being. Fortunately, there is enough evidence that lies outside of many cultural, and perhaps biographical, imaginations to thrust itself upon our consciousness, no matter the distances involved. Such imagery, more so than artifacts or the mortal memory which can only be transferred to text, continues to impose itself upon us, continues to do what it had originally done. The Nazi imagination is not merely still with us when we copy their politics of shameless bullying, but is *within* us when we are confronted with its crimes.

Domineering Discourses:

The limits to our present imagination that are most dangerous to ourselves and to the resonance of history are not in fact those by which we struggle to communicate the depths of humanity, but are rather those that allow focused power a decisive role in the making of our own history. At the limits of agency, a faith is erected as a bulwark against what we imagine to be potential meaninglessness. But this faith is both misplaced and misdirected: "This strong faith in State-agencies is, however, accompanied by so weak a faith in natural agencies [] that, in spite of past experience, it will by many be thought absurd to rest in the conviction that existing social needs will be spontaneously met, though we cannot say how they will be met." (Spencer, op. cit. 152). When our own powers fail us, when the force of whatever community that may exist in the contemporary political landscape seems fragile and at the end of its reach, we then over-reach both ourselves and our ideas of unity in giving over to the State a kind of blank existential check. We collectively say to the State, 'you can spend our lives in any way that furthers the cause of our lives'. If we were the actual functioning elements of the State, its cells and its organs, we do not, by definition, represent the whole of either its body or of its powers. Yet at the same time its power is precisely power over its constituents, and may only exert externalizing powers by sacrificing aspects of its own interior. We continue to over-estimate the powers of persons, but more dangerously, we also continue to under-estimate the powers of 'the State'. We imagine, in other words, that a personification of ourselves might exist independently of persons. Certainly, this is an ancient idea, but it has never been associated with the kind of risk that its fascist implications have in the present day: "Indeed this faith in governments is in a certain sense organic; and can diminish only by being outgrown. From the time when rulers were thought demigods, there has been a gradual decline in men's estimates of their power. This decline is still in progress, and has still far to go. Doubtless, every increment of evidence furthers it in *some* degree..." (ibid:172, italics the text's). One might well suggest, in light of the general distrust of the authority of government and lack of faith in its abilities, especially the absence of trust in the ability and even more so the motives of politicians, that Spencer's evolutionary tack is finally bearing real fruit. But this would be premature. Populations and cultures of all kinds are suspicious of centralized power, but this does not prevent there being in existence an entire range of more or less authoritarian forms of government, from attempted theocracies of a rather medieval tone, to controlled economies that self-label as socialist, to inveterate capitalist pseudo-democracies, to outright dictatorships of madmen. What all of them share is not only the distrust of those they are ideally responsible to and for, but because of this, and indeed also leading directly to this distrust, is that they all exercise the inalienable right to use force to bind the desires and wills of 'the people'. The state, in a word, turns 'a people' into 'its people' in the manner of a religion. At no time, however, do the gods exert the kind of actual physical suasion that does a modern state. One could turn away from one prophet with only metaphysical doubts, and more rarely doubts about one's physical safety and continued freedom, whatever that may have meant in different ages and places. Not so today: "It is power that, having become separate from society, is exercised over, and if need be, against society. The focus of attention here has been the whole series of societies with a State, from the most archaic despotisms to the most modern of totalitarian States, going by way of the democratic societies, whose State apparatus, for all its liberalism, nonetheless remains in remote control of *legitimate violence*." (Clastres, op. cit. 152, italics the text's). How this moist flagrant and immediate use of power becomes legitimate is, experientially and immanently, a cause of the greatest ethical concern. It is one thing to say that we 'the people' generally agree about certain laws and norms and desire the protection of professional arm of the state and its 'apparatus' because some elements of our shared society exist that threaten us. We may be tolerant of certain excesses and not of others. Our values may contradict, and this then is reflected in the official view of things as written within a legal code or a political process. We accept that the

majority is not so much in the right, but has needs that by definition should be satisfied before other, needs, deemed more marginal, are met. The 'what if' scenarios of manipulation and the over-runs of ideology are not entirely lost on us, but the fault appears when we, as we almost always do, compare ourselves *only* with these excesses and not so much with ideals which are even now easily within our reach. We prefer to smugly congratulate ourselves that, whatever our mimicry of the Nazis, we do not live in the Fourth Reich, rather than busy ourselves with eliminating global poverty and malnutrition. The concentration camps are the urban sprawls of the 'developing' world. The detainment camps the rural ignominy and political ignorance of that same world. The same dreary 'rationality' is supplied by an exogamous architecture of power that makes marginal what is out of sight and generally out of mind. The 'fourth-ness' of our modern statehood is one number greater than Hitler's creation due to its more advanced means of putting marginality at a distance, of taking the suspicions of persons regarding power and exorcising them by exercising itself in more remote human arenas. Its ability to construct an autotopology of myth is less romantic and ridiculous as the Wagnerian song. It does not, however, transcend the same problem that imposes itself on any collection of powers and authorities; that is, how to justify its own abilities in the face of human reality. Speaking of the origins of the analytic of this problem in Plato, Cassirer states that "In order to create the rational theory of the state, he had to lay the ax to the tree: he had to break the power of myth. But here Plato encountered the greatest difficulties. He could not solve the problem without, in a certain sense, surpassing himself and going beyond his own limits." (op. cit. 71). Not that rationality as an abstraction does not participate in a metaphysics. There is an 'external force' that is accumulated by tradition, an inertia having a kind of anti-discursive character that frustrates the separation of new ideas from old. Not only this, ideas 'themselves' are frustrated by reality. This is not 'reality' also in and of itself, but the pragmatics of day to day living on in the face of both the inertia of history written into norms and acted into behaviors, but also the open book of the future, on which pages not one word has yet been written.

Perhaps it was the accumulation of tradition in myth, song, dance as well as the empirical and experiential actions and agencies of hunting and gathering that finally gave way to the idea that other things could also be amassed. If the Greeks had a problem overcoming mythic reality and the tradition of religious observances and folkways that animated the arts and thought of their times, we also encounter the same problem today, when we imagine that rationalization is not merely a force in itself but also a force through which one is liberated from any metaphysics that adheres to any kind of consciousness of mortality and thus also historical memory and finitude. Indeed, the accumulation of tradition and the symbolic character of instrumental utensils is already both a premise for and promise of things to come in the arts and in religion. Beyond this, but coming from the already established confluence of the both of them, the idea that institutions that have the authority over a person's labor power and the fruits thereof begins its long ascent into modern rationality. The contemporary upshot of the nexus of the artisan and the priest, their shared mission to make real the ideal, is that the mythic tradition can now be accumulated as part of the object realm. That this takes on both immense and sacred proportions is more due to the amount of power at stake and thence the amount of social control as a resource that might be manipulated. Even so, there also must exist an authority that designates what work can be done where and when, and also what must be accomplished by whom for what kind of reward. This apparatus has not necessarily become less stringent over time: "This apportionment must be enforced. Without alternative the work must be done, and without alternative the benefit, whatever it may be, must be accepted. For the worker may not leave his place at will and offer himself elsewhere. Under such a system he cannot be accepted elsewhere, save by order of the authorities." (Spencer, op. cit. 64). This is a characterization which fits equally well in bureaucratic socialism as it does in monopoly capitalism, that latter contriving such a result by perpetually maintaining through the very competition Spencer extols a significant reserve pool of unemployed workers. The sensibility that is willing to adopt the new idea of the accumulation of goods for their own sake, and then also create out of this material sensibility a rationalization that states that such is not only to be valued as 'wealth' but that wealth is a good in itself apart from whether or not one has any evidence of it, participates fully in the structure of mythic thought, though with new narrative content: "...the modern political myths proceeded in quite a different manner. They did not begin with demanding or prohibiting certain actions. They undertook to change the men, in order to be able to regulate and control their deeds." (Cassirer, op. cit. 286). This transformation of the humanity of human beings is of the order of something that previously, only the gods could undertake. It has an almost uncanny atmosphere about it, and makes one both sober and perhaps even regretful. This ancient regret, coming down to us from the earliest systematic agricultural centers and their somewhat later writings, is reflected in the new mythic narratives of loss and expulsion, and the desire, which is also tinged with a fair seasoning of resentment against the new order, of catastrophe and renaissance. From Eden to Noah in the Hebrew texts there is this tropic line of reasoning. Both myths are of course far older, and were appropriated by various later groups, including the Israelites, but this only suggests the popularity of their themes, for everyone in the Near East was undergoing a similar transformation. New pantheons justified the new order, and new 'ideologies' of accumulation, social hierarchy, and indentured labor also rapidly arose. The cultural imagination of the Nazis begins there.

The Nazification of history results from the imposition of a mythic narrative onto archaeological or otherwise empiricising events. These myths have vague resonances of regional cultural narratives, such as those found in the Nordic sagas, but are extensively new to the needs of the day. Indeed, the Nazis, in a very short period of time, undertook only a shadow of the task that human beings were presented with during the agrarian revolution, but the dynamic is too similar to be ignored. The Nazis even lined up a lengthy series of marginal cultural groups, including the Roma, to give their new order the necessary historical perspective that was also available to the new agrarians with the remaining presence of nomadic groups using a variety of subsistence strategies all around them. So it not so much that the new orders of ancient times and our own represent a blank and unrecognizable otherness. They are not aliens either to what we know or what we had known. Instead, what is honored and valued is radically altered in favor of its new masters. It is almost as if we are jealous in our reserve, aware that some perverse instrumentation of 'our' culture has become a vehicle for what we deem should be the other: "What is so unacceptable is not anything that is readily dismissible as pure alterity, a discourse emanating from an instance and in forms that are radically different from those we know. This otherness was the problem of negative theology: it is not ours." (Haidu 1992:292). This 'should-ness' of an otherness which in fact is part of our own reality is resisted by the intimacy with which we have come to know, and suppress, the knowledge of a shadow which always falls upon our door and thus makes us shudder: "...Himmler's discourse is *unheimlich* because it reproduces, with all nuances and paradoxes in place, the discourses we know as the discourses of poetry and policy, of idealism and religion, of administration and bureaucracy." (ibid). This ability of the shadow to reproduce the form of the body from which it comes should not surprise us, but it always does seem to have the power to startle us, at least a little. It is neither a question of something that is mere embellishment. It is rather *negative being*, like the kind of hallucination certain drug addicts report when they are well into their long-term cycles of fix and reprieve, the latter unwanted by a physiology now conducive to the former. At first they recognize this partner as their shadow, but its company is not the company of convivial perspective, as had Nietzsche's wanderer. Here, it is a dark version of the self externalized and made palpable, a horrifying vision that is too close for any kind of comfort. The Holocaust was, writ large, this kind of negative being. Existential negation differs from that theological in that we are forced to recognize ourselves in what 'should not be': "...its unspeakability derives from the recognition of our own modes of discourse, and of the subjectivities which, if they are not actually our own, are entirely within the grasp of our imaginations." (ibid).

The threatening aspect of such an apparition is that it seeks to dominate our imaginations in an authoritarian and altogether intimate manner. It 'gets inside our heads' in the same way as does a domestic or sexual abuser. Its combination of addiction, perverse comfort, abuse, and the repetition of all of these actions forces us into the role of the victim who also blames herself. We often hear the refrain from the abused, both men and especially women who are trapped in these kinds of relationships, that if they themselves were 'better' people they would not warrant such action against them. Children too claim that if they were 'better behaved' then they would not 'deserve' their beatings. It is a testament to the victims of the Holocaust that we have relatively few instances where this kind of false consciousness became internalized. The feeling of being domineered is paramount in all of these kinds of contexts, however vast or domestic in scale. And it is the discourses of control which allow them their existence in the first place. Whether the sense of the body are being controlled by a foreign substance, as in the case of the addict's hallucinations, or whether the child or partner is being controlled by the emotional trauma of being abused, there is an 'ideology' that is created out of the repeated offenses against mind, body and spirit. A way of knowing, an *epistemology* of suffering, is ingrained in the victim. One must learn the scripts and the dynamics of victim-hood, just as in any other social role. Without that role, the abuser would be lost. It speaks directly to the ability of abusers and addicts to shroud their actual behaviors in a language of positive social sanction and acceptability - 'disciplining' children, 'concentrating' Jews and others, 'curing' homosexuals, and even 'running' a household, keeping things 'under control', and the like are all euphemisms for abuse - that the police are either unaware of transgressions of the law or that, in certain countries, they themselves are part of the problem, as even the legal code, as it was in the Third Reich, may be "It must be admitted [] that infringements of epistemological rules are rarely a matter for the police. However, the law still intrudes, the idea of free and independent research is a chimaera, and the presence or absence of police intervention has nothing to do with the problem before us..." (Feyerabend, op. cit. 259-60). Here, Feyerabend is critiquing the editorial censorship involved in making knowledge claims within the sciences, but the structure of negative sanction that issues proscriptions is the same as the positive sanction that issues prescriptions. They are no mere siblings, but guises of the same social process. 'Discipline' in all its forms, from the social control of children to the sciences and their modes of perception, writing, and construction of knowledge have the same ends. Such a concept bears artistic fruit, though at a cost to individual creativity, in the dance studio, as it also bears legal and well-researched fruit in the courtroom. Discipline as a manner of direction and training has its place, but it should never be used as a rationalization for abuse.

Ultimately, the disciplinarian is not only about control of others - the person who has the self-discipline of the ballet dancer or the symphony musician seeks to direct the self in aesthetic ascent, and has *no* concern with

what others may be doing or not doing in this way - but seeks to manifest the process of this control in a domineering and authoritarian manner. In our cultural imagination, the absence of perspective found in the home is also found in the laboratory, and thus makes its way into the world on two fronts. Its outcome is that it can only know its own power, and thinks its power into being through the victimization of the other. Weakness is disdained and exploited, and resistance is seen as a deliberately subversive and wholly unwarranted assault upon what is right. The politics of the discourses of domination are such that they can only understand critique as attack, and the situation rapidly deteriorates into one where actual assault upon the victimizers may be the only way to end the cycle, as it was during the war. Of course this way of being runs contrary to both authentic science and sincere statesmanship, and only exposes the lack of perspective always to be found in dogma: "It is not a scientific proposition to determine that some cultures lack political power because they show nothing similar to what is found in our culture. It is instead the sign of a certain conceptual poverty." (Clastres, op. cit. 17). One may speculate as to whether or not it is precisely this experience of one's own existential poverty that leads to the drive to control others and to impoverish them. It is well known that pedophiles seek to 'steal the joy' of children and to fill a void that they themselves have endured. Almost to a person, such perpetrators have themselves been abused, and the cycle almost inevitably repeats itself. Socialization, in whatever form, is so unutterably powerful in this way, that truly a way of life emerges from it. The few children who survived the camps and were repatriated to normative social relations had incredible difficulty with the transition, sometimes taking decades of courageous efforts on their part and on the part of their wards, mentors, and later friends and family. Holocaust survivors reunions are common practice, though the numbers ever dwindle. If one is to survive, it becomes a necessity to make such a transition. The ethics of it are always and already two-fold, in that we not only have to protect ourselves from further abuses, we also have to ensure that we ourselves do not become another abuser, thus injuring others. The idea of necessity itself is, ironically, one that springs from the same source as the rationalizations of revisionist. This is sobering, but should not be a complete surprise, as what is at stake is a kind of revised life. Not so much that we are whitewashing what we have been through, the pain, great or nominal, cannot be avoided in any authentic way. No, revision means beginning a relatively new life in different social contexts that *will* the new but cannot erase the old. The rationalization of those who seek to obliterate the world as it actually has been, desire a completeness which human life on the ground can never attain, and should never be tempted to attain. Such a position, once again, is domineering, constructs an auto-mythology, and states that "...human culture is not an offspring of free and conscious human activities. It originates in a 'higher necessity'. This necessity is a metaphysical one; it is the natural spirit which works and creates unconsciously. According to this metaphysical conception the *value* of myth is completely changed." (Cassirer, op. cit. 182, italics the text's). Rather, the work that must be done to live on after trauma is very conscious, most of all of itself. It feels like a necessity, but it is not such in any transcendental way. It is a necessity to live insofar as living is necessary given the alternative, but this in no way 'raises' it to the level of a metaphysics. The worst excesses in the history of our species have appeared on the horizon which claims to unite the existential with the essential.

The Strain of the Ideal:

Yet if we cannot be relied on to keep the necessary perspective, which is also precisely the perspective of what is necessary and what is only of necessity, what is something that we cannot avoid and what is instrumental to our survival, then we risk losing another kind of perspective which has defined us as human from primordial times: "The immediate *perception of the Infinite* has from the very beginning formed an ingredient and a necessary complement to all finite knowledge. The rudiments of later mythological, religious, and philosophical expressions were already present in the early pressure of the Infinite upon our senses - and this pressure is the first source of and the real origin of all our religious beliefs." (ibid:20). This is not an affirmation of any particular metaphysics. It merely speaks to the fullest presence of what remains always present to our consciousness, what defines our consciousness as human. We are almost immediately aware that we are finite beings, and the 'pressure', the strain upon this awareness doubles over upon us because at the same time that very awareness of finitude is also finite. We cannot see beyond our own lives just as much as we cannot live beyond them. So the presence of that which does appear to go beyond our version of being might well be taken for Being itself, the 'Infinite' rather than the merely infinite. But this entails a misunderstanding insofar as its consistency involves us in taking our finitude to be the finitude, the Finite, whereas in reality it is simply one of many finitudes, many things that must come to an end and lie beyond our ultimate control. It may have been the radicality of this new form of consciousness, the transforming of earth into world, of creature into being, and of instinct into thought, that prompted its neophytes to imagine that because of all its apparent powers, that its demise should be heralded as the corollary to the ongoingness of the cosmos. However this may be, it is clear that human beings pride themselves enough as containing the essence of what is immortal - all theories of the afterlife rest on this premise, even that positing the absence of the continuation of consciousness given our theory of matter and energy - that our deaths have come to represent the necessary balance to that

which does not die. We recall ourselves to our earliest incarnations when we recognize the resistance to untimely death, premature burial, and forgotten memorial. Speaking of tribes over-run by colonists and missionaries, Clastres reminds us that "...what strengthened them in their refusal, was the shame and the pain of seeing something they despised threaten their own substance, their point of honor, and their moral code: their gods and the discourse of their gods, gradually eradicated by the god of the newcomers." (op. cit. 159). This strain of competing ideals, the one well known and representing all that is of the essence, the other an alien negation of who one is and where one is from, home and homelessness, calls all of us back into a time when we could not know what was to become of us but that such knowledge was not necessary for life, the time of our childhood where what was essential was only the hour to hour wonder at exploring the world. Here, we sketchily recall being unable to distinguish between what was of this world and what was of the next, or the other world. The worlds of phantasm and agency intermingled, akin to the world related and enchanted by mythology. Such magic is referred to as 'innocence' simply because the fully socialized adult mind must dwell in one world only. Nostalgia aside, the world of wondrous dreams which are no longer merely dreamed but also lived is rudely replaced by rationalities that themselves attempt to ape the ideals of the other world. This strain is in fact one that is the hallmark of all philosophical systems, and hardly the monopoly of children's games: "The conflict between the two tendencies in Plato's thought, the one tending to surpass all limits of the empirical world, the other leading him back to this world in order to organize it and to bring it into rational rules, is never resolved." (Cassirer, op. cit. 64). Regular persons 'resolve' the strain between competing claims to worldliness by using the fascism of norms to crush the lingering visions of the child. Before sliding into the ethnocentrism of comparing the child and the 'primitive', we must remind ourselves that the children are forced to concede their world to ours in a manner similar to the way in which non-Western cultures are strained and assimilated. This processual similarity does *not* denote that their modes of being are similar. The child inherits both the new world and all of its fragile powers, but learns to desire and to use them. There is no anxiety about the inheritance per se, only a resistance that demands that its pace be adjusted to the child's self-centeredness. The potent melange of resentment and utility that adults wield to make the child do their bidding, to act and to think in a manner befitting the adult experience, may indeed be linked to the feelings we have, begrudgingly perhaps, towards small scale societies whom we still heartily disdain by our looks of askance in their direction. It is as if the only adulthood is the one we know, the one who invents and is willing to use its weapons to destroy the earth, or casually use the earth up in the meanwhile so we can have a choice between the bang and the whimper.

Pre-agrarian cultures, even those with intensive resource extraction systems, would reject this kind of 'maturity' out of hand, even if they too might be attracted to its structure: "Indian cultures are cultures anxious to reject a power that fascinates them. The affluence of the chief is the group's daydream. And it is clearly for the purpose of expressing both the culture's concern for itself and the dream it has of transcending itself, that power, paradoxical by its nature, is venerated in its impotence: this is the Indian chief, a metaphor for the tribe, the *image* of its myth." (Clastres, op. cit. 47, italics the text's). We have never lost the daydream, but have balked at the idea that it remain but a fantasy. Instead, we pursue the affluence and the apparent power and more than this, desire to make it a reality for ourselves. At the same time, we have not entirely lost the sensibility of our ancestral communities regarding the simultaneous distrust of power, and now, after the Second World War, even the image of power. After the period of global crisis, the Depression and the subsequent conflict, the conspicuous display of wealth, famously analysed by Veblen, has dropped off considerably. Ironically, where it is found today is in the developing world, where the new rich have no scruple in showing off their ascendant status and material gains. It was noted long before Clastres that the social hierarchy of tribal groups was always pro tempore, and had to do, as within the later anthropological analyses of pre-Agrarian 'politics', with the crisis of intertribal warfare, which was something that was almost unheard of in even smaller scale societies where the resource base was scanty and the population load minimal: "In the rudest tribe the chief, obeyed as leader in war, loses his distinctive position when the fighting is over; and even where continued warfare has produced a permanent chieftainship, building his own hut, getting his own food, making his own implements, differs from others only in his predominant status." (Spencer, op. cit. 67). It is more equal even than the sharing of the means of subsistence imply. If the chief is the 'image' of the myth of tribal daydream - all would like to live like this but all, in fact, do live so similar to the leader as to not covet the position overmuch, the one who occupies such a role and performs its duties in and out of communal crisis, is also the one who is ultimately sacrificed, in a manner not unlike the sacrifice of the personal and the private that modern politicians must endure. Indeed, inasmuch as there is a self-aggrandizement associated with the pursuit of power, with the desire to focus it and use oneself as a lens for its application, there is as much self-sacrifice involved, which is precisely the reason - and *not* so much the apparent ethical superiority of those who do not run for office versus those who do - why the rest of us disdain the public life. We are dimly aware, it seems, of the presentiment of the kind of death it represents; that of the self we know and love, and that of the reciprocity that we can be assured to maintain with others who also are at the mercy of the State. There is community, ironically, in the face of politics, and not because of it. Those who fight for the greater good also seek the grail of public recognition, and with it the status of influence that may come with it. This in turn becomes the vessel of focused power, which in the end, will

spur on the demise of those who hold it to their lips: "Death is the warrior's destiny, for, primitive society is such that *it does not permit the desire for prestige to be replaced by the will to power*. Or, in other words, in primitive society it is the chief, who embodies the possibility of a will to power, is condemned to death in advance." (Clastres, op. cit. 210, italics the text's). Because of this, our lingering awareness that the political life is always and already a kind of 'temptation', a way in which one might possess what is otherwise forbidden in the wider society, allows us to self-select those who would still be thus interested. There is, in spite of its pitfalls, and indeed, in spite of and yet perhaps also due to, the sensibility that is willing to risk a glorious death for the sake of one's posterity and under the guise of serving the community, a pull towards the grails of power. The 'hero', as we have seen, rests in our cultural imagination as eminently a *public* figure. The courage shown by the victims of private abuse, those who have physical and mental disabilities, and those who work with marginal person such as these and others, that of the homeless and the poor, goes virtually unrecognized. Instead, we elevate those with all kinds of privileges to heroic status, even if we are also suspicious that they are not worthy of our complete adoration. Our media is always on the look-out for a scandal involving someone 'famous', even though such fame most often rests on the trivial, entertainment and sporting commodities, for example, or regional politics which affects not in the least the structural issues of the day and of the globe. This overlooking of authentic bravery is also a form of fascism.

It is the larger than life sequences of living on, the *Erlebnis* of the public figure insofar as this term has any remaining existential import, that reiterates the mythology of the grail of power being holy, and thus those on its trail become more and more sacred in themselves the closer they approach it - think of the sporting records and statistics which are kept in such a detail as to be only rivaled by the Nazi's own posterity records (how many subhumans killed in this or that place and by whom, etc.), as perhaps the most obvious example of this - to the point where it no longer matters if they can actually grasp it. The influence of this fetish of heroic quests "...in our culture and contemporary history has been very powerful, particularly is we take account of Fascism, as well as of the fascination with violence which has come to infect even Enlightenment-inspired movements, such as Bolshevism [] And can we exempt the gory history of even 'progressive', democratic nationalism?" (Taylor, op. cit. 637). Although Taylor's characterization of what he calls 'anti-humanism' is too trite due to its Anglo-Saxon distanciation, it is reasonable to concur that certain strains of thought, those that push an ideal over against the reality of the day to day world and its Goethean demands, are seemingly more likely to participate in the cults of heroic fetish. The fact that these have been yet more successful as commodities even than as politics only underscores their current and ongoing influence.

Since all forms of culture are thus fated in capitalism, we, as consumers of both the culture and the commodity are faced with our own political dilemma. Since the mid 1920s, advertising has resuscitated the myth of the quest as well as decorated the now needless chalice of material goods in a way that is directly reminiscent of Romanticism. If the adoration of fans is vivifying to the culture hero of sports, entertainment, and less so, politics and business, it remains for us to create the self-adoration that is the reward for the possession of certain kinds of commodities. Beginning with subsistence level goods and services, we must look after ourselves in a way that is now destined to pursue a path takes away from concerned being. If Marx reminded us that 'the more man puts into god the less he puts into himself', then today we are more apt to be taken in by the prosthetic godhead of new technologies and techniques. Their cumulative effect is one of self-aggrandizement and self-sacrifice, exactly the *same* combination that is found in the lives of those who become public figures. We thereby construct our own limelight and attempt to live up to its expectations, even if there are few actual others who notice or care. This kind of 'care of the self' is part of the cult of bravado that illuminates all public and would-be public stages. In capital, indeed, it would appear that only the most marginal persons hold authentic courage, as they are not merely completely private figures, but struggle with the most elemental relations of living as well as they can a human existence. These are the current victims of we other Nazis, the camps, as noted above, recede from our general view and those within them subsist on the streets, tenements, subways, and killing fields of other worlds. Our world has, at the same time, become a romantic one, in which all possible options are at hand. Love and lust, gluttony and gourmet, thrills both safe and unsafe, and flights of contrived fantasy through the use of substances and even other persons, all present themselves to us as the spoils of personal victories. We desire not only to be noted by our culture, but in so doing, we imagine that this is the best way of becoming cultured. This becomes the processual character of the fetish, and we may well become dogmatic and authoritarian in our pursuit of it. We may even imagine that this was the purpose of all romance, "But judging in this way we are likely to forget the principal and, indeed, the decisive feature. The 'totalitarian' view of the romantic writers was, in its origin and meaning, a *cultural* not a political view. The universe they were longing for was a universe of human culture. They never meant to politicize but to 'poeticize' the world." (Cassirer, op. cit. 184, italics the text's).¹ This is also what we imagine for ourselves. We are, after all, patently *not* politicians. We have eschewed the truly public path to glory and fame, and in so doing, have made new worlds of living on which are, as it were, smaller than life.

That we remain romantics ourselves though, is the key to the link between the private fantasies of most persons, and the public delusions of the few. We may well seek to become 'cultured', and hope that the wider

world contains those like us to tacitly validate our claims to having discovered the value of the hidden grails overlooked by politicians and other public figures, but we also cannot avoid the politics that we have set in motion by our equal disdain for community and for others to self. For in pursuing the greater glory of the private self, we turn away perhaps in an even more conspicuous manner than do those who claim to serve society through self-sacrifice. It is the lack of general concern and compassion amongst the masses, and not that emanating from those who represent us, that is the most challenging ethical problem of our times. Complacency is not a new form of self-comfort. It was the Romantics themselves who became aware that their work and desires might well lead society ironically into a new form of self-absorption, even though the original goal was to shake themselves loose from such: "The propounders of these ideas were always conscious of the precariousness and difficulty of these views, which frequently appeared to them only as distant ideals; hence the 'unending desire' of the German romantics, the stress on evolution, on art as a groping towards the ideal. Exoticism of many kinds is part of the reaction against the eighteenth century and its self-complacency." (Thorlby 1966:31). All of us must confront a similar challenge. The world as it is may not support our desires, even though the vast majority of us dwell well within the larger cultural imagination, for culture is the source of imagination as much as the reverse may be true. If we turn away from that world, we in some sense also turn away from at least a good part of ourselves and inevitably, most of those others with whom we share a culture. Even if we put at a distance the vision of our ideals, as political leaders like Hitler were unable to do, we cannot entirely avoid the consequences of the attempt to make the world, an immanently and eminently public domain, into a sphere of action where we control the outcomes of our phantasms. It is all very well to have dreams, and thence to make them more sensible through the day dream. But the world is neither dream nor day dream. It is the enacted reality of multiple projects of actions, originally imagined by billions of us, and then perhaps exhorted and systematized by the day dream. All of us react to our own placement in the flow and flux of history, and in this we are, writ small, kindred to those we think of as the ones who have revolutionized thought itself: "The great thinkers of the past were not only 'their own times apprehended in thought'. Very often they had to think beyond and against their times. Without this intellectual and moral courage, philosophy could not fulfill its task in man's cultural and social life." (Cassirer, op. cit. 296). To the extent that we too think against our times and our cultures, we participate directly both in the historical project of philosophy but also take up the strain between what has passed for the world and what we desire the world to become.

Collapsing Categories:

The ongoing risk is that we let that strain take on the character of our own ideals, and thus begin to demand that the world as it has been expose itself as a species of demon, always seeing the worst in others and in the past, as well as demanding that the future be cast in our own image. We project what is to come in the manner of revealed religion, and we are either the prophet of this vision or indeed, as with Hitler, its messiah. If we succumb to this pattern, this kind of aggrandizement both of ourselves and of our ideals, we become a figure who "...is unconscious of the truth that he is helping to form a certain type of social organization, effecting kindred changes of organization, tend with ever-increasing force to make that type general; until, passing a certain point, the proclivity towards it becomes irresistible." (Spencer, op. cit. 32). The obliviousness of all subjects who remains subjective takes on enormous proportions in the prophet who is followed, or in the one whose visions prompt them to lead. We are often astonished at the apparent ignorance of politicians about 'the issues' or, at the very least, disappointed that those who 'represent' us do not share our actual day to day experiences, and never have done so. The great diversity of the human experience cannot be encapsulated in a few epigrammatic principles or fine words, or, for that matter, sound bytes. The visionary who has let his own imagination run away from him to the extent that he imagines that it is no longer his own but both a will in itself and representative of the spirit of the 'volk', turns into someone who now demands that all others *admit* to their participation in this phantasm, not unlike the tension between Socrates and the sophists: "What he is asking for is the unity of the will. In spite of all their talents and of all their multifarious interests - or perhaps because of these talents and multifarious interests - the sophists were unable to solve this problem." (Cassirer, op. cit. 57). The self-appointed leader claims to know human nature, whereas other schools of thought are concerned with the pragmatics of what human beings do in the world, and what they must do. This 'must' comes to us by way of the necessities of worldly life, and is not to be considered either moral or metaphysical. The visionary adopts the structure of what the world demands of us and hypostasizes it. All of sudden, the specific and mostly routine melodramas of the day have become the teleological drama of the other world, the world to which our world should supposedly aspire. Those that follow along are apt to adopt a new counter-identity that places their wills and desires over against that of the world and those who 'remain' within its mundane ambit. The new group, purposive and oriented no longer to finite goals and projects of action which involve others to self who must, by definition, be convinced of a shared interest even if they themselves hold a different array of goals, is no longer part of the new reality. Instead, the absolute value of the incarnation of a new world becomes the goal, and its very vagueness and distance are ongoing guarantors that it will be pursued, idealized, and romanticized. That

which we cannot observe can rest only in the perception of the imagination. The sight of the imagination is always visionary, the site of what we imagine to be is always 'somewhere' and not here. Sociologists have long commented on the fact that visionary or no, new social groups elect themselves to some place of privilege, and the more marginal these groups are, the more fantastic does their identity become: "...the way in which outcasts preserve their sense of value by constructing a (sometimes pathological) counter-ideology, interpreting their discrimination as a sign of special chosenness, is strongly reminiscent of what some modern sociologists describe as the formation of a 'counteridentity'." (Funkenstein 1992:71). Within this space of the chosen, all events are signs of the self-same assignation that one's very presence as a member of the group has become. As opposed to this are all of those 'left behind', united in their diversity as those who are not chosen, as representing the inversion of the truth, and as possessing thus the mark of evil. Politics of all stripes bears the insignia of revealed religion. The fanaticism is muted, no doubt, in most systems due to the rationalization of the ministries of power. These no longer rest in the hands of mere elders, equipped only with the esteem of those younger than them, as well as the experience of what works and what does not. Modern authority is distinguished, as Weber in great and grave detail outlined, by its appeal to instrumental reason and legal rationality. It was the interesting quality of Hitler's politics that sought to unite both rationality and irrationality, the one in the systematic seizure of the control of society at all levels, the other in the ideals and imagination of the new 'culture'. Perhaps this historical moment was inevitable, given our narrative so far, but clearly Hitler himself had already seen the need to mimic the older forms that were part of the suite of cults from the earliest periods of agrarian social organization: "...the art of leadership consist of consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up this attention [] The leader of genius must have the ability to make different opponents appear as if they belonged to one category." (Hitler, in Blackburn 1990:196). At the same time, in almost an anti-Mosaic manner - just so, conversely, the actual mosaic of large scale societies must be melted into one pot - the 'leader of genius' must also appear to be the nexus of the aspirations of the people. He must be their vehicle, in the same way as a religious figure ideally was seen, and he also must become the focus of the people's will as a new form of focused power. His power, though, in contradistinction from that of the prophet, comes from the ground up, and not from the heavens. It is received amidst the throngs of likeness, those who are also of the same mind and heart as the leader, and not on a mountaintop from a being utterly different from that human. When analyzing this process, however, one cannot become too attached to the central figure, and much history dances on the edge of biography. This version of history has an ethical danger embedded within it: "A certain intentionalism, by concentrating overwhelmingly on the demonic figure of the Fuhrer himself, can tacitly exonerate any wider sections, or longer traditions, of German society from responsibility to the crimes of the regime." (Anderson, 1992:55). This wider view was already part of the discourse of the social scientists during the time period that led up to the advent of fascism in Europe. The elements for authoritarian regimes were in place, much in evidence, and growing in the same way that socialist aspirations of a nation-state of 'the people' were also developing. Hitler's insight was common enough. A leader could take advantage of an already existing political situation in which it was most convenient not merely to vilify one's set of opponents, but collapse them into a singular category. The 'us' and 'them' binary is the simplest, and the most simplistic, but it has seen great success in the public realm, as it cannot but appeal to the rest of us whose minds are only occupied with politics during a scant few moments of our lifetimes. It is our inattention to the polis that allows it to be hijacked. In this, the Greeks were absolutely correct to say that the entirely private figure was an 'idiot'. By the end of the nineteenth century, the signs were transparent enough that the 'nature' of the new state was heading towards a series of disasters: "No such nature as that which has filled Europe with millions of armed men, here eager for conquest and there for revenge; no such nature as that which prompts the nations called Christian to vie with one another in filibustering expeditions all over the world, regardless of the claims of aborigines, while their tens of thousands of priests of the religion of love look on approvingly..." (Spencer, op. cit. 77) can ever led to world 'harmony'. What it can, and did, lead to was world disorder and world suffering on an entirely new scale of ruthlessness. This projection of desire as against the 'them' of the rest of the world is merely an extension of those same politics enacted on a domestic front where the weak, defined by the hierarchy of power and access to resources, are at best simply forgotten, at worst, persecuted. In this, both ourselves, the forerunners to Nazism, and the Nazis themselves are cut from whole cloth. This is the fabric that covers over the divisions amongst human beings, but does not clothe us. It exposes, rather our fear of being naked in front of the other, a fear which is so omnipresent in public life that it has made its way into the intimacies of many private relationships. The most important function of such a textile, its textuality being the myth of the age, is to help us deny that we are close kindred to those we deem the worst of others, the 'them' which in turn made us into them: "So that, marvelous to relate, though they cannot bear to think of the evils accompanying the struggle for existence as it is carried on without violence among individuals in their own society, they contemplate with equanimity such evils in their intense and wholesale forms, when inflicted by fire and sword on entire communities." (ibid: 112).

This disconnect, apparently more rampant in previous centuries only because when questioned, one was more likely to get a callous response that did not even pretend towards compassion, allows a studied demeanor

to take hold even when historicising events such as the Holocaust. Even those for whom we feel sympathy, or with those we feel empathy, risk being distanced through the veils of fabric which clothe our self-doubts and hide our collective shame. The victims of genocide are still another 'them', their 'them-ness' not only makes the historical victims but more soberingly, allows us to feel horror as a by-product of someone else's experience. Aside from the obviously irresponsible and perhaps even sadistic notion that all human beings should suffer in order to make suffering the lot of all - indeed, we already do, but, as we have seen, we have developed sophisticated rationalizations and escapisms to banish the global empathy that might arise from being members of the same mortal species - there needs to be some more direct manner of sharing horror than the reliance on either a personal or a cultural imagination impaired and impoverished by large scale systems of formal education and media, and jaded by the outward and unashamed cynicism of the political and business worlds.

We are not by nature compassionate, any more than we are monstrous. How is it that we can understand the abysses of human action and agency without directly succumbing to their parades of power and control? "These questions become painfully relevant in the division between survivors' and bystanders' (or second generation's) literature with all the ethical implications and hermeneutical risks that this division entails. A many discussions of the issue have made clear, the opposition between documentary realism and mediated recollection, raw testimony and literary construction, is not so final after all." (Feldman, 1992:228). It is also just as clear, that whatever traumas we suffer in our own lives, the great majority of which will never find themselves within the discourse of history regarding the human species, must also find their delicate way between what we experienced and what we recall, what lingers as a resonance or even a remnant, and what is overcome. Whose definition of living well would actually be the best revenge? And is overcoming a victory *against* something or someone, or even against the self that I used to be? To take both the 'us' and the 'them' of selfhood might be the beginning of prising open once again categories that we ourselves have colluded in collapsing.

Imaging the Other:

If the first step in the dispassionate comprehension of both the absence of compassion and the presence of hatred is taking ourselves into our own confidence, trusting that what we had been in the face of our own suffering, however historically small, is neither a petty nor a trivial thing, then we might also find ourselves willing to begin an analysis of the stereotypes and ethnocentrism we routinely use to imagine what the other must be like. The 'must-ness' of our view of the other is of course a short slide away from a 'should-ness' which is all the more dangerous. The other, generally, must not be like me, therefore he should be more like me. If I am to give him the time of day, there must be some kind of connection that I value. If there is something there, as in my mind there should be, the 'must' and the 'should' begin to look more and more alike. This may be convenient in the short term, but it always shows its fatal flaws in the broader sense, when communities find that they cannot get along with each other, and then are astonished and resentful that such an event could ever occur. It is our own fault entirely, as we have set up the other to do something that he need not do, be something he need not be. For why should the other be at all like myself? Apart from a common humanity which must be recognized as a charter, we rather might do better by allowing the other to be exactly who he feels he must be, and then enter into some kind of dialogue. This is not to 'give over' to the other the self, as some critics of thinkers such as Levinas have claimed, nor is it to expect that the other digest me whole and take me into himself without reserve, to become part of himself. Neither of these is a realistic nor yet an ethical option. Both involve a kind of force that is all too similar to that used by the state to enforce its politics both at home and abroad. If we imagine that we are not 'entire of itself', that our islands are archipelagos connected at least under the shallow waters of like socialization, and still further connected by the fathoms of mortality and evolution, we do not stand alone amongst others, but stand due to the gravity of others in the same manner as their orbits are in part defined by where we stand. This *understanding*, this standing-under the wills of others is also not to abandon the selfhood of respect and dignity, but to participate. *The dialectic of all dialogue is the otherness of resistance*, and this resistance, ever present, can be taken as a good in itself. If not, we are struck dumb by the force of anyone who wishes to be in control of others in lieu of self-control. Most political analyses appear to have ignored this relationship, and so a change of lens is warranted "It is not evident to me that coercion and subordination constitute the essence of political power *at all times and in all places*. Consequently, an alternative presents itself: either the classic concept of power is adequate to the reality it contemplates, in which case it must account for non-power wherever it is located; or it is inadequate and must be discarded or transformed." (Clastres, op. cit. 13). It is of capital importance that the rise of hierarchical power be understood as a *possibility* only, not an inevitability or necessity in its original process. Such an event is not an eventuality until and unless other transformations have taken place. It is the same with fascism or other kinds of authoritarian events. One reacts in a certain way. The misbehavior of children or the disorder in the workplace, the 'insolence of officials' or of one's neighbor, and the acquisitive inroads of competing nation-states, all call forth some kind of reaction, but not necessarily *this* kind. Power must be qualified by a disclaimer which reminds us that 'this was what occurred in specific situations, and not all contexts'. It was Plato who first

discussed at length the issue from the other side of the door, as it were, a door which had been opened some millenia beforehand and had never thence been shut upon itself. This door, unlike other doors, and very unlike staying put, developed mechanical solidarity in a manner theretofore unheard of. The suasion of the first religious leaders, acting as they did to avert the crisis of conflict, ironically took on the mantle of a leadership that precisely because it was not linked with the warfare it was trying to avoid, became perennial instead of temporary. This is at least the plausible outcome of Clastres' analysis. We see it from the far side through the lens of Plato and others, who, understandably, sought to remedy the situation by aspiring towards a new rationality that would sever the link between politics and religion: "As long as we think of the gods in the traditional way, a fighting or deceiving each other, cities will never cease from ill. For what man sees in the gods is only a projection of his own life - and vice-versa. We read the nature of the human soul in the nature of the state - we form our political ideals according to our conception of the gods." (Cassirer, op. cit. 66). Yet even with the old gods dead, such ideals remain on the ground. Surely this must be the case because their rationalizations, appearing to emanate from an other world, never in fact did so. Projections alone, like a kind of archaic ontology that the nineteenth century sciences shrugged off as dross, may have sustained the political order in the minds of persons for millenia but their origin was to be sought elsewhere. Perhaps this is also the reason that when the 'divine right' associated with the transcendental metaphysics of the newer agrarian states had finally disappeared, the void was filled with a return to the gods on earth metaphysic in the form of the fascists. These latter day saints of the desert of a consciousness bereft of concernful being made it known that they could replace the messiahs of any revealed religion that looked to overcome the sorry state of affairs of earthly life, including that of politics. Instead of everyone being equal in the eyes of a god, equality was now to be made physically real in the body of the various *Volker* who happened to live in this or that region. One is not surprised, then, at the ferocity of this approach given the intense diversity of large-scale societies. It is not a new problem so much as it is one of the quantity of quality: "Primitive societies, like Western societies, are perfectly capable of handling the possibility of difference within identity, or otherness in homogeneity; and in their rejection of the mechanistic can be read the sign of their creativity." (Clastres, op. cit. 60-1). Our historical position makes it more difficult to read the origins of things, although the idea that we must search for an origin is likely merely an after-image of the flash of realization that the sources which were posited and believed in for thousands of years have dried up and are no more, so we well question this drive in the future as a momentary one, however much it is today deemed necessary. At the same time, the sense that in such a search lies a different kind of truth is surely helpful, for it generates a new sensibility that might not be as easily converted to the latest interpretation of our collective desire: "Taken in themselves the mythical stories of gods or heroes cannot reveal to us the secret of religion, because they are nothing but the *interpretations* of rites." (Cassirer, op. cit. 28, italics the text's). The major problem with all such reifications stemming from the rationalizations of this or that narrative, is that they assume an extorsory stance vis-a-vis the world as it is. They claim to be substantively part of the very world they are only tangential to and a decoration of. It is not entirely fair to dissuade myth of its *own* myth, for after all, each of us tells ourselves our own personal fables, and indeed, they are a part of who we are. The myth of myth is that it is real, or at least that it reflects reality in some concrete way. Yet it is true to say that within the mythic imagination there is a distinct lack of critical reflection: "Genuine myth does not possess this philosophical freedom; for the images in which it lives are not *known* as images. They are not regarded as symbols but as realities. This reality cannot be rejected or criticized; it has to be accepted in a passive way." (ibid:47, italics the text's). The reificatory quality of mythic thought contains both this danger and temptation. It is comforting to have a stable set of beliefs in the face of the vicissitudes of both human and cosmic history. It is not so much the latter, but the former that ultimately unnerves us, as we simply do not live long enough to see the effects of cosmic evolution display their grandiloquent aura. For within human history, we in fact do play the historian. It is we who recall and record, and it is we who wait in a hardly silent witness room filled to the brim with contradictory viewpoints: "...when you ask the question 'what's the time?' there never is a simple, single answer, unless it be given by those who have stopped the clock for their own immediate and self-interested reasons." (Bosworth, 1993:196). The worst excesses of the 'end of history' occur when the state assumes the authority of self-authorship. Stalin, Hitler, and all other authoritarian regimes are most transparent in this venture, but we cannot exempt countries like Japan - where World War Two is often expunged from history textbooks - or our own situations - where high school history is basically an apology for actual history, especially when it involves the development of modern government and geographical expansion. Nonetheless, and in spite of these forces, "In a free society, rather, men and women make and re-make their own historiography, both of their own free-will and under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted." (ibid). These kinds of subjectivities write themselves larger than their own lives when they encounter the narrative discourses of the scientific and historical disciplines. What we do for ourselves we also seek to do for others, for 'our culture, and for the world as we have known it: Bosworth concludes, "In the writing of history and comprehension and experience of life, the traditions of the dead generations weigh, sometimes like a nightmare, sometimes like a glorious dream, on the minds of the living." (ibid). Of course, one person's dream may well become another's nightmare.

All of this has the thrust of a demythology about it. In our ministrations to the happenstance of *Erlebnis*, we bring to the process that self-same conception of reason that is brought into mythical life by the advent of critical philosophy. Indeed, the auto-historian in us may also be the source of the rationalist. This new analytic does not destroy the danger inherent in all systems of thought, it merely seeks to make them rational and thus overcome their tendency to assume that they have a unique but unquiet monopoly on the truth of things: "The only thought which philosophy brings with it is the simple conception of Reason; that the history of the world presents us with a rational process." (Cassirer, op. cit. 273). All of this seems well and good. A simple tool, but one that can be applied in all contexts, to all cases, would be the harbinger of a universal reason that also laid no claim to the substance of its findings beyond that of interpretation, for there would always be the next application of the tool in mind. All was not to be kindred with this sensibility, however, for within modern idealism there came an understanding that the telos of historical life was indeed leading to some specific destiny of its own. History itself, then, took on a life of its own that spiraled away from human concerns, and it was the least concerned aspect of our humanity that took off in its pursuit: "...it was the tragic fate of Hegel that he unconsciously unchained the most irrational powers that have even appeared in man's social and political life. No other philosophical system has done so much for the preparation of fascism and imperialism as Hegel's doctrine of the state..." (ibid). Just so, other preparations were also at hand, those leading directly to the Holocaust, an event which must also be seen within not only its historical context, its happenstance of destiny, but also and very much within the context of the nation-state whose architecture was founded on the teleological stance of philosophies of history that were *designed to lead*. The leadership of a posited fate is no longer a participant in happenstance, whose events can be back-read by the curious without doing any damage to their happenstance nor to the various interlocking cosmic orders about which we are understanding through the mathematical sciences. Like a vision to be interpreted through the lens of the local religion, the authority of the back-reading must be taken all in all for the one who requires it or who has experienced the event, but for not other. Even so, if we are to interpret without the aid of the mythic life, and in the case of the Holocaust and other aspects of Nazism this is indeed a necessity, lest we repeat the offences, we must turn to an holistic history which includes the telos of mythic history in its critique: "What National Socialism called the 'Final Solution' of the 'Jewish Question' indeed possesses a horrific singularity; but it does so only in the more or less continuous, increasingly systematic, 'Western' - and terrifyingly *Christian* - traditions of religious, political, economic and cultural persecution of the Jews. In this sense, the attempt to eradicate the Jews is not some strange, irrational swerve away from..." a 'liberal and rational' historical progression from Western origins in the Greeks to ourselves. (Pecora, 1992:161). Generally, the excuses for such persecutions have in fact been quite 'rational', if empirically undemonstrated. It is not quite a theory to say that 'The Jews' monopolize wealth at the expense of their neighbors, but it is more than an ideological statement. It plays on superstitions and resentments no doubt, but it also hypocritically attempts to redefine the pariah status that this group has historically been subject to by pretending that because of the very forcedness of their ghettoization, their forced construction of enclaves, that Jewish people have uncannily overcome these bonds and flourished in any case. This is hardly the case historically, and, with horrible irony today it has become more of a case simply because the vast majority of the Jewish (and other) victims of the Holocaust were poorer persons who could not get out of the way of Hitler's eugenical and aesthetic juggernaut.

The way to escape the Holocaust was already built into the rationalization for it. Of course, in Hitler's daydreams, the entire world would be subject to his sensibilities, and thus there would be no ultimate escape. At the same time, because the Holocaust was not only built into the economic structures of our time but also into the military efforts of all the nations involved, such a fantasy fortunately remained just that. In a word, we at least have capitalism to blame for the war and for its outcome: "The exceptionality of the 'Final Solution' is anchored in the nonexceptionality of capitalism. That capitalism should be given the capacity to provide for 'a higher level of reflection', as Habermas puts it, is disturbing. Why is capitalism - which makes mincemeat of real argumentation by its homogenization of signifiers, not accomplished, for example, by the media's excessive displacement of analysis or the marginalization of unfamiliar cultural and social voices - rendered more critically?" (Cohen, 1992:176). That twelve millions of persons became a 'human resource' could be seen as part of the commodification principles of capital, but that it was these persons and not others cannot be seen in this way. The economic argument, dear to both Marx and Weber does not fulfill the demands of the modern imagination which, tethered still to its pre-modern and even anti-modernist phobias, pushes back against any motion that attempts to tie it to specifically contemporary tendencies and social forces. Granted that the elements of archaic metaphysics and pseudo-history - 'The Jews' are the chosen people but they also killed Christ, that sort of thing - are almost entirely used as populist rationalizations for violence. Scapegoating is always a convenience for the majority, and it occurs regularly in groups large and small, from the school playground to the workplace, to the political arena and even within the camps themselves, amongst the victims, and perhaps yet even amongst some of the perpetrators; those who might not seem to be sadistic 'enough', for example. The stigmatizing of the one or the few assuages the bad conscience of the rest of us. It allows us to deny that there is any real injustice because the group or person in question is unjust themselves, and therefore

'deserving' of their newly decided fate. This process takes place in the imagination of those who sit in judgment, and the violence is merely an afterimage of these evaluations: "Our modern politicians know very well that great masses are much more easily moved by the force of imagination than by sheer physical force. And they have made ample use of this knowledge. The politician becomes a sort of public fortune-teller. Prophecy is an essential element in the new technique of rulership." (Cassirer, op. cit. 289). Through these machinations, the power to act upon the imagination, and thence to enact its agency in the world at large, becomes both focused and corrupted. Instead of culture as a diverse assemblage of unlike elements which participate in the gestalt of human life, that life now centers around a culture of power, where those who have it try to hold onto it, and those who do not try to take it away from them. This is one version of our modern 'one-dimensional manhood', and the 'man's man' of this brave new world is the one who can accomplish both of these feats; wrest power from an adversary and then keep it to oneself.

There is nothing in nature that compels these efforts, but there does remain a primordial dynamic between nature and culture that might be imagined as a template for the internecine conflicts endogamous to humanity. That is, we still must make a living from the earth. Even if and when we destroy our shared home, the impetus was, and has always been, the need to survive. But this need too is something that rests solely in our imaginations, our visions become grossly egocentric, and thus perverse at the same time. Given this, there is also nothing in nature that can help us save it being destroyed by culture. Indeed, it is only within culture that we have the means to reject this path and its implications. This does not entail a self-rejection, as there are many ways of being human, and just as many futures. Rather, "...it is culture itself, as nature's absolute difference, that becomes totally invested in the rejection of this power. And is it not precisely in its relation to nature that culture manifests a repudiation of equal profundity?" (Clastres, op. cit. 44). As long as we image the other as something not only so different, but also, and partly by such a definition, having something we do not, or that we should in turn have or desire, the human imagination will coagulate in a vessel of singular dimension; one that concentrates our hopes and dreams as one contains those who one wishes to deny the breath of life.

Note:

Still later, this theme is repeated in terms of individual writers: "However we may object to Carlyle's theory of hero worship, a man who spoke thus ought never to be charged with being an advocate of contemporary National Socialistic ideas and ideal. It is true, that Carlyle did not refrain from saying that 'might makes right'. But he always understood the very term 'might' in a moral order rather than in a physical sense." (Cassirer, op. cit. 222). Even so, the Nazis themselves claimed the moral high ground, and more importantly, claimed their might as being of a thoroughgoing cultural kind. The physics of this might was merely a vulgar and necessary expression of the idea that the world should be beautified at all costs and by whatever means.

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