

By way of a motto for culture and representation and so for *Culture and Representation*, one which or who like a ghost may threaten or promise to return to what is yet to come:

I think in the end that what interests me most in the texts I read and in the texts I write is precisely that. All of this merits further analysis, but that's it, how it shifts, moves from one phrase to another, from one tone to another. Such analyses are rarely performed — I haven't read a lot of work on the subject — but it remains an important question. And it would be an analysis of the pragmatic type, one that doesn't consist of what something means, what its thesis, theme, or theorem is, for that is not so interesting nor so essential; what is more important is the tone, and to know to whom it is addressed in order to produce that effect.

— Jacques Derrida, “The Spatial Arts”

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PART ONE

Singles

Preface to Part One

This is a book about two concepts: culture and representation. Why culture? And why representation? Second things first.

When we put culture and representation together, the first thing that may come to mind are questions like: “What does a given cultural artefact represent?”, “How do we represent cultures?” or, perhaps, “How *should we* represent cultures?” This is interesting because what it shows is just how utterly we take *the idea of representation itself* for granted. We do not ask “What is representation?”, that is, *before* we ask about how it should be done or about its cultural effects. Today, and perhaps for quite a long time, we have used the word “representation” for all manner of writing about things, depicting them, speaking about them, thinking about them, photographing them and so on. It is as though “representation” were a quite neutral term for collecting diverse forms of ... well, what? Representations? There seems to be no other word than this.

It was this minor tautological impasse that started me thinking about representation, and the more I thought about it, the more limiting the very idea seemed to be. What work does it do? — seemingly everything and nothing. Why do some people think that everything is a representation and, more to the point, that representation is *important* because of this? Why does there seem to be so much concern about the “politics” of representation — in the sense of weighing up the correctness or incorrectness of certain kinds of representations as against others — when there is hardly any reflection on what sort of thing representation is, itself?

From a lazy habit of mind, I turned to history. In the first place (Chapter 1) I looked at Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things* where I found something very refreshing: the possibility of a time before representation; that people may not always have thought about their writing and speaking and thinking and so on as representational. This in turn led me to a number of different places. Firstly it led me to a couple of concepts that Foucault sees as typical of his “age of representation”: naming and historical contingency (Chapter 2).

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it led me to Martin Heidegger's idea of representational thinking — and its problems — as being even more historically entrenched than Foucault's mere "age" suggests. That is: while for Foucault, the "age of representation" comes about near the beginning of the 17th century and actually *ends* in the mid-to-late 18th century, Heidegger's view of representational thinking is that it begins as early as the pre-Socratics, is well in place by the time of Plato, and could barely be thought *without*, even in his own day (Chapter 3). And since I could see no clear alternatives to the idea of representation today (unsurprisingly, because that is where I began my train of thought), it seemed that the Heideggerian view was more like the one I wanted. In addition, Heidegger keeps giving us glimpses of what thought was like before this deeply entrenched form of representationalism, and so I wondered whether I could put some of these glimpses together in a roughly coherent way in order to get an initial outline of a *non*-representational way of looking at things — a non-representational way of thinking yet to come perhaps (Chapters 4 and 5).

So this partly answers the question "Why representation?" As for "Why (then) culture?", even the beginnings of an answer will have to wait until the penultimate chapter of this part of the book. This is not because I cannot give a reason now (as I write, of course, at the end of writing the book); it is more that I could not give a reason when I started. Something — I didn't know what — seemed to beckon me towards the concept of culture as one utterly steeped in representational thinking. The more I read both Foucault and Heidegger, the more it seemed to me that every approach to culture (indeed to particular cultures and their artefacts) that I knew about or could imagine was predicated on the notion of representation being already in place, taken for granted, utterly unproblematic, as a concept and as a way of thinking. The sphere of culture, that is, called me more than any other to ask about a new and different "politics of representation" — not as a question of the correct or incorrect means of representing (other) cultures (which is its dominant meaning today) but as a question of the *politics of the concept itself*. Could it be that there is a uniform politics inhabiting all representational thinking and therefore, possibly, at that level at least, only one way of thinking culture today? And would this not be an extremely odd outcome given that culture is supposed to be a very open and

pluralist category?¹ After all, there are some among us (even some who hold senior posts in universities) who believe that space aliens and angels — not to mention dogs — have cultures. What on Earth can such a thing *be*?

But this, *the question of the being of culture* (which only starts to be opened in Chapter 6), was just a beginning. Once I started along this path, it occurred to me that it might eventually lead me to an alternative “definition” of culture as such. And the quotation marks are very shuddery here because, as I soon found out, the uncharted territory outside representational thinking does not appear to have a place in it called “definition”. Part of the eventual answer to the question “Why culture?”, then has to do with what it is you have to do to get an idea (an experience?) of culture without a definition as such. But now I am running ahead of myself.

Returning to the safer ground of prefatory work: this book, then, describes a path of thinking towards (but not yet reaching) a rethinking of the concept of culture. It shows that almost all hitherto existing theories of culture must have thought that concept representationally. That is, whatever a theory has assumed culture to be *substantively* — the collective consciousness of a nation; a fundamental attribute of human nature; the transmission of national characteristics from generation to generation; the immaterial bonding medium that ensures social solidarity (or, indeed, social difference); an immaterial effect of a society’s economy; and so on — that assumption has been predicated on a *general form* of representational thinking. Our task from this point on is to try to think culture outside it; to try to find some new paths.

¹. Kendall and Wickham (2001, 2) remind us, for example, that “even in the 1951 *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* there were 78 definitions of ‘culture’”.

Chapter 1

Representing Culture

I.

What is representational thinking? Central to Foucault's argument in *The Order of Things* (1970) is a quasi-periodisation. It consists of three eras or "epistemes".

(1) A pre-classical period lasting up to the start of the 17th century, predicated on *resemblance* as the central means of understanding both words and things, and with no genuine separation between these two domains, the verbal and the ontic.

(2) A classical (or early modern) period, beginning in the 17th century, formed around a new array of splits between words and things, making these into distinct fields whose re-connection was predicated on the idea of *representation*.

(3) A period, beginning in the mid-to-late 18th century, extending into our own times, and turning on a conception of "man" as a double entity, caught between "blind *empirical* conditions and deracinated *transcendental* ideas".¹

Three ages then: of resemblance, of representation and of empirical-transcendental man. Now this version of things *might* hold with respect to Foucault's restricted domain — France and the disciplines that take life, labour and language as their objects (currently biology, economics and linguistics)² — but does it hold if we look more broadly at European thought and at a different but related object: culture?

In order to situate any (and perhaps every) theory of culture as representational, it is true that we have to play fast and loose with Foucault's conception of representation, extending it into and even conflating it with that of Heidegger (on whom Foucault is partially dependent throughout *The Order of Things*). It is true, that is, that Foucault situates the age of representation (the classical age) close to the start of the 17th century — a period we would now perhaps call the "early modern" — and, moreover, that he says

1. Ian Hunter, personal correspondence.

2. On the much stricter Heideggerian criteria for representational thinking, however, I doubt if any contemporary disciplines could easily escape the description "representationalist". See below and Chapter 3.

quite clearly that this period of the dominance of ideas by representation ends with (or perhaps a little after) Kant and the enlightenment, some 150 years later (1970, 74-5). However, we can still discern in his historical work on the advent of representational configurations a continuity between it and the later period — and indeed with our own. This connection or continuity is made through a consideration of the ways in which representational thought (in the early modern period) may itself have generated a version of human nature, of what was later to be called “man”.

Prior to the end of the 16th century, Foucault argues, language was not an object for conceptualisation or analysis. It was simply “one of the figurations of the world” (1970, 56), coextensive with the world’s being, and wrapped in a version of that being as pure resemblance. With the great “classical” thinkers (particularly Bacon and Descartes), language became a problem by being severed from natural being. It became a form of the representation of being. Hence the problem, associated with the early modern sciences, is one of deriving a correct language for the representation of being; a language striving to repair the newly possible *lack* of conformity between nature and sign. In short, the earlier idea of resemblance eventually splits into a set of doubles: between identity and difference; between measurement and order; between what represents (a sign) and what it represents (nature); between the arbitrary and the natural; between the sensible sign (the empirical) and the truth of being (the rational), between a history (of human artifice) and a science (of nature), among many others — thereby forming a new and complex binary split:

The simultaneously endless and closed, full and tautological world of resemblance now [around the turn of the 17th century] finds itself dissociated and, as it were, split down the middle: on the one side, we shall find the signs that have become tools of analysis, marks of identity and difference, principles whereby things can be reduced to order, keys for a taxonomy; and on the other, the empirical and murmuring resemblance of things, that unreacting similitude that lies beneath thought and furnishes the infinite raw material for divisions and distributions. On the one hand, the general theory of signs, divisions, and classifications; on the other, the problem of immediate resemblances, of the spontaneous

movement of the imagination, of nature's repetition. And between the two, the new forms of knowledge that occupy the area opened up by this new split. (Foucault 1970, 58)

Accordingly, and perhaps for the first time, human knowledge (rather than divine being) is the hinge on which the order of things turns. And so the question of who it is that knows, the question of human nature, is opened. This early formation of modern human being in fact stems from representational thought — as follows. The unit of representation is the sign, and the sign in turn is a unit of thought, an idea. The structure of the sign becomes homologous with the structure of artificial human nature (which would ideally construct sign systems congruent with nature as such): “In its simple state as an idea, or an image, or a perception, associated with or substituted for another, the signifying element is not a sign. It can become a sign only on condition that it manifests, in addition, the relation that links it to what it signifies. It must represent; but that representation, in turn, must also be represented within it” (1970, 64). So just as the full sign (as opposed to the naked idea) must be capable of representing its own representationality, this emergent figure (“man”, perhaps) must be able to represent himself to himself. As “representation can always be represented within the idea that is representing” (1970, 65), the further idea of representation as the medium of *self*-representation becomes possible. And as early modern humanity begins to represent itself to itself, it finds what it is in precisely those terms: it is that which moves in a world of signs and representations “from elementary sensation [the empirical] to the abstract complex idea [the transcendental]” (1970, 67). At this time, then, the nature of being becomes a problem (in the sense that it becomes available only via artificial signs), and the question of human nature becomes its corollary problem. So the answer arrives in the exact terms of the question: to be human is to make artificial signs and, in constructing those signs, one not only approaches non-human nature (brute physical nature), one also, and simultaneously, approaches oneself as the one who represents representation: “human nature resides in that narrow overlap of representation which permits it to represent it to itself” (1970, 71).

Now, to be sure, this version of humanity is not quite the empirico-transcendental doublet that Foucault later announces as the *sine qua non* of man since Kant and the enlightenment. It is not yet that ultra-problematic figure, caught between empirical

sensuality and ethico-intellectual spirituality. But it is, via its particular splits and its inauguration of self-reflection, a clear prefiguration of it. And we must acknowledge that establishing a quasi-continuity here is to read Foucault against the grain; for Foucault makes it clear that *his* man did not fully exist before the start of the 18th century (1970, 308). Yet if there *is* any element of continuity — and I suspect there is a reasonably strong one — then perhaps the slightly later (post-)Kantian episteme is nothing more than a subsequent version of the representationalist problematic.³ Perhaps it could even be re-read as a new configuration of, and solution to, the problematic positioning of human self-knowledge first opened up, according to Foucault's own chronology, at the start of the 17th century.

One connection is certain here: that Foucault's classical modernity moved away from the securities of the earlier episteme (grounded in resemblance) as it became *secular*. In a world of resemblances, signs are God's signs, and signs of God. For humanity, they are matters of divination. In an emergent secular age of reflective human knowledge (if not quite yet of "reason"), by contrast, the divine urge no longer needs to be deciphered:

It is here that knowledge breaks off its old kinship with *divinatio*. The latter always presupposed signs anterior to it: so that knowledge always resided entirely in the opening up of a discovered, affirmed, or secretly transmitted sign. Its task was to uncover a language which God had previously distributed across the face of the earth; it is in this sense that the object of its divination was *divine*. From now on, however, it is within knowledge itself that the sign is to perform its signifying function; it is from knowledge [rather than God?] that it will borrow its certainty or its probability. (1970, 59)

This is both more empiricist and more secular than the enlightenment projects that followed it. In this respect, Kant may actually be said to reintroduce an older spirituality — but as a secular spirituality — on top of classical modernity's utterly representational science. But there is no way we can read the events of the mid-eighteenth century as deleting a dependence of man on representation and self-representation. On the contrary, "man" as the empirico-transcendental doublet is clearly prefigured in the earlier version of

³. The very fact that Foucault chooses to call his eras or periods "epistemes" (knowledge formations) more than suggests that all three partake of representationalism's insistence on the priority of knowledge over being.

human nature. In one form or another, then, it is co-extensive with (self-)representational thought.

Moreover, Foucault himself finds two important continuities between the two periods. Firstly: the idea or theory of the name since “it was this theory that subsisted longest, breaking up only late in the day, at the moment when representation itself was *modified* at the deepest level of its archaeological organization” (1970, 23; my emphasis). And secondly: the centrality of “history” which, “Since it is the mode of being of all that is given us in experience, has become the unavoidable element in our thought: in this respect, it is probably not so different from Classical Order” (1970, 219).⁴ Note the term “modified” in the first of these continuities — for this is what I think we can see in the sphere of culture: a continuing tradition of representationalism that undergoes *modifications* rather than being utterly overhauled in the name of something more truly modern.⁵ But at the same time, as the historical sketch below (section II) shows, it is also true that we do not get a fully-fledged theory of culture *named as such* until the time of Kant and his near-contemporary, Herder. Prior to that (in Hobbes and Vico, for example) we can discern only proto-cultural concepts, albeit of a manifestly representationalist kind. Nevertheless, there are continuing representationalist elements that are crucial to the theories of Herder and the explicitly cultural theorists following him.⁶

So it is this, *representationalism*, that I want to argue is the foundation for all the major steps towards our current conception(s) of culture. Culture, despite its myriad inflections, starts as the ascription of collective self-representational capacities to social groups and individuals. It is secular and humanist in its orientation: replacing the divination of God’s

⁴. The concepts of naming and history (as contingency) will be the main foci of Chapter 2.

⁵. Another way of putting this would be as follows: is or is not Foucault’s (1970, 75) use of the term “culture” to describe the classical period an anachronism?

⁶. The crucial dates here are as follows: Hobbes 1588-1679 (*Leviathan* 1651); Descartes 1596-1650 (*Discourse on Method* 1637); Vico 1668-1744 (*New Science* 1725); Kant 1724-1804 (*First Critique* 1781); Herder 1744-1803 (*Ideas* 1784-91); Fichte 1762-1814 (*Science of Knowledge* 1794); Comte 1798-1857 (*Cours* 1830-42); Marx 1818-1883 (*Capital* 1867-95). Interestingly enough, the idea of Hobbes and Vico as classical representational thinkers is lent some minor additional weight by the fact that both wrote self-representational texts par excellence: autobiographies. The genre was not unknown in Hobbes’s time (the earliest known English autobiography stemming from the 1430s) but it was still reasonably new. Hobbes wrote his life in Latin blank verse, beginning with his premature birth in 1588 upon his mother’s hearing news of the imminent arrival of the Spanish armada. Vico, by contrast, wrote his autobiography in prose and in the third person.

pre-given signs with a universal human capacity for the creation of self-representing signs. Moreover, it is a specifically Western, indeed Western European, conception of being in the world. Today, we may think of culture as a broad and differentiating concept, generating difference and diversity across the world's manifold societies and social practices. But we might also think of it as predicated on homogeneity, on a terribly narrow and historically particular idea of Western man. (And this will be a central theme running through later chapters — particularly Chapter 5.)

As we noted above, there is a distinct likelihood of Foucault's "discovery" of the self-representing subject deriving from Heidegger. There are so many traces in his text of Heidegger's critique of Western thinking which, Heidegger argues, has turned away from questions of being and towards epistemic questions — away from "what is" and towards "what and how we can *know* what might be". This is precisely the turn that Foucault locates as the move from "this raw being that had been forgotten since the sixteenth century" (1970, 44) to representationalism. The question of how we can know things, in any version or "period" of modernity, as self-representing subjects, is most clearly crystallised for Heidegger in Descartes' *cogito*.⁷ This is the "I" that can represent, that has the capacity for representation and that takes *itself* as the primary object of representation. It is always double: a subject-I that performs acts of transcendental self-knowing, and an empirical object-I that is highest on the list of the things that can be known. Heidegger formulates his critique of this subject in the following way. He writes that the *cogito*:

has the peculiarity of first positing that about which it makes an assertion, the *subjectum*. What it posits in this case is the "I". The I is the *subjectum* of the very first principle.... Hence it came about that ever since then the "I" has especially been called the *subjectum*, "subject".... That the "I" comes to be defined as that which is already present for representation (the "objective" in today's sense) is not because of any I-viewpoint or any

⁷ However, the source of this turning away is, for Heidegger, very much earlier and is associated with the decline of Homeric Greek thinking and, eventually, with the rise of Platonism. Accordingly, Heidegger's version of representationalism is historically and "philosophically" deeper and much more widespread than Foucault's.

subjectivistic doubt, but because of the essential predominance and the definitely directed radicalization of the mathematical and the axiomatic. (Heidegger 1967, 104-5)⁸

Representationalism, that is, cannot be strictly confined to Foucault's middle period. It arises wherever and whenever being is displaced by knowing and, in particular, where the figure of "man" arises as *subjectum*: as that uniquely privileged being for which all other beings come into existence by virtue of being re-presented by it and for which the central being so-represented is, fundamentally, itself.

II.

Using this historically and conceptually broader version of representationalism to extend Foucault's more specific *age* of representation, we can say that representational thinking is predicated on the unproblematic necessity of all knowledge, all meaning, all understanding, all truth passing through this double state of subjecthood. Its necessity to modernity may be connected, as we have seen, to its essential secularity. Without an eternal providence to secure a sense of what is, a version of the human mind with doubly internalising and externalising capacities becomes crucial. At the same time, at the advent of modernity, it became equally necessary to develop a concept of culture. This is no coincidence — human reason and culture go hand in hand: the former pointing to the modern person and the latter to the modern society. Culture arises in the space of the question: how is human collectivity possible? In a theological age, no such question can arise — for collectivity is no more and no less than the collectivity of souls that are all essentially one under God. Freed from that mooring, a new principle needs to be discovered or invented. Hence the mind must work self-representationally and political subjects must be tied to the state by a process of representation (of being represented by a king or a parliament). And no doubt, for early modern thinkers, these two forms of representation were closely connected: language (as a means by which a prior "mental

⁸. Note too, Foucault's location of mathesis as a crucial dimension of representational thought (1970, 71-6), even though there is a distinct possibility that his reading of this concept — as "the science of calculable order" (1970, 73) — is quite different and distinct from Heidegger's more etymologically-grounded idea of mathesis as *foreknowing*. The crucial event of "man's" becoming *subjectum* is returned to at various points later in the book, especially in Chapter 12.

discourse" was made public) and the state (as a means by which a prior animality was tamed) were not separate matters, as Hacking has noted in the case of Hobbes:

The public discourse of politics is, in his opinion, entirely parasitic upon mental discourse. Indeed it is instructive to compare the thrust of his theories of the state and of speech. In the case of the state, individuals are constituted prior to a state that makes sense and exacts obligations only in terms of the needs of individuals and the contracts into which they enter. Likewise, Hobbesian mental discourse is constituted prior to the public discourse that is derived from it. (Hacking 1975, 25)

To some extent, then, we can discern a kind of secular spirit (that would eventually come to be called "culture") first in the great works of early modern political thinking such as that of Hobbes. Hence Hobbes marks the break between natural chaos (man as animal) and civilised order with the concept of *artifice*. Artifice is the capacity to generate art and artefacts — synthetic, man-made objects — what some call "commodities". And one such object is the contract of each-to-each that Hobbes calls the sovereign. This sovereign may be embodied in a king or an assembly, but that is only its empirical realisation. What it represents (its proto-transcendental function perhaps) is the collective will — a general will to pacify the chaos of individual wills struggling against one another in their pursuit of individual pleasure and power. The sovereign embodies an abstract or transcendental contract of each-to-each. Hobbes's ideas, of both a general capacity for art and artifice in human nature, and of the generation by that capacity of a collective will, are perhaps the first truly modern rudiments of what we would now regard as "culture". It is not hard to see then that, right from its inauguration as a proto-concept, culture assumes the form of a collectivisation of the Cartesian representational subject. It begins with the question: how do we *know* who we are (in the just possible absence of a god)? It is the necessity of *asking* the question that is representationalist, and so the form of the answer (artifice and collective will) necessarily derives from that form of thought.

Somewhat later, Vico provided a different answer to precisely the same question. His *New Science* tried to establish a method for deriving the general principles of collective being (civilisation) from historical evidence. Kenneth Minogue puts Vico's version of the question succinctly:

how to account for the beginnings of civilisation without invoking an original designer, either in the form of a semi-divine lawgiver, or in the form of the civilised intelligence presupposed by the theorists of the social contract. (Minogue 1986, 60)

Vico, then, goes beyond Hobbes and effectively sees in social-contract solutions no more than a kind of humanist theology: in place of divinity, the sovereign — “that Mortal God to which we owe under the Immortal God, our peace and defence” (Hobbes 1968, 227). Civilisation cannot be thus explained and understood. Instead, Vico turns to secular mythology and discovers there a tendency for every collectivity to form three basic institutions: religion, marriage and burial. Myth-telling along these three axes is effectively the form of human representation that secures an institution-building capacity (or wisdom, as Vico calls it). So again, a double capacity: material production and mental (self-)representation. And then, in terms of a method for understanding this double, Vico works with a binaristic theory of human knowledge. On the one hand, knowledge can be in the form of *scienza* (science) and so grasp things in their fullness and depth, as eternal and transcendental principles; on the other, it can be mere empirical knowledge of the surface data of phenomena — *coscienza* (conscience and/or consciousness). *Scienza* is appropriate knowledge for whatever the knower has himself made (*verum ipsum factum*). Hence men can have complete knowledge of history and civilisation, because they have made these themselves. But of other things (brute nature) they may only have *coscienza* — empirical knowledge. To take an example: from the surface details of actually spoken languages (in all their varieties and empirical differences) — that is, from a *coscienza* of languages — the analyst may derive eternal linguistic principles, a *lingua mentalis* — and hence have full (transcendental) knowledge of one of his own innate capacities. With regard to natural objects there is no such possibility. Again, then, we can see that this proto-theory of culture is a theory of something like a collective empirico-transcendental doublet: man the empirical maker of culture and man the transcendental knower of his own capacities — the vulgar citizen who merely performs cultural labour, and the recondite philosophical anthropologist who reflects on that labour in order to ascertain its transcendental principles.

Kant's problem was the resolution of this antinomy. One of the first philosophers of contradiction, and one of the first detailed categorisers of man as empirico-transcendental doublet, Kant worked constantly towards what he knew to be an impossibility: the unified subject. In one respect, this subject was composed of flesh and therefore was necessarily bound to the uncertain world of sensations and sensuality. As an empirical subject, he was confined to the world of phenomena, sensory perceptions of what might or might not be really existing things. The idea of fully knowing such things was, for Kant, however, both our goal and our impossible task. Something about us, he argued, strives for the ultimately real behind the merely actual — and this ultimately real might be called the noumenal (as opposed to the phenomenal). But what, in the realm of the noumenal, could men ever know — attached as we are to our flesh and our senses? Roger Scruton suggests an answer — that Kant construed the possibility of two distinct forms of knowledge: “He asserted that in the first form of knowledge [theoretical knowledge], I know myself as phenomenon, in the second, practical knowledge, I know myself as noumenon”. So, he concludes:

Despite Kant's seemingly established theory that noumena are in essence unknowable to the understanding, he has, through invoking the ancient idea of “practical” knowledge, presented a picture of how they might nevertheless be known. (Scruton 1985, 157)

This is a nicely weighted rethinking of the Cartesian subject — and it is not without its attachments to Vico's doctrine of *verum ipsum factum*: the subject of practical knowledge (the empirical side of the doublet) knows itself in its fullness, while the subject of theoretical knowledge (the transcendental side of the doublet) is confined to mere appearances and shadows of that form of itself. This is a complexification of the Cartesian representational position, to be sure — for now we have two distinct forms of knowledge (the theoretical and the practical) and two distinct forms of the subject (the transcendental and the empirical) — but it nevertheless remains a version of representationalism. Moreover, in the third *Critique* Kant came to apply this double-double to questions of ethics and aesthetics and discovered a subject divided between its capacities to act and its capacities to judge. At this point, I think, we have a much fuller statement about the

cultural subject and its divisions: it is at once practical/sensual/active and theoretical/spiritual/judging. As Kant puts it in his late work, the *Anthropology*:

The two kinds of good, the physical and the moral, cannot be mixed together, because they would then neutralize each other and have no effect on the purpose of true bliss. Rather, inclination to pleasurable living and inclination to virtue are in conflict with each other, and the restriction of the principle of physical good by the principle of moral good constitute *through their very conflict* the whole purpose of a well-bred, partly sensuous and partly ethicointellectual human being. (Kant 1978, 185, my emphasis)

From this point on, then, culture becomes the impetus towards and struggle for this version of the representational subject itself — the “partly sensuous and partly ethicointellectual human being”. What this opens up is the possibility of culture as ethical and aesthetic self-improvement; as a civic program directed at the spiritual development of the individual. It is from this point that one can speak, for example, of the arts as a civilising pursuit, as a good in itself, seemingly disconnected from utility, the body and facticity but, in fact, geared towards quite civic-utilitarian ends — the production and management of a very specific kind of (self-)representational human being.

One upshot of Kant’s distinction between phenomena and noumena was German romanticism. What it did was to inaugurate a version of idealism that, to this day, is always a temptation in studies of culture — it posited the existence of a radical subject whose interpretations are paramount. This version of idealism (embraced by Schopenhauer and partly taken up by Nietzsche) suggests that the world is no more than how it is interpreted. To return to Scruton’s account of one such figure (Fichte) and his reading of Kant:

Fichte asks, by what right does Kant assume the “thing-in-itself” [noumenon]? If it is really unknowable, what meaning is there in the assertion that it exists? Surely we should drop all reference to it and develop “transcendental idealism” in its “pure”, subjective form. We can then argue that the world of nature is the totality of those appearances through which the ego knows itself, subject to an order which the ego, in the act of knowing, is the sole principle and origin. (Scruton 1985, 162)

This is the origin of a terribly subjective cultural relativism. It means a conflation between a Cartesian individual subject and the order of culture itself. Effectively: one person, one culture. Then, of course, for any cultural theory following from this peculiar form of thought, there is an immediate contradiction. That is: what exists in reality is a function of one's cultural location and yet that location itself is nothing more than the sum of "those appearances through which the ego knows itself". The world (nature), its cultural mediation, and "pure" experience reduce to a single moment. We can notice two things about this highly reductionist argument. Firstly, it justifies a totally aestheticist conception of culture — art for art's sake — as the intention of the artist, or his or her interpreter. And secondly, it remains utterly within a representational framework; for it argues that the world is no more than a function of the representations or interpretations that a particular mind can make of it. In this sense, romanticism has always looked as if it were a way out of modernism's dominant formation of the subject (by an escape into personalism, a politics of personal identity and radical interpretability), but it in fact remains firmly predicated on this exceedingly singular version of the subject.

Herder worked directly against this uptake of Kant by returning to material conditions "outside" and prior to subjective experience. He produced, in fact, the first theory of culture to be named as such. His argument was that fixed and given climatological and topographical conditions formed the geographically distinct collectivities that he called "nations". Moving directly away from the personalism of the German romantics, he went closer to Vico. He saw the Kantian turn as precisely the wrong one, as opening the possibility of ultra-subjective interpretability. On the other hand, he did not think topographical factors alone could generate a national culture. They were necessary for its development, but not sufficient. The peoples who were so formed by those conditions also had to express, in their artefacts, their rituals and their forms of life, their dependence on those conditions. Hence cultures were at once fixed and material and, at the same time, expressive. This expressivity was not an entirely controllable or deducible factor — it depended on local uptakes. So, for Herder, a national culture depended as much on the spirit of a people (its *Volksgeist*) as it did upon the material conditions in which they found themselves and which, at root, could be held to have generated that abstract spirit. To this

extent, his theory was as populist as it was materialist. And moreover, this unique combination of geo-conditions and popular traditions meant that cultures could not be compared. There was no fundamental human nature; there were no founding principles (even though Herder himself set out to find such anthropological constants) — simply an exhausting empirical task ahead — an empirical anthropology, no less, based on perhaps the first explicit thinking of cultural pluralism.

One radicalisation of this position which gained dominance throughout the 19th century was positivism. In this theory, all human affairs (cultural, political, economic, social and moral) were presumed to be objects of analysis in more-or-less the same way as natural objects were for the physical and chemical sciences. Hence, an almost total science of culture. But not completely: for at this point it is often forgotten that the founder of positivist thinking, Comte, also saw positivism as a secular spiritual regime based on order, love and progress (Style 1928) — such that the quest for order is remembered today while the humanistic demand for love and the politically interventional demand for progress are all but forgotten. Despite this lost dimension of positivism, the movement was, if *anything* was, a turn to the almost entirely empirical side of the doublet. It forms the nearest antithesis to German romanticism we could imagine, or indeed locate historically. But by the time of the advent of positivism, it was already clearly acknowledged that there were distinct sectors of life: nature on the one hand and human affairs on the other — this is one of the premises on which the positivist manifesto is based (for without it, there could be no program of culture-to-be-studied-as-nature). And then, inside the category of purely human affairs, which the new discipline of sociology was supposed to take as its object, there were further divisions: politics, economy, culture and so on. So by this time, the sphere of culture had been delimited to such matters as literature, art, education and so on. Then when we look at the supposedly scientific methods that were to be applied to these domains (see below) we find that they, as well as the assumptions which carved out those domains, are thoroughly inhabited by representational thinking. While romanticism and positivism appear antithetical, even today, they merely mark opposite points on a single, and arguably narrow, representationalist continuum.

As a quasi-positivist, Taine, for example, believed that he could describe literary production (as one branch of cultural production) in terms of a tripartite distinction between *race*, *milieu* and *moment*. If *race* consisted of the fixed and hereditary characteristics that a national culture could not avoid, then *milieu* consisted of environmental factors such as climate, topography and (as it happens) many of Herder's ultimate cultural determinants. *Moment*, for Taine, consisted of highly localised factors — the driving forces or momentum behind any cultural production. In fact it was the total ensemble of spiritual (that is, immaterial) factors influencing any literary production. On the one hand, this triplet would seem to exhaust any proto-scientific and de-aestheticised description of a literary artefact (most usually an author's oeuvre). Yet it is also true, on the other hand, that both the separation of a distinct cultural domain ("works of art"), as well as its explicability in terms of partly empirical and partly immaterial factors, return us to a deeply representational form of thinking. Literature, on this thesis, is both a kind of natural outgrowth of its empirical conditions (even to the point where Taine claims that Burns's poetry grew out of the very soil he turned over as a ploughman) *and* an expression of a collective spirit or will: the "English" nation, according to Taine (who seems to have forgotten that Burns was a Scot). In this sense, Hobbes's artefact-will distinction is not far from the surface. If Hobbes's conceptual apparatus is re-filtered through a critique of a Kantian rethinking of the Cartesian subject, the result is positivism.

Marx is supposed to have put an end to this variety of metaphysics with the manifestly materialist conception of culture that he, again supposedly, formed through a critique and inversion of the idealist philosopher par excellence, Hegel. All questions of theory, pure thought, transcendence and ideality are now supposed to be reducible to specific economic conditions. The story is well known — so much so that today's cultural studies has been trying for more than 20 years to shake off the spectre of determinism that this apparent marginalisation of the cultural entails. But essentially, this version of Marxism is no different from positivism with an economistic gloss. Instead of culture (as the immaterial aspect of human collectivity) arising out of natural conditions, the standard boy-meets-tractor version of Marxism has it arising out of economic conditions that — because they are already an accumulated effect of human practice — are both determining

and somehow subject to human transformation. Hence on this traditional version of Marxism, there are two relatively fixed human capacities (as per the standard representationalist double subject): a capacity to think in symbolic terms and a capacity to control natural matter by transforming it into useful commodities. The seeming solution to the problem of the Cartesian *subjectum* offered by Marxism is quite simple but also utterly original: make the thinking (therefore cultural?) subject into a pure effect of the acting and producing (therefore economic?) subject, thereby returning it at every point to its materiality-as-economy. The uniqueness of this cannot be underestimated, especially since its end (with the last Marxist philosopher, Althusser) was to be an argument for the deletion of the subject (as *ego cogito*) altogether.

But this concentration on the “mature” Marx forgets his earlier and quite different contribution to cultural theory; a general anthropology that was less concerned with the economic basis of historical periods and more concerned with the general conditions of human action. At that time, surprisingly enough, he did not argue that consciousness (as immateriality, or as a general representational and reflective capacity) is simply an effect of the particular materially productive (economic) circumstances in which human beings happen to find themselves — or vice versa. Rather, he argued that consciousness and production, as general capacities of human being, were better identified as a *single* capacity (“conscious life-activity”), a unique capacity distinguishing “man” from animal:

The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is *its life-activity*. Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity.... In creating an *objective world* by his practical activity, in *working-up* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being. (Marx 1973, 51)

Culture, then, is “conscious life-activity”: a pure thinking/representing that exists *in and as* an acting/producing. The two are utterly coeval. But what is significantly different from classical Marxism in this form of thought is that it does not solve the problem of the acting and reflecting (collective) subject by marginalising or even deleting the latter; on the contrary, it begins with a thought that moves, at least to some extent, against

representationalism. In this respect, it may presage an important alternative to mainstream cultural thinking that could go like this: stop thinking of culture as a problem to be solved by a theoretical resolution of the duality of the collective subject, for the supposedly two parts are actually only one part; thinking (whether in the professional form of theorising, or in the ordinary sense of working out a practical problem) is never divorced from action; in fact, in any situation we care to name, we will always find that action-thought is one thing — social being; there is no double self to be accounted for or reconciled; and so the analysis of culture is an analysis of a single thing with many and diverse instantiations.

Part of the move away from representationalist versions of culture, then, might involve some such “singularisation” of the (post-)Cartesian subject — if not quite that of the early Marx himself — and, hence, a “flattening” of culture-in-general into one dimension. Still more importantly, we must eventually ask, beyond any form of Marxism, whether it would be possible to rethink culture altogether outside “action-thought” whether as dual (the classical subject) *or* as singular (the early Marx’s subject). But this must be reserved for later and, for now, we must look briefly at the cultural disciplines in our own times.

Today, the main disciplines that deal with the concept of culture are anthropology and cultural studies. Neither of these, despite their intra-disciplinary variations, appears to move away from the tropes of representationalism. Anthropology, in its movement from considerations of the purely physical conditions of sociality, via analyses of cultural artefacts as “symbolic”, and towards notions of cultures as “whole ways of life”, as “language games”, as “practices”, even as mere artefacts of the anthropologist’s own forms of writing, does not move very far from the general model of attempting to explain a collectivised *cogito*. Cultural studies is even more clearly confined to the space of empirico-transcendental collective man, since its own history is precisely an amalgam of the discipline of English (aestheticism in the service of the cultured citizen) and sociology (the empirical investigation of broader “macro” social functions, including the “cultural sector”). In its most recent inflection (which involves a synthesis with something called “postmodern” thinking), it frequently espouses a radical subjectivism (often in the form of identity politics) that is little different from post-Kantian romanticism. In this case, it

seems that there is in fact a radical continuity inhabiting a very Western will to know “how it is we know who we are” and underlying all previous attempts to know what culture is or what cultures are. What I want to suggest is at least the beginnings of a move away; not simply for the sake of alterity (though this is clearly part of the motivation) but also because, as we shall see on a number of occasions, the predication of culture on a self-representing subject may be extremely limiting.

III.

We have now looked briefly at the substance (the “content”) of cultural theory in the West. But what of its methodology? If modernity is principally a form of history and historical thinking characterised by the passage of representation through a self-representing subject, then we might expect there to be a rather limited range of methodologies for the analysis of culture. But is it possible that an even more radical proposition may be true: that there is only one methodology? Such a methodology may be called bi-polar or oscillatory and would involve something of the order of a shuttle of interpretation between, roughly, the empirical and transcendental sides of the (self-)representing subject. The model would look like this: an array of empirical particulars is collected and passed to the transcendental component in order for it to be inspected for its qualities of generality, for its rules or principles. Those general qualities are then returned to the empirical component for checking against further particulars. The generality is then either retained or adjusted. And so on, potentially to infinity — but halting in any particular case at a point where a “felt” adequation is reached, a point where it appears that a large enough array of inductive particulars has been captured by a transcendental deduction. In scientific contexts this technique would be the hypothetico-deductive method (which is, in the strict sense, inductive since its conclusions will always exceed its premises).

In theories of culture, however, we can find it working under a number of different names. For example, we have already encountered it in the oscillation between *scienza* and *coscienza* in Vico and its possible arrival at such eternal principles (or anthropological constants) as the *lingua mentalis*. However, it is also apparent in versions of the

hermeneutic circle such as the proto-form used by Herder (from fixed conditions and national rituals to the *Volksgeist*). Again, it can be found in Taine where a general cultural ethos (*moment*) can be transcendently deduced from the enumerable particulars of *race* and *milieu* — and this is no doubt a method borrowed from Comte’s double relation between statics and dynamics. Another instance appears in the seminal 20th century essay on cultural methodology, Karl Mannheim’s “On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*” (1952) where the analyst is asked to move from given observations to generalisation and back again, until a meta-generalisation (in the form of a world picture) is reached which can encompass the whole of a society’s knowledge formations.⁹ All references to such matters as *Zeitgeist*, ethos, world vision, and so on are varieties of the same method. It can be found in humanist histories of ideas, E.M.W. Tillyard’s *Elizabethan World Picture* (1963) being a paradigm case; in Piagetian psychology (in the double relation between organism and environment, as a model of learning); in Marxist sociology of culture (for example in Lucien Goldmann’s explicitly “oscillatory” method connecting authorial oeuvre and world vision); in Freudian psychoanalysis (in the corrective oscillation between dream data and psychopathological condition — and then, ultimately, towards a general characterisation of the “unconscious”); in Saussure’s reduction of all signification to the ideal; in Althusser’s method of “symptomatic reading”; in Derrida’s novel reduction of all representation to a general negative metaphysical condition of *différance* (rather than, as elsewhere, to a positive metaphysical condition of presence), as well as in manuals of correct procedure in ethnography, case studies and qualitative methods. Even relational databases for computers designed for qualitative analysis are explicitly predicated on this method under the name of “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Elsewhere, however, it has been claimed that such a method is not simply a professional analytic device for the discovery of underlying cultural conditions. Rather, the claim is that this oscillation between evidence and general pattern is a routine property of all human sense making, lay or professional. Under the name of the “documentary method of interpretation” or the “gestalt-contexture property of action-and-context”, Garfinkel (1967, 77-9) has proposed that this same shuttle between empirical

⁹. The question of the world picture is taken up again in Chapter 12.

particulars and general interpretations (or between sensory evidences and underlying patterns) is a general capacity of human practical reason. And in fact, it may be possible to discern a similar (but rarely explicated) tendency in mainstream forms of cultural analysis: namely that the search for “culture” in a collectivity may involve no more and no less than the search for this *analytic* method itself among a culture’s *participants* or “subjects”. In that case, cultural analysis could be said to go searching for its own limited methodological principles *inside* the forms of production and recognition of the cultural objects it would ideally describe or explain at arms length. If so, this would be a terrible repetition: a restricted subject form generates a single methodological process and what counts as “analysis” is simply the rediscovery of that same process inside cultures so that these, in turn, are constructed as just that subject form, the collectivised *cogito*. The peculiar argument from representationalism itself would then run: if we are doubled beings, that is, general-particular beings, then the only method at our disposal is the shuttle from the particular to the general and/or vice versa. The double use *and discovery* of this method (in and as cultural analysis) would merely confirm and reconfirm this. Hence this would be our “real” condition.

The interesting possibility contained in Garfinkel’s rethinking is that such a method may be a topic, *and only a topic*, of analysis. This then begs the question of what method there may be that could analyse that topic but without being, itself, any form of repetition of it. Such a question, though, is not to be found in Garfinkel himself — though some of his followers would contend that the documentary method is a precision instrument and that the use of precision instruments (such as it) for the analysis of precision instruments is a legitimate pursuit. My suspicion is otherwise. I think Garfinkel at least begins to press the boundaries of representational thinking. And this has to do with his (by-and-large) refusal of generalisation; his policy of inspecting the local and specific particulars of an almost physical-material situation of cultural production (which he calls the “in situ”). In this case, a culture would be no more and no less than a collection of devices, an apparatus or *dispositif* (Hunter 1991), or, in slightly different terms, an array of “orderings” (Kendall and Wickham 2001).

At the same time, most of Garfinkel's work directly eschews what he calls "constitutive theorising" — perhaps conflating theorisation with undue generalisation and mere speculation. To that extent it does indeed open up the possibility of an utterly non-generalising, non-speculative cultural theory. A further possibility that this suggests is that this "flatness" of culture (as a non-binary, non-dualistic array of devices) is close to the "solutions" to representationalism to be found not only in the early Marx (as we have seen) but also in Foucault. Foucault refers to the primacy of the empirical event over its transcendental possibilities (its conceptualisation) as "positivity". In this sense, Foucault and Garfinkel may share a theory of culture as a singular and merely given empiricity, with no transcendental properties whatsoever but one that is capable of generating a "sense" of the transcendental when subjected, after the fact, to speculative thinking, idealisation, "constitutive theorising" and so forth. Foucault saw positivity as a condition in which forms of knowledge (particularly those of the human sciences) and their action in and on the world were more-or-less coterminous with one another. In an important paper on this, "Politics and the Study of Discourse" (1978), Foucault makes it clear that he focuses on the human sciences precisely because there is, as it were, very little delay effect in their operations. If medical thought, for example, changes, its changes are almost immediately instantiated in practice. Hence, thought and practice cannot be easily separated — and *we do not need a theory* to connect them. Here, then, we could return to the Hobbesian problematic: the question of how collective will (thought) and practice (artifice, commodification) are connected. Foucault's answer is simple: they do not *have to be* connected — merely described — for they are identical and immediate. Positivity, as a concept, is therefore a radical one: it turns away from the *double* self that both knows objects and is, itself, the primary object that it knows. But it does not delete the self altogether. Rather, it makes it singular (as — if there is one — a general self), and yet everywhere open to the particularity of the event. One possibility that may flow from this is that culture becomes, as we have seen, a collection of devices or "orderings" for specific accomplishments, an apparatus or *dispositif*. But, on the same model, the *principle* of that collection could never be available. To this extent we could recharacterise representationalism as follows: its mistake is to see culture as the *principle* of the collection

of human productional devices while culture is, in fact, the array of devices itself, not a general property they share. So a counter-representationalism could at least begin by thinking that there *is no* principle for such a collection and turning instead to a methodology that wished to get a reasonable description of such devices in their specificity, their locality, their positivity. If there could be a relatively pure empiricism of this kind, I do not doubt that it would be an excellent “solution” to representationalism.

But what are the chances of such a strict empiricism? Here, we must admit that this is no more than a call for an impossible deletion of the transcendental. Empiricism is, perhaps, always already a form of thinking inside representational thinking. To this extent, it can never be without its own metaphysical positions and grounds. It may be an anti-transcendental metaphysics, but it is nevertheless a metaphysics for all that. Still, those empiricisms that offer a “metaphysical” dependence on the positivity of the event — as opposed to the event as a mere instance of some more general and ideal state — do appear to promise something of a first step along the path that leads away from traditional and entrenched forms of representationalism. So this is where we must turn in the next chapter. There we can pick up on two clues or hints left behind by Foucault (see above); the two continuities between what he thought of as the high age of representation and its supposed displacement: naming and history.

Chapter 2

Two Empiricisms: Naming and Contingency

I.

What remains of our brief look at the representational grounds of cultural theory? Perhaps only a couple of hints. The first involves a general direction towards some kind of (very loosely) empiricism, an insistence on the priority of the object-event over its conceptualisation. The second gestures towards two possible topics — naming and history — as sites where such an empiricism might operate. Then the risk may be that these are no more than detours or false trails. Still, they are effectively all we have for now. And so we can imagine ourselves in the presence of two guides and see where they lead us. The first guide is concerned with cultural objects (in this case “knowledges”) and with their “ownedness” by collectivities of people as an alternative to the idea of “literal naming”. The second guide beckons us into a territory where the very history of cultural “production” can be rethought as empirical in the sense of being radically accidental and contingent, radically open to what happens “in the event”. Let us follow them one at a time.

II.

In an important but often neglected work on the problem of “owning knowledge”, our first guide Wes Sharrock (1974) wants to know, among other things: what is a cultural object? By what means, or we might say, by what technologies (artful forms, or *techné*), are they brought about as specifically cultural objects? And in order to think this question we will need an initial and approximate pre-specification of how these terms operate. Accordingly, we could think of cultures, for now, as quite loose assemblages of devices for object production and recognition, such that object production and recognition practices

are identical;¹ and such that the term “object production and recognition practices” can be glossed by the term “technologies”. Then we might think of a cultural object — again, as an initial approximation — as whatever it is that people can produce-and-recognise *as* something. By “recognise”, we would have to mean “use as”, “employ as”, “take care of as” — so the term is not a psychologistic one. A cultural object, then, would be whatever people know-and-use. Then, by “know”, we would have to mean technical knowledge — “knowing how”, rather than “knowing that” to invoke Ryle’s (1984) and Heidegger’s (1982) distinction — in order, again, to avoid the mentalistic sense. Cultural objects would then be, among other things, practical knowledges. So Sharrock can ask his question about what cultural objects are by asking how it is that cultural collectivities (the English, the Chinese, or Aborigines, for example) come into confluence with bodies of practical knowledge (grammar, geomancy, kinship).

What we can notice about this, in the first instance, is that cultural objects routinely consist of two terms: a term describing a cultural collectivity and a term describing, say, a body of knowledge or an assemblage of practices. They are always, as such, even if there is no direct mention of the fact, double. Rain may just be rain — though it may also be a particular (and therefore cultural) kind of rain — but guitars are always American guitars, Japanese guitars, Spanish guitars and so on. So, even from the outset, as soon as we are dealing with cultural objects there is a doubling. This seems to be elementary: it points to the existence of cultural objects as having, from the start, always more than a single element. And if there are elements, then there is the possibility of analysis — in almost the chemical sense of the isolation of an object’s elements.

Turning to that double, Sharrock’s next step is to ask: how is it that a corpus of knowledge comes to get the same *name* as a cultural collectivity? For he notices that the existence of same names does not automatically relate one thing so-named to another. There are many persons called, say, Miller; but they do not, by virtue of that same-naming, necessarily bear a relation to one another. And in the case of named corpuses of knowledge, Sharrock points out that they do not have to be uniquely *possessed* by the collectivity of the same name in order to get that name. Hence, in his example, via Evans-

1. This is one way of stating Garfinkel’s (1967) theory of reflexivity.

Pritchard (1937), a people called “the Baka” can legitimately and correctly say that they practise “Azande witchcraft”. And as we know, Anglo-Australian people can read and write Australian-Ukrainian novels; Irish women can manufacture and wear French perfume; and Swedes can produce and drive Japanese cars. The culture-naming adjective that describes an object or knowledge-formation is not necessarily identical with the same term used as a noun to uniquely describe a cultural cohort. What we call French windows, the French call *fenêtres anglaises* — and the same applies, for that matter, to French leave and French letters. Something is clearly going on in the naming of cultural objects and knowledge-corpora that is distinct from a unique and literal ascription of them to finite collectivities or cultural groupings.

There is a genuine puzzle here; and not just a linguistic curiosity. For Sharrock leads us into asking: given that cultural objects are always double (for they are objects *and* they are culturally produced, named, recognised, associated, and so on), what is happening in the process of their, let us say, “attachment” to a culture? And, because we have yet to arrive at it, we have to put the name of this relation in cautious quotation marks for now. Still, we might begin to suspect that it is the general character of this relation that will eventually tell us what is cultural about a cultural object; and, as importantly, that this “general character” must be something other than representationalist in the sense that it does not begin from the premise that cultural objects are, primordially, representations. By taking this path, we may then be starting to ask no more and no less than the question: what is a culture? And just perhaps: what is a culture other than a principle for collecting an ensemble of mere representations? There is something (still to be found, for sure) in Sharrock’s question about the *attachment* of objects to cultures (by names?) that promises to reveal something of the character of the cultural as such.

To ask what it is about Indian cinema such that it is Indian, or to ask what it is about Italian coffee such that it is Italian, is to ask what it is, in general, about certain sorts of objects that they are cultural. And what we have seen with the help of Sharrock’s guidance is that that attachment — of particular objects to particular cultures, and by extension of objects in general to cultures in general — is *not* a simple matter of naming or

literal description. One of Foucault's most enduring characteristics of representationalism (namely, naming) appears to be coming apart, if only slightly.

We could speculate on how our trail so far might pose problems for the cultural disciplines. That is, if the strictly "naming" connection does not hold, there may be a mistake in cultural studies of thinking that we are saying something about, say, television viewers, by describing viewing *habits*. Or there might be a mistake in anthropology of thinking that one is saying something about Inuits by describing fishing *practices* and so on. And the same might hold for such categories as "the medieval romance", "postmodern theory" or "continental philosophy". This may be an absolutely fundamental problem, *prior* to any investigation, and one that it is crucial to clear up. If we cannot even assume that basic cultural descriptions are literal, then we cannot assume that face-value analyses mean very much at all. Now it begins to look as if something so simple as an empirical description is already problematic — or, at least, it may be something other than "literal". But what? What *is* the nature of cultural "attachment" if it is not one of literal naming?

Sharrock's solution to the problem — that strict literality can sometimes fail — is, in effect, a Wittgensteinian return to ordinary usage. He writes: "The idea that the name is intended as literally descriptive is mistaken". So when people ordinarily use these terms, they are not giving literal descriptions: "The name is never intended to describe the persons amongst whom the corpus has currency but, instead, to specify the relationship which that corpus has to the constituency". He then goes on to say that, for him, this is "a relationship which seems analogous to that of ownership" (1974, 49).

Let us pause a while here and consider our guide's direction. Cultural attachment, he says, is "analogous to" what we might ordinarily call "ownership". So we must assume that it is not a relationship of ownership as such — not ownership *literally*. Then what? How does the analogy work? There is an important clue in Sharrock's next step when he goes on to say that, for example, my car is my car, and if you drive it, you're either "borrowing" it or "stealing" it (1974, 50).

"Borrowing" and "stealing": could these be the important terms as initial approximations? Nearly all of the examples Sharrock gives to show that the relationship

of collectivity to corpus is *like* one of ownership, are cases of ... what should we say? Shifting? *Non-attachment*? For it is difficult, in English, is it not, to find a term to collect all such terms as “borrowing”, “stealing”, “using another’s”, and so on?² So, from the examples that Sharrock gives against literality and on behalf of ownership, the relationship might just as well be one of — to try some more terms — “borrowability” or “stealability”. The way that something appears to be culturally attached, to be “ours” for example, appears to be that it *can be* (though it need not in fact be) taken and used by others. Along the way towards the idea that a relation of proper *ownership* (propriatorship) pertains between an object and a collectivity, then, Sharrock sets off along an equal and opposite path. On this other side, the opposite relation (“borrowability” and so on), would be equally criterial for us having a definite case of a cultural object — an object attached to a culture. Following him along this way, we might have to say: any cultural object is, if only purely in principle, borrowable (and so on) and this might be its condition for being one.

At the risk of wandering even further from our guide, let us imagine for now that this is right. The consequences would be interesting. For example: we would then have to say that what makes something into “women’s knowledge” is the risk that it could possibly come into men’s hands. Or: what makes this “Alec’s book” is that it is capable of being quoted, plagiarised and so on. Or, what it is that makes my guitar a “Japanese Telecaster” is that I (or another) might pass it off as an “American Telecaster”. In this case, what would determine any cultural object, as a specifically cultural object or, which is the same thing, as an object pertaining to a specific culture, would be its condition (though not necessarily the instantiation of that condition) as potentially *impure*, *improper*, *misused* and so on.

Risking a few pitfalls and going a little further still than our first guide would allow, we would have to say that cultural objects are marked by the *necessity* of their *possible* dis-ownership (both emphases are equally important). Then, what is “cultural” would be whatever could always come to mean things, to be recognised, to be used, to be known, to

2. A more Heideggerian way of approaching this term is worked through in Chapter 5.

be governed, and cared for in *at least two* (frequently more) different cultural systems, different assemblages of production and recognition.

An interesting consequence of this would be that it would make the cross-cultural the condition for the cultural, so that not only *can* Anglo-Australian people write and read Australian-Ukranian novels, Irish women wear and manufacture French perfume, and Swedes drive and produce Japanese cars — the necessity of this possibility would also be *the condition for* all “authentic” instances of Anglo-Australian, Australian-Ukranian, Irish, French, Swedish and Japanese cultural production. Accordingly there would be nothing special about cultural hybridity. It would be — and I suspect that it is — the most ordinary thing in the world. On the other hand, and equally, there would be — and again I suspect that there is — no place in the world for simplistic affirmations of unalloyed cultural purity.

So far though, we have been confined to macro-cultures of production (such as the Italian, the Chinese or the American). But we can just as easily see that this condition of dis-ownership (or, perhaps, hetero-locality) might equally apply at micrological levels. The most mundane cultural object such as a teacup, for example, would then carry with it a possible return to, say, either its aesthetic system of production (the fact that it is such and such a shape, colour and size, and with such and such a motif on its surface, for example) or else, and equally, to its material system of production (which will have to do with the physics of ceramics and certain processes of manufacture and mass production).³ And no doubt we can think of many other systems involved in the production of teacups, not to mention films, persons and other technically complex objects like computers or bio-techniques.

At the macrological level, we can suspect, after Sharrock, that culture X can only be said to “own” belief B because culture Y can emulate it, copy it, also believe it, and so on. And in saying this, we are saying that the belief, as a cultural object, can be returned to X’s native system because it can also be returned to Y’s. Ditto at the micrological level: we can say that a cultural object (such as a teacup) can only be known, used, recognised, and so

³. This always possible return is taken up in Chapter 12 under the terms “referral”, “renvois”, “Verweisung”.

on, because it can be so in relation to more than a single system at once. Then, in a quite ordinary sense, cultural objects would be always already hybrid or internally differentiated entities. This would be an essential aspect of them; and an essential aspect of them *regardless* of their representational statuses. So if they were ever given as hypothetically pure and simple productions or recognitions from within a single system, they would not be knowable, usable or recognisable in any way shape or form. If there were such things, they would be the cultural equivalents of Kantian noumena: natural in the purest sense, and no art or science could know them. On this way of thinking, hybridity would be the most ordinary and primary condition of something's being cultural, since anything non-hybrid would be unknowable by anybody.⁴

Having reached this point, where hybridity (internal differentiability) appears as universal and ubiquitous, a number of other possible pathways open up in several directions. For example, claims such as one finds in certain forms of postcolonialist and feminist cultural studies — claims to the effect that diasporas, borderzones, polymorphous sexualities, ambiguous bodies and such like are unique and different from “monocultures” — would have to be reconsidered. Instead, and because there could *be* no monocultures, they would simply be types or kinds of hybridity generally. And although I cannot pursue this path of thinking here, it would be interesting to speculate on a whole range of new ways of looking at such cultural matters as diasporas and sexual difference opened up by a perspective in which hetero-locality becomes the *ground* of ordinariness rather than a radical departure from it.

Another interesting consequence of this type of thinking could run as follows. We started with the idea that a cultural technology is a system of cultural production and recognition. But now we would have to say that it can only ever be such a thing as and when it comes into confluence with at least one other such system.⁵ This would then mean that we could re-think the history of cultural technologies in terms of confluences. So, for

⁴ Interestingly enough, one of the first cultural theories to announce itself as such, that of Herder (cf. Chapter 1), insists that borrowing across national borders is always an integral part of a national culture rather than, say, a “corruption” of it.

⁵ Once we have followed our second guide, we will have to add the following: this “coming into confluence” will always be accidental; a purely pragmatic matter; part and parcel of no general historical law.

example, the cultural technology of printing would be said to come about through the unforeseeable accident of a certain confluence: the fact that, around 1450 in a particular part of Europe,⁶ certain metallurgical skills (the production of malleable but strong alloys) grew up in a region where presses had traditionally been used for, among other things, the extraction of juice from grapes, cloth making and garment decoration.

As it turns out the example of printing is instructive: not only these two systems or sub-technologies, but a whole range of others were involved. To name two: a strong demand from educational institutions for reliable bulk copies of scholarly and religious works to overcome the reproductive deficiencies of hand-copied manuscripts; a growing mercantilism in search of uniform means of production which, in turn, required exact descriptions and schematics — such that the printing press was both an *example* of a uniform means of production and a *means of distributing* identical copies of information *about* such means of production.

We can also note that the cultural technology of printing bore an important relation (or referral back) to a *prior* form of communicational technology: handwriting. The earliest print forms looked very much like handwritten forms. And we could think of this move as one which both replaced and augmented handwriting. The movement is, in its Derridean sense, supplemental (Derrida 1976, 141-64). The printing press is a supplement to handwriting in the sense that it *both* adds to it *and* takes away from it. It looks, in the first instance like a kind of prosthetic handwriting. (And the same could be said about writing's supplementation of speech, or of computing's supplementation of printing.)⁷ Moreover this idea of the history of cultural technology as supplementation (adding-replacing) also suggests (again) the idea of contested ownership in Sharrock's sense. Who can be said to "own" writing as it shifts from the hand to the press, from the scribe to the

⁶. The Chinese case, somewhat earlier, is no doubt different again.

⁷. A current example of this is the problem that almost all computer systems and softwares have with fonts. The various kinds of font (bitmap, PostScript, TrueType and so on) are all attempts to have screen fonts match printed fonts to produce true WYSIWYG effects. Although there are "quick fixes" in the form of type management software, so far there has not been a definite solution to the problem of achieving exact matches. There exists a similar problem with the synchronisation of on-screen and printed colours. The point is that the older technology (printing) constitutes the problems for, and drives the search for solutions in, the newer technology (computing).

printer, from the personal correspondent to the published author? The supplementational double of ownability / mis-ownability, that is, carries with it a double morality.

And it is interesting that this kind of historically lateral hybridisation, especially in cases of massive technological shifts — speech to writing, writing to print, print to computing and so on — does often, empirically, involve such a double morality. The old system and the new have their advocates and adversaries respectively. What we might call a “conservative” morality divinises the old form and demonises the new one; vice versa for a “progressive” morality. Some instances of such moralities at work can seem very peculiar in retrospect and only serve to highlight the ordinariness of such hybridisations for us today. Take, for example, the initial reactions to urban streetlighting which was thought either to usher in a triumphal conquest of the night and all its uncertainties, or else to corrupt our souls and our productive capacities by interfering with the “natural” rhythms of waking and sleeping. Today the fluid boundaries between everyday and everynight life surprise no one. Or else, a little later, there is Heidegger’s (c. 1942) invective against the typewriter:

It is not accidental that modern man writes “with” the typewriter.... The “history” of the kinds of writing is one of the main reasons for the increasing destruction of the word. The latter no longer comes and goes by means of the writing hand, the properly acting hand, but by means of the mechanical forces it releases. The typewriter tears writing from the essential realm of the hand, i.e., the realm of the word. The word itself has turned into something “typed”. Where typewriting, on the contrary, is only a transcription and serves to preserve the writing, or turns into print something already written, there it has a proper, though limited, significance. In the time of the first dominance of the typewriter, a letter written on this machine still stood for a breach of good manners. Today, a hand-written letter is an antiquated and undesired thing; it disturbs speed reading. Mechanical writing deprives the hand of its rank in the realm of the written word and degrades the word to a means of communication. In addition, mechanical writing provides this “advantage”, that it conceals the handwriting and thereby the character. The typewriter makes everyone look the same. (Heidegger 1991, 79-81)

Again, today, when the typewriter does nothing but gather dust in attics, and when almost all original and creative writing (as well as straightforward “copying”) takes place on computers, almost no one could possibly rehearse such moralistic pros and cons. Nevertheless, in their own times, such double moralisations appear quite ordinary. So this moral-evaluational productional system, according to our path of thinking so far, would be simply another productional system coming into the space of, and so producing, the cultural object, along with others. Therefore, it would be a component part of a general hybridity that would need to be accounted for.

That is, along with sheerly material systems (in the case of printing: metallurgy, the wine and cloth presses and so on), demand systems (scholarship, religion, mercantilism, and so on), there are also moral systems at play and, especially in cases of massive shifts, a noticeably double morality of divinisation and demonisation. We may be seeing the same thing today around computers: celebrations of techno-nerdism that would have all actuals replaced by virtuals, all biological functions replaced by machinic prostheses; and then conservative worries about losing our humanity to machines, children dragging pornography off the net, and so on. What may be happening in such cases is that these morally evaluative systems are actually *part of* any cultural object (albeit thrown into particular relief when a newer technology supplements an older one). The moral system appears to emerge out of the potential contestation that (mis)ownability, as an essential feature of cultural objects, entails. “The *properly* acting hand” — this is a phrase that seems so assured and confident of propriety and ownership, of the correct cultural formations in which writing should appear; and yet, it is a phrase that, at the same time, comes embedded in a passage that precisely documents the loss of any such assuredness and confidence.

The analytic question would then be: how would we go about describing the naturally-occurring moral-evaluative properties of cultural objects? Important in this respect is Frow’s (1995, 131-69) spirited argument against the possibilities of “dispassionate” cultural analysis and the idea that we could “get neatly beyond the whole problem of valuation” (1995, 135). According to our deliberations so far, we would have to be mostly in agreement with Frow and, in particular, we would have to agree that cultural analysis,

since it is *itself* a variety of cultural object, could not go untouched by evaluative technologies. Nevertheless, since our line of inquiry is an empiricist one, we would also have to say that such evaluative technologies can at least be described.

An important example of such work would be that of Jayyusi (1984; 1991). She shows how extremely basic aspects of cultural production and recognition such as naming people and giving descriptions of them are, through and through, moral-evaluative and not simply instrumental in every single case. And she shows this to be so *whether or not* we are dealing with explicit cases of attributing, say, bias or prejudice. So while cultural studies, for example, is highly aware of questions of cultural value (cf. Smith 1988), it is usually (*pace* Frow) the subdomain of *analysts'* value positions that interests it. This suggests that the extremely large field that contains the moral-evaluative aspects of cultural objects *themselves* (prior to their analytic conceptualisation) is among cultural studies' many missing topics. Is there something, as it were, in the very *nature* of culture that the cultural disciplines do not quite see clearly?

At the same time, and perhaps because of such a myopia, cultural studies since its inception has tended to side, in the first place, with one or other form of endogenous moralising (demonisation or divinisation, for example) and, *only then*, to go about analysing its object. So, for instance, Madonna is divinised as transgressive feminine sexuality or else demonised as "perversion". Or: pornography is demonised as male heterosexual and patriarchal exploitation or else divinised as free and open expressivity, as a morally positive transgression of traditional sexual mores.

There appears, then, to be an association between a lack of awareness of the ordinary endogenous moral dimension of cultural objects and running the risk of simply *rejoining* that dimension by repeating the practices of, for example, demonisation and divinisation that are, we might say, "native" to cultural objects themselves. This is not so much a "pitfall" for cultural-studies-type analysis. It is more a reflection of its historically strong dispreference for separating its topics (cultural objects) from its resources (theories, methods and analytic procedures).

But if this imbrication with moral systems is *an ordinary and routine component* of cultural objects (as our investigations so far have led us to believe) then it would be part of

any analytic task to show how this element occurs and works. It cannot be a merely taken-for-granted part of the analytic method (resource) if it is also to be part of the object to be analysed (topic) — otherwise, the description would be radically incomplete. In cultural studies, we might perhaps, on this reading, not be so interested in whether popular cultural objects are “good” or “bad”, but rather in how people come to find them to be so — either way.⁸ On this theory, moral evaluation would simply be one variety of cultural technology making up the necessarily hybrid (multi-technological) constitution of cultural objects. As such, its status for cultural analysis would be that it should come under description, at least in the first instance. At the very least, we might reasonably ask evaluative analyses to take into account (to give accounts and perspicuous descriptions of) ordinary valuations in their domain of interest.

What this theory of cultural objects could do, then, is to displace the sometimes fruitless intellectual debate about the goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness, correctness or incorrectness, of cultural objects, popular or otherwise. It suggests that cultural analysis may need to guard against the uptake of positions along the traditional moral lines generated by cultural objects themselves in the first place. That tendency to be in the thrall of cultural technologies’ “natural” moral sub-technologies may be holding us back from achieving something even as basic as an adequate descriptive or analytic grasp of our chosen objects. Below I want to suggest a “Deleuzian” and therefore, again, empiricist alternative.

III.

Now, then, we need a guide who can take us a little further into the peculiar metaphysics of empiricism. As it turns out, it will be a suitably strange (but ordinarily hybrid!) guide made up of Gilles Deleuze and David Hume. This is where we will be asking them to take us: towards a form of analysis that is capable of grounding and guiding the version of cultural objects outlined so far. What it would have to do is as follows. (1) Acknowledge that borrowability or hybridity is a general condition for any cultural object, but also (2)

⁸ Although I am addressing this question of evaluation as a moral matter, we should also bear in mind that some such judgments will be nonmoral in the strict sense. On this distinction, see Frankena (1963, 47-8).

allow there to be an analytic attention to the specific and empirical instantiations of that general condition. Hence it would have to (3) shift attention away from a rather obvious general condition (hybridity) — at least for now — and towards the determination of particular cultural objects by their historical, pragmatic and empirical (that is, their accidental) situatedness. So it would, in addition, (4) conceive of cultural objects as dynamic, not static or once-for-all entities with fixed properties — for their only fixed property is their always-already-hybridisation (and possibly the attendant “natural moralisation” that flows from it).

We have come this far by taking Sharrock as our first guide and what he has shown us is that we might begin to think culture in terms of a “relation” (between cultural objects and cultural cohorts). The relation for Sharrock was not literal naming but something analogous to owning. And with one eye on his own evidence, we saw that it could just as easily be whatever the opposite of owning might be. In part the rest of this book will be a search for that term. But at the same time, we might say something about relations in general so as to take us a little further towards the particular relation we want.

The concept of relations is given one of its fullest treatments in Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* (1888). In Deleuze’s (1991) reading of Hume, the primacy of the concept of relations grounds an empiricism which, Deleuze believes, is sufficient to unhinge the primacy of representations. “Hume often talks about a critique of relations; he presents in fact a theory of the understanding as a critique of relations. Actually, *it is not the relation which is subject to the critique, but rather representation. Hume shows that representation cannot be a criterion for the relations. Relations are not the object of a representation, but the means of an activity*” (1991, 120).

This version of relations appears to be exactly the kind that could ground some of our thinking so far, since it moves away from representation and towards an empirics of practice (activity). The position that Deleuze derives from Hume (such that we must now call them, or it, “Hume-Deleuze”), because it turns to ultimate and possibly universal grounds, is called “transcendental”. Still, those grounds are based on a thoroughly empiricist ontology. Hence: “transcendental empiricism”.

Baugh (1993) has very meticulously documented Deleuze's relation to, and modifications of, British empiricism. The central point of his argument is that Deleuze has a very significant response to the Kantian "irony" of the cruciality-but-unattainability of the truly noumenal — of the double necessity-and-inaccessibility of things in themselves. His response involves deploying the idea of repetition (of the same, via local differences) as a replacement for the transcendental-empirical distinction, as conceived in the Kantian tradition (see Chapter 1). This means that, via discrete, concrete and locally specific repetitions, difference itself ceases to be simply a general condition and becomes the effect of the situated and particular.⁹

This has important ramifications for our earlier journey towards what might count as the general conditions of cultural objecthood. It may well be that several of the relational terms we came up with there (mis/ownership, difference, hybridity, supplementability, prosthetisation, transferrability and so on) constitute an almost unnameable condition of cultural production. But, having discovered that, there is pretty much no specific work to be done as such. The general condition can be found, or simply assumed, no matter which actual cases are adduced. What is interesting about Deleuze's departure is that it points us towards the *specifically* different, the *intricacies* of hybridity, and so on, in any particular case. Moreover, as we shall see, it argues that this utter particularity, empiricity or facticity, is not only unforeseeable, it is also determinative. In place of the Kantian "irony", then, the Deleuzian "accident". How can this be?

As Baugh puts it, in one of several definitions of Deleuze's version of "the empirical": "The empirical is the here and now actuality that differentiates between performances and ... makes repetition of the same possible" (1993, 16). He goes on:

Empirical actuality, then, is not to be explained through possibility, however "concretely" determined, but through actual causes.... The empirical is the effect of causes which contain no more and no less reality than it does, causes which are immanent and wholly manifest in the effect through which they are experienced. (1993, 16)

⁹ Another way of putting this would be to say that difference-in-general may be an important ground for an anti-metaphysics, but it leaves us with the question of which or whose difference in particular has most actual effect.

By contrast with a purely theoretical version of cultural objects that finds a mere principle or possibility of difference behind every actual case, then, Deleuze holds that “the empirical is the reason for the non-conceptual differences between one instance of a representation and another” (Baugh 1993, 17). In this version of things, then, empiricity precedes every possible conceptualisation, including those predicated on an ineluctable difference or hybridity. Its priority is therefore a transcendental condition in its own right. But it is a very peculiar transcendental condition indeed: one with no force as a law or rule; one offering no generalisations above and beyond the case-by-case (or clinical) inspection of local details; one that would give over the field of thinking, necessarily, to the priority of contingent historical events. This incredibly “weak” transcendental condition would mean that: “The conditions of experience are themselves actual, not possible, contingent, not necessary, and particular rather than universal: ‘the real precedes the possible’ and conditions it” (Baugh 1993, 22; Deleuze 1991, 120).

This, then, is the position Deleuze calls “transcendental empiricism”. According to it, the *grounds* (for example, we might hope, of cultural objecthood) consist in historically contingent events and not in “conditions” preceding or (*a fortiori*) determining such events. Nothing, as such, determines historical causation. Whatever appears to be such a further determining ground, for Hume-Deleuze, is in fact merely another effect of empirical becoming. This is radical indeed. For in our thinking so far, we have only encountered the position whereby the ideal (for example, of cultural ownership) *can* be subject to contingency. It was, then, the *possibility* of contingency that mattered most. Now Hume-Deleuze is suggesting that sheer and utter contingency (in the form of what we will soon encounter as the “transversal” axis of accidental history) is the ultimate ground of *whatever* appears under the guise of ideality (be it ownership or its opposite).

We will need to revisit this radical assumption (see Chapter 5) but, for now, there is at least one consequence of it that holds an attraction for any theory of cultural production. That is, it inverts the usual linguistic hierarchy in which we start with syntax, move to semantics and only thence to pragmatics. That is — if we turn to the linguistic sub-field of culture and take statements as one kind of cultural object (just as forms of knowledge

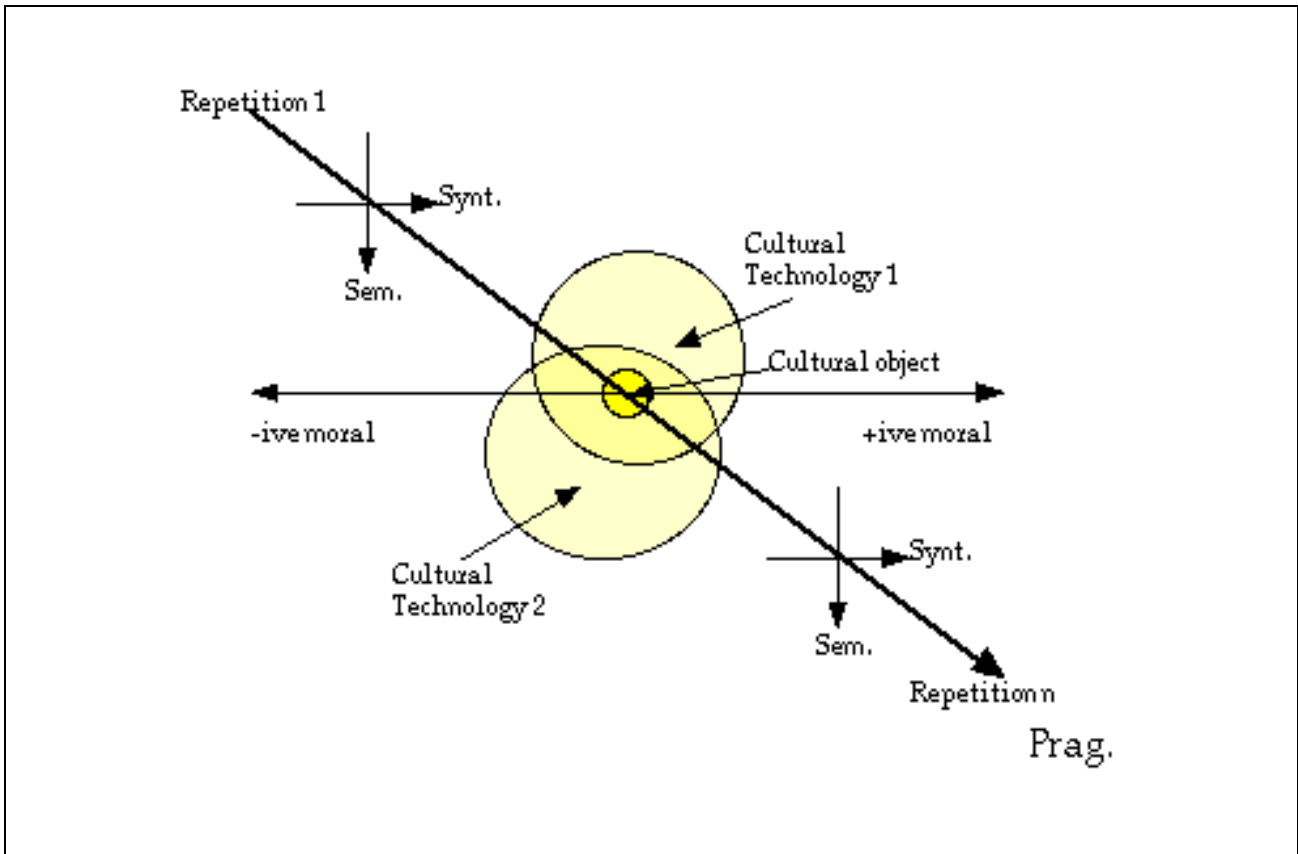
were our main instance in section II, above)¹⁰ — it is a logical consequence of Deleuze’s prioritisation of the sociohistorically (and pragmatically) contingent that:

a statement has a horizontal relation to other statements that determines its meaning and allows it to function as a concept (for example, a statement of definition), and a vertical relation that allows it to designate particulars as instances of a universal, but it also has a diagonal or transversal relation to other conceptual systems, a purely “virtual” relation that becomes actual only when that statement in fact, due to contingent circumstances, enters into one of those systems (for example, when a language adopts a locution from another language). The first type of relations is syntactic or grammatical, the second is semantic or referential and the third is pragmatic and historical, since it concerns the actual historical and pragmatic reasons for a statement’s becoming part of a new system of statements, or language. The actual functioning of a statement as a concept, then, is determined “in the last instance” by pragmatics. (Baugh 1993, 23; Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 116-17)

So: three relations between statements and others of their kind, where the third is in fact the primary relation. And this third is a relation that clearly involves an essential borrowing, hybridity, contamination: it is the sociohistorical, evental and hence pragmatic dimension of discourse. Furthermore, the syntactic and the semantic are utterly *dependent* upon it rather than being its grounds.

To this extent, Deleuzian semiotics appears to satisfy all of our initial criteria: it finds an essential hybridity (albeit that it then displaces this in favour of historical specificity); it sees products as productions, as dynamic rather than static; it crucially emphasises the accidental, historical, empirical and pragmatic constitution of cultural objects (in this case, statements). If we add to this our discovery (above) of a “natural” moralisation occurring at any cultural-production site, we might get a general picture or diagram of the locus of cultural objects. It would look fairly much as follows:

¹⁰ On another reading, we can think of statements via their “actual functioning” as critical components of practical knowledges and their fields (cultures). This is why I have no qualms about treating statements as proxies for cultural objects generally. The doubly hybridised and accidental pragmatic axis (the “transversal” axis) having priority is critical to our thinking both here and in section II of this chapter.



Here, the first line of approach to cultural objects would, naturally enough, begin with the contingent and pragmatic details of their specific histories (the transversal axis). At any point on that trajectory, a traditional analysis of their syntax and semantics could be conducted — but it should be noted that, at different temporal points, these axes will be subject to change. Hence the formal structures and meanings of, say, a piece of music or a painting could be expected to alter historically as an *effect* of contingent pragmatic conditions. However, the transversal axis that determines such structures and meanings is, itself, historically contingent; it has no further determining conditions, as it were, “behind” it — no ideal history can, that is, calculate all possible contingencies.

While cultural objects are historical productions, they are not subject to a *total* historical determination, then. Rather their historico-pragmatic conditions are determining but undetermined in themselves. Furthermore, cultural objects arise at pragmatic sites where *at least two* cultural technologies come — again unforeseeably — into conjuncture. That is, they are necessarily hybrid on this model.

Cultural technologies may be any of a diverse range of types: material systems of production, macro political systems, bodies of ideas, industrial conditions, epistemic assemblages, fashions, styles, evaluative procedures and so on. When they come into conjuncture, they provide a baseline condition for a number of cultural objects — this is the shaded area in the diagram. However any *particular* cultural object that arises within this area will be unique as a performance, a local repetition. For example, it will be unique in terms of the forms of evaluation that inform it. Potentially at least, this evaluative axis will always be at least double, consisting of both a positive and a negative value. Again, this valuing will be a component of any given cultural object — it will in fact be one of its “natural” properties and will, accordingly, need to be described by any empirical cultural analysis such that the analysis’s own contribution to moral evaluation will (while it can never be deleted) be secondary to that initial description.

This, it seems to me, is potentially a highly productive cultural theory. It has the potential to provide a new footing for the cultural disciplines by providing a basic theorisation of, and descriptive method for, their own unique domain of objects. At present, cultural studies, to take one example, is extremely capable of discovering some syntactic-semantic aspects of cultural objects, for semiotics is, after all, still its main methodology (Thwaites et al. 1994). Cultural studies can provide some ideas about the socio-political importance of cultural objects (by virtue of its own Marxist past); and (in line with its deep-rooted historical connection with literary studies) it can furnish aesthetico-moral evaluations of cultural objects. But what it appears to lack is a basic grounding in how to offer *initial empirical descriptions* of cultural objects. In moving beyond this situation we may need to return to at least some of the tropes to be found in empiricism.

IV.

Two empiricisms, then; and two from a very broad range of possible candidates; but two sufficiently different for us to be able to see the limits of empiricism in its typical (social scientific and philosophical) configurations. But in another sense, valuable as these journeys have been — particularly for the further hints they have left us, hints that point

towards problems of owning and the primacy of the event — they still only appear to offer revisions at the methodological level. That is, they help us to identify the sorts of things that might count as cultural objects. To misuse the logical categories, they tell us a great deal about the extensional definitions of culture but very little about its intensional properties.

Do we dare to ask this remaining question? For surely, if anything will, the demand for the intrinsic could well take us back to the heartland of metaphysics, to questions of the essence and nature of things, and away from the rigours of empiricism. Still, as we have seen, neither of the empiricisms we have been guided by so far have been without their own versions of ideality. Essential ownership (rather than literal naming), borrowability (rather than literal owning), necessary hybridity (rather than monoculture), inevitable moral axes (rather than value-free inquiry), the transcendental condition of the priority of the event (rather than a single meaning or spirit of history): all of these have been used and mentioned on our path away from representationalism. But what representational thinking offers, against all of this, is an individual subject and a collective subject to anchor the concept of culture intensionally. To move further away from it, curiously enough, we need to move closer to it; to tackle it on its own terrain and, perhaps, just perhaps, to reach the beginnings of a counter-representational metaphysics.

Where to begin — again — then? If our empiricist journeys have taken us anywhere it is to the pragmatic, to the centrality of what might reasonably be called “usage”. But what is that? How do we begin to move along the lines of usage towards an other definition of culture?

Chapter 3

Along The Lines Of Usage

I.

Cultural theory is to write of culture — the concept of culture as such. To write of culture is always to write of a becoming of things; of a coming-about of things; which is why so many theories of culture are, or sound like, creation stories and myths of origin — with the proviso that, in many cases, the origins in question tend to be secularised. Vico is a clear case in point with his story of prehuman beasts running from the wrath of Jove (*Jovis, ius*, justice) into the shelter of caves; as is Hobbes with his myth of the overcoming of pre-social chaos by a “contract” — a mythical originary moment of sociality rather than an actually signed and delivered document. But while these stories almost invariably sound like creation myths, the analogy is a rather sparse one: for the two (creation stories and cultural theories) simply have one aspect in common; namely that they are both ways of telling of the becoming of things. If it is effectively impossible to separate cultural theories from the cultural *practices* of telling origin stories — at least with respect to their common concern with how things become — then what we have to get clear when we are doing cultural theory (or when we are trying to understand some example of cultural theory) is *how* it is that the becoming of things is to be (or should be) told. The question of the question of cultural theory is: how are we to describe the coming-about of things? — as opposed to asking, after the fact of their coming-about: what do they represent?

Yet, if Chapter 1 is even vaguely right, then all hitherto existing cultural theories have told of this coming-about *in terms of* representation. Most commonly, something is held to exist prior to culture’s making-things-come-about — Vico’s beasts, Hobbes’s presocial confusion, the later Marx’s idea of the capacity for labour to transform natural materials, and so on. Sometimes this is, or is strongly associated with, nature (*physis*). Then, according to the story, culture is the making-come-about that is done on that “raw material”. There is always, in these stories, something already *present* (nature for example,

raw materials, things-already-become) that the “cultural work” of making-come-about re-presents. What culture specifically brings to presence (as a cultural object) is a re-making (re-presentation) of something more originally present.

The creation myths of pre-modernity, then, and the cultural theories of early and contemporary modernity are not so unlike: but they are not identical in any sense. A story about a supreme consciousness that, for example, breathes its life spirit into dust and creates the world of things and men is not quite the same as a story about an inanimate and inert raw material being processed into a new, and cultural, form. There are similarities, but they are not overwhelming. All that is being said when we point to these similarities is that both of these ways of telling are ways of telling about the becoming of things.

If we wanted to question this fundamental aspect of representational thinking, our question would be: how to tell of the becoming of things without taking the step of positing a pre-cultural condition which is then *re-presented in* culture (as cultural objects) and *as* culture (as cultural processes and practices)? Why can we not say: they simply become? Would this simplicity or levelling, perhaps, threaten the very domain of culture itself as a distinct field in its own right? What of culture as such if there is no “natural” outside to it?

To ask this question would be to ask what “coming-to-presence in general” is, and one place to start would be with Heidegger’s situation of the question as crucial for the Homeric (and to a lesser extent the pre-Socratic) Greeks. Heidegger’s *Early Greek Thinking* (1975) belongs with his later works and consists of essays written after World War II. By this stage, Heidegger was much less interested in delineating the field of *Da-sein*;¹ that is, in giving a description of what it is to be a being of the same ontological character as ourselves.

Heidegger’s characterisation of *Da-sein* however, in this early period, foreshadows and prepares the ground for his later and more direct critique of representational thinking. In

¹. Throughout this book, the orthography of the Stambaugh translation of *Being and Time* (1996) is retained wherever possible, except for accuracy in direct quotations from other authors and translators. Note especially the spellings of “*Da-sein*” and “being” (with a lower-case “b”) even when referencing being-in-general.

particular, it begins out with a reconsideration of the standard subject-object account (as we have seen, so crucial to representationalism) and displaces this with an account of “Da-sein and world” (1996, 56). Accordingly, “knowing”, as the central plank of the representationalist platform, is moved from primacy to a secondary position: “we must remember that knowing itself is grounded beforehand in already-being-in-the-world which essentially constitutes the being of Da-sein” (1996, 57).²

That is, particularly in pragmatic readings of *Being and Time* (such as Okrent 1988), Da-sein is an eminently direct and practical mode of being in the world which by no means depends on the centrality of consciousness or any other capacity for self-representation. On the contrary, such epistemic reconstructions can only occur after the fact of practical involvement. We must use hammers before we can reflect on what a hammer means or represents. Since this is the case, one approach to a general understanding of presencing (coming-to-presence) which obviates a split into a distinction between natural and cultural modes of being in the world, would be as follows: to characterise the early anti-representationalist position in *Being and Time*; to turn to his most direct analysis of presencing as an anti-representationalist concept in *Early Greek Thinking*; and to speculate on how the later concern with presencing might be rethought in terms of the pragmatics of everyday life.

II.

Here we will be following parts of Okrent’s (1988) account of Heidegger’s early thinking. He begins with Heidegger’s notion of Da-sein which he glosses as “a being of the same ontological sort that we are” (1988, 3). He wants to show how Da-sein can be read against the grain of both metaphysics and mentalism by configuring it as an alternative to traditional accounts of intentionality. Da-sein is, to be sure, a certain sort of being, characterised by its intentional agency in the world. But that intentionality cannot, for Okrent, be secured by characterising intention as a kind of mental state. Rather — and this foreshadows the later critique of representational thinking — intention is eminently

². For a basic discussion of the concept of Da-sein as such and its importance for re-thinking culture, see my “The Ontology of Culture — Way-markers” (1999).

pragmatic. He writes: “to be an intentional agent is to be a certain sort of organized activity itself, not to be a thinking thing that happens to have private mental states such as beliefs and desires” (1988, 7).

Expanding on this groundwork, Okrent examines the role of understanding in what it is to be *Da-sein*. For Heidegger, he argues, understanding (*Verstehen*) is always self-understanding (1988, 24). But this cannot mean — contrary to almost all cultural theories — an internal representational capacity to reflect on some already-constituted or yet-to-be-constituted activity. Rather understanding must be essentially bound in some way to *practical activity itself*. As it turns out, the two could not be more related, for in Heidegger, self-understanding is eminently practical in the first place. In fact Okrent’s account of the matter (1988, 24-5) shows Heideggerian self-understanding to be reflexive (in the technical, non-mentalist sense). That is the constitution of a practical activity and its understanding mutually produce and elaborate each other. In competent forms of practical activity, I display my understanding of such activities. And by the same token, any claim to an understanding of a practical activity must consist in its competent performance.

In defining understanding, moreover, Okrent turns to the distinction (also, as we have seen, attributed to Gilbert Ryle) between “knowing how” and “knowing that”, between practical and propositional forms of knowledge. He writes: “It is certainly the case that when Heidegger talks about understanding he is always using the word in a way that is meant to be somehow akin to the ordinary practical use of the word” (1988, 24) — and then goes on to quote Heidegger as follows:

In German we say that someone can *vorstehen* something — literally stand in front or ahead of it, that is, stand at its head, administer, manage, preside over it. This is equivalent to saying that he *versteht sich darauf*, understands in the sense of being skilled or expert at it, has the know how of it. The meaning of the term “understanding” ... is intended to go back to this usage in ordinary language. (Heidegger 1982, 276)

At the heart of our being-in-the-world, then, lies not a set of fixed mental predicates or self-representations but a variety of practical capacities: capacities for self-managing or self-administering, for dealing with what is at hand (*zuhanden*). In this sense,

understanding is not “over and above” existing: “existing is precisely this being towards oneself” (Okrent 1988, 29; Heidegger 1984, 189).

It is at this point that we begin to encounter continuities with Heidegger’s later work. For there, one synonym for “presencing” is “unconcealment” or “revealing”. And, on the argument of *Being and Time*, too, “revealing” is synonymous with “understanding”; for understanding is disclosedness (revealing, unconcealment). But unlike representationalist forms of analysis which take the idea of unconcealment as a way of getting to some hidden truth (unavailable, for example, to cultural practitioners or members themselves), Okrent glosses the early Heidegger’s revealing/unconcealment as *das Umwillen* (1988, 29) — the for-the-sake-of-which. In other words revealing is a bringing about of some end; it is purposiveness, or what makes things serviceable and practicable. Da-sein, in this sense, is “purposing” (1988, 30). Moreover, it requires equipment: the availability of methods for the manipulation and ordering of whatever is ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) in local and practical affairs (1988, 32). In this sense, revelation (as *das Umwillen*) is by no means unworldly; it is what connects intentionality to practical purposes (1988, 35). That is, it is not the prerogative of the cultural analyst after the fact of practical actions; rather it is a property of practical actions through and through. It is their self-revealing properties.

On this version of things, the purposiveness of a project, *das Umwillen*, is the purpose or end that one understands oneself *as*. And that end is not something thought, represented or explicitly willed separately from the project itself — for a split here would be precisely a split between understanding and action and thus in contradiction of Heidegger’s starting point (1988, 36). In short, “Da-sein” does not mean “I think about it”: in embryonic form, it is a strictly counter-representationalist concept. Da-sein does not require “deep” analytic interpretation, after the fact of its existence as practical action; rather it constitutes the utter familiarity of everyday events; and this utter familiarity, in its turn, may conceal the artfulness of everyday events as practical self-understandings.³ In this case, it is possible to consider how it is that Da-sein constructs itself as both hidden and transparent. Indeed, its constitution in (and as) familiar practice would seem to make

³. A short way of putting this would be: it is every culture’s fundamental custom to forget all that is customary. Cultural studies appears to share in precisely this occlusion.

this double predicate necessary. To this extent, it begins to be possible to see how a double hiddenness-transparency pervades what we might elsewhere be called “cultural production” — but this would have to be in such a way as to obviate the idea of analysis as the discovery of hidden meanings after the fact. Rather what is hidden is the local, specific and in situ artfulness of cultural objects’ coming-to-presence; and what is transparent is their utter mundanity.

So, what is it to act in such a way — in accord with what is familiar and purposive but also almost never inspected (by virtue of its pragmaticity and familiarity) for its artful handling? Okrent goes on to say that I, the one who so-acts, *am* the for-sake-of-which (*das Umwillen*). In bringing about the end that I will be (for example, the one who has hammered, or spoken, or read) I do not, in a separate and distinct act of consciousness, think about this end. Rather I have a projection (*Entwurf*) (Okrent 1988, 36; cf. Schütz 1967, 59); and this is not so much a pre-representation of an end — a thought-out scheme or plan — as it is a pro-jecting, a throwing of existence ahead of itself. And this projected end is always (only ever) a *possibility*, a form of risk, rather than a definite calculation: “our self-understanding is ... our practical understanding of things; and the end that we understand ourselves as is the end that is implicit in the activities in which we are engaged” (1988, 36-7). Coming-to-presence, then, is not a predictable matter: it exists in the future anterior, as “what will have been” (all along). In this sense, cultural being is what one tries to bring about, what one pursues and cares for: “In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care of” (Heidegger 1982, 159; Okrent 1988, 36).

This is why Da-sein is “always displaying its practical understanding of tools” (1988, 38). The way Heidegger, via Okrent, puts this version of reflexivity (or mutual constitutivity) is to say that self-understanding is both primary *and* identical with practical understanding (doing things); that there is no selfly “ghost” (or ghostly self) behind the practice which *makes* representations in some ethereal way (before or after the event); and

that this identity is reflexively constituted; self-understanding and practical understanding are “two sides of the same coin” (Okrent 1988, 39).⁴

To characterise the “coin” as a whole, Heidegger posits a “functionality contexture” (*Bewandtniszusammenhang*) (1988, 40) such that the notion of world can be understood as the totality of functionality contextures. It is this “relational totality” that Heidegger calls “significance” (1988, 43). Hence significance is not a property of interpretations, rather “we display our understanding of significance whenever we display our practical understanding of things, whenever we use them appropriately” (1988, 43).

There is still a sense, however, in which this account of the early Heidegger (via Okrent) is still somewhat egological and not fully social. Schütz’s (1962, 187) suspicions of solipsism in Heidegger have still to be allayed. Heidegger, that is, speaks more often of “I” or “one” than of the collective. But in fact, contrary to the Cartesian tradition of thinking of the human subject as a special kind of substance (one with unique properties such as “consciousness” and so on), Heidegger thinks of Da-sein as *essentially* a social category. In a sense it is much less a “person” or a “self” than it is what happens socially, concerted, in the first place (Okrent 1988, 45); for to be Da-sein, “one must be a member of ... a group of beings ... who establish standard ends and communally shared ways of achieving those ends” (1988, 5).

Accordingly, we can summarise the pragmatic reading of the early Heidegger as follows. Self-understanding is practical understanding. The totality of this functionality is the world which is organised *typically* (1988, 47). Typicality means the proper or competent use of tools or methods by, in, or as, a community (1988, 47). In turn “a community” is that which “uses the same tools in the same way — typically”, in “everyday being with one another” (1988, 50). It is a collection of methods, tools, equipment, *pragmata*. Da-sein therefore incorporates and is oriented to the “they” [*das Man*] which “prescribes the kind of being of everydayness”:

⁴. This suggests a comparison with Garfinkel’s theory of reflexivity to the effect that “the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organised everyday affairs *are identical* with members’ procedures for making those settings ‘account-able’” (1967, 1; my emphasis) — and, again, this is taken up by Sacks (1992, 226) in terms of the identity between methods for the production and methods for the recognition of cultural objects.

In utilizing public transportation and in the use of information services such as the newspaper, every other is like the next.... We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way *they* [*das Man*] enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way *they* see and judge. But we also withdraw from the “great mass” [*großen Haufen*] the way they withdraw, we find “shocking” what *they* find shocking. The *they*, which is nothing definite and which we all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness. (Heidegger 1996, 119; 1957, 126-7; Okrent 1988, 50)

III.

All of this gives us a hint towards the possibility of thinking culture not just non-representationally but also in terms of Da-sein, as “the being of everydayness”. In this way, it becomes fully ordinary, familiar, popular, the property of everyone, every member, “they” [*das Man*]. But it also suggests that, in order to be separated more distinctly from representational thinking, this version of culture (indeed of popular culture and, or as, everyday life) needs to be more definitely tied to what the later Heidegger calls “coming-to-presence”. In *Early Greek Thinking*, Heidegger makes it clear that he is no longer interested in the ontological mode of Da-sein alone (hence of just culture or human production, to give a very rough gloss). Rather, following his reading of Anaximander, whatever happens to come to presence does so as an effect of general conditions of presencing. This includes “gods and men, temples and cities, sea and land, eagle and snake, tree and shrub, wind and light, stone and sand, day and night” (1975, 40) as they *are* and not merely, for example, as “cultural representations” of these things. Hence: “whatever lingers awhile in presence at the same time lingers as something brought forward into unconcealment. It is so brought when, arising by itself, it produces itself; or it is so brought when it is produced by man” (1975, 56).

There could be no clearer statement of Heidegger’s shift in thinking from the earlier preoccupations with the ontology of Da-sein alone. Now the interests in coming-to-presence, in unconcealment (revealing), in lingering temporarily in presence and in passing through and out of that clearing, are manifestly meant to apply to whatsoever, to things in general, regardless of any distinction between, for example, what we would now

call natural production (that which “arising by itself ... produces itself”) and cultural production (that which “is so brought when it is produced by man”).

This is on all fours with what Heidegger sees as a corruption of early Greek thinking, starting with Theophrastus and Aristotle. Not all the details of this argument can be given here, but a number of important distinctions between Heidegger’s reading of Anaximander in particular (and the pre-Socratics in general) and those of the Western philosophical tradition following them need to be rehearsed. For the first of the misreadings is to assume that what the pre-Socratics meant by *οντα* (beings) was *φψσει οντα* (physical things). This assumes that the pre-Socratics actually made a strong distinction, as we do today, between the physical (*φψσει οντα*) and the cultural (*τεχνη οντα*) (1975, 15). In fact, it is part of Heidegger’s thesis that the very early Greeks made no such distinction: that, instead, their understanding of being consisted of a thinking about being in general, outside this (now deep-seated) distinction; that this constitutes pre-representational thinking; and that the grounds of such a thinking have now been all but lost to Western metaphysics.

From the start then, Heidegger’s path of thinking towards what the early Greeks may have meant by “beings” or “things” appears to be critical for the counter-representationalist theory of culture we are trying to mount here. And while Heidegger’s quasi-apocalyptic tone need not be followed here (“Do we stand in the twilight of the most monstrous transformation our planet has ever undergone?” (1975, 17)), his insight into the possibility of non-representationalist thinking, via his reinspection of the very early Greek thinking of *οντα* may be among the possible courses we could take. Logically, however, there is already one very likely consequence of pursuing such a course: that the very concept of culture itself will be worn away by it — for without the distinction between *physis* and *techne*, between “that which produces itself by arising out of itself” and that which “is produced by human planning and production” (1975, 15), there will be no “other” from which a clearly bounded and separate domain of culture can distinguish itself. Accordingly, it may be that a move outside representational thinking means a move away from all strict and narrow culturalist thinking; away from the question of what it is to be a specifically cultural (as opposed to a physical, natural) being at all. We risk the

specificity of the cultural disappearing altogether and coming to be replaced by a description of the general conditions under which things (any things regardless of predication) come about, “linger awhile in presence” and pass away. And this may be why, in Chapter 1, we found almost all theories of culture to be representationalist and why, there also, we found it so utterly difficult to operate in the sphere of culture without at least some traces of representational thinking remaining. Culture may *be* representation (*tout court*) — the collection of what is culturally present — and so the possibility of a cultural theory outside representation may be equally chimerical. Chapter 4 (below) sets out from this possibility.

To think beings or things (οντα) as *either* attributive effects of *physis* or *techne* (and only as one or the other) is to think them in terms of what *is present* rather than in terms of their *coming to presence*. The distinction between the two is perhaps the most insightful distinction in the later Heidegger’s thinking — the ontological difference; the difference between being (as such and in general) and merely present beings. Representational thinking is, therefore, all thinking that forgets the ontological difference and, according to Heidegger, that forgetting is so pervasive today (particularly in the fields of “science”) that the ontological difference can hardly be thought at all. Representational thinking *is* contemporary thinking in this sense. And so what Heidegger offers us is effectively a return to a much earlier form of thought — one that is all but lost to us and which can only be glimpsed even in the pre-Socratic fragments.

In terms of the movement of Heideggerian thought, this means that one difference in ontological forms (the distinction between Da-sein and its others) is displaced by another (the distinction between being as coming to presence and those beings which are merely present). But this second difference is always paradoxical; for the ontological difference itself is the condition of all beings; and that condition can be called “being”. The distinction between mere beings and being itself, then, makes mistakes (“errancy”) a necessary condition of historical existence:

Without errancy there would be no connection from destiny to destiny: there would be no history.... When we are historical we are neither a great nor a small distance from what is Greek. Rather, we are in errancy toward it.

As it reveals itself in beings, Being withdraws.

Being thereby holds its truth and keeps to itself. This keeping to itself is the way it reveals itself early on. Its early sign is 'Α-ληθεια. As it provides the unconcealment of beings it founds the concealment of Being. (Heidegger 1975, 26)

It is tempting to read this passage and others like it as metaphysics par excellence.

However, from what we have established so far, there can be a more important reading than this as far as cultural theory is concerned. Accordingly, we could read the passage as marking the paradoxical duality of any historical being that tries to understand the conditions of a being such as itself. Since, at least for the early Heidegger, to understand is itself to practise, the *conditions* of that practising itself would, logically, be unpracticable and therefore not open to understanding.⁵ So, as the conditions of practice (being) reveal themselves in actual practices (beings), they can also be said to withdraw from understanding *qua* conditions. This would then be the significance of 'Α-ληθεια, *A-letheia*, un-concealing. If this is the case, any return to the pure-and-simple conditions of practice will be errant.

But, and this is an important caveat, this concealment of the conditions of practice only occurs once thinking has confined itself to that which is (merely) present. That is, it only occurs once the ontological difference is forgotten and the merely present comes to occupy the whole of our thinking about being. If so, then Heidegger's tracking of a form of thinking outside these narrow confines of representational thought would appear to offer the potential for a general theory of how it is that things (natural or cultural, it may no longer matter) come about.

Heidegger attempts to establish this re-thinking of the early Greeks by arguing that their references to τὰ εἶντα (beings) are effectively always double and cannot be assimilated into a discussion of merely physical (or, for that matter, cultural) things:

⁵. This is foreshadowed early on in *Being and Time* where Heidegger writes: "Acts are nonpsychical. Essentially the person exists only in carrying out intentional acts, and is thus essentially *not* an object. Every psychological objectification, and thus every comprehension of acts as something psychological, is identical with depersonalization. In any case, the person is given as the agent of intentional acts which are connected with the unity of a meaning. Thus psychological being has nothing to do with being a person. Acts are carried out, the person carries them out" (1996, 44-5).

in Greek experience what comes to presence remains ambiguous, and indeed necessarily so. On the one hand τὰ ἐόντα means what is presently present; on the other, it also means all that becomes present, whether at the present time or not. (1975, 35)

In this crucial sense, “beings” or “things” are not just currently present things but also include those things that are currently absent and which may either have once been present or have yet to become present. What ties these things, then, cannot be their simple immediacy (their “presence” in our current sense of the term), but rather their *presencing* or coming to presence which Heidegger calls ἐόν (being). And this ἐόν cannot be simply glossed as a kind of essence (as it would be in many metaphysical traditions) for “It (ἐστίν) names ἐόν, the presencing of what is present. The ἐστίν corresponds to the pure claim of Being, before the division into a first and second οὐσία, into *existentia* and *essentia*” (1975, 39). Any such pure claim, however, remains obscure to modern thinking which easily assimilates “being” to essence and “beings” to existence. The claim of the early Greeks, according to Heidegger, is different from this again: it is a thinking of presencing that lies outside the respective divisions into nature and culture, or the essential and the existential.

This early thinking of presencing, then, is a highly unifying claim: it eliminates what are for us, today, apparently crucial differences: the physical and the cultural, the essential and the merely existent. But it does not make this unifying claim on the basis of some idea of being as a hyper-essence; for, as we have seen, being-as-presencing is always ambiguous, errant, undecidable. How practices come to pass, in any given case, cannot be pre-decided and followed along a pre-ordained course by reference back to their conditions (ἐόν); for those conditions are conditions of undecidability. The ultimate paradox is that what we think of today as “essence”, the thingness of any thing, is in fact what ties it to its otherness, its absence, its prior formation with respect to “what has not yet come to presence” and its later formation with respect to “what has already passed away”. This is why Heidegger wants to read the Anaximander fragment outside a purely linear history including (as it happens, for many of its other translators) its supposedly moral sense of necessity or urgency.

In its usual translation, the Anaximander fragment reads (with the crucial phrase underlined): “Whence things have their origin, there they must also pass away *according to necessity; for they must pay penalty [recompense] and be judged for their injustice*, according to the ordinance of time” (1975, 13). The underlined phrase, in the Greek, reads: “... κατα το χρεων διδοναι γαρ αυτα δικην και τισις αλληλοις αδικιας”. In Heidegger’s counter-reading, however, the fragment does not concern what appears to be a simple matter of, for example, birth and death according to moral judgment; rather it concerns the εον of εοντα (the coming to presence of things). Accordingly, a number of terms in the underlined phrase have to be retranslated. Heidegger begins his re-thinking by starting with the pair of terms δικην and αδικιας. Instead of rendering them in terms of “punishment” and “injustice”, Heidegger thinks them through as opposites: order and disorder (or being in and out of jointure) which he then connects to the main topic of the phrase, “presencing”, by arguing that what we should find in the fragment is a general statement of how coming to presence is a matter of coming to order (for a while) and thereby surmounting absence (disorder).

Our first insight then into the general question of the presencing of things is that they move, as they come to presence, from not being ordered or governed by rules into such a state of order and governance. As any thing (natural or cultural) comes about, it comes about as a controlled, governed, or ruled matter. As it passes, so it passes from this state. Its coming to presence is a coming to order.

As a consequence, Heidegger also has to rework the term, τισις, which is usually translated as “penalty”. Its other meaning, for Heidegger, is “esteem” [*Schätzen*] (1975, 45). So, instead of a morality of balanced punishments operating in the fragment, Heidegger finds instead an ethics of care. What comes to presence, comes to order, and it does so in terms of what is esteemed or cared for. This, in an important sense, returns us to the notion of “the activities we pursue and the things we take care of” in the early Heidegger.⁶ To grasp this more general version of the concept, however, Heidegger further translates *Schätzen* (“esteem”) as *Ruch* (“reck”) and he makes it clear that reck (as care, heed, consideration or regard) is a fundamental property of order: “we shall speak of τισις as

6. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had already stated that “The being of Da-sein is care” (1996, 262).

the reck corresponding to *δικη*, order” (1975, 47). In this sense order is effected by (and in its turn effects) what it is we “pursue and care for”, our “reck”.

Finally, then, the name of this general principle of coming to order-and-care must be given by the words, *κατα το χρεων*. Instead of reading *χρεων* as “necessity”, however, Heidegger argues that it must simply name, as we have said, the principle of coming to presence. Hence *χρεων* “is the earliest name for what we have thought of as the *εον* of *εοντα*; *το χρεων* is the oldest name in which thinking brings the Being of beings to language” (1975, 49). And while “necessity” is a possible translation, Heidegger follows the etymology from *χραω* and *χραομαι* which, he argues, suggest *η χειρ*, the hand. Hence “*χραω* means: I get involved with something, I reach for it, extend my hand to it. At the same time *χραω* means to place in someone’s hands or hand over, thus to deliver, to let something belong to someone.⁷ But such a delivery is of a kind which keeps this transfer in hand, and with it what is transferred” (1975, 51-52).

On this reading, the idea of *χρεων* as something which “must be” is, at the very least, only part of the story. It also carries a sense of to-hand-ness. It is, in fact, not terribly far, in this sense, from the terms *zuhanden* and *Zuhandenheit* (ready-to-hand and ready-to-handness) that characterise Da-sein’s fundamental relation to equipment in *Being and Time*. This is why, perhaps, Heidegger eventually settles on the translation of *το χρεων* as *der Brauch* (usage, custom, practice, use), which retains, in German still, the sense, if not of necessity, then at least of compunction, of a “needing to”, a “taking the trouble to” and, so, “having to” do something (*brauchen*). And this, finally perhaps, returns us to the pragmatic elements of the early Heidegger’s discussion of Da-sein.

IV.

With this re-thinking of Anaximander, Heidegger is able to translate the crucial part of the fragment as follows: “... along the lines of usage [custom, practice]: for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder” (1975, 57). This “usage” which names coming-to-presence must, however, be any instance of using or being used, whether human or otherwise. What comes to presence (for us, up until now at

⁷. The case of owning/belonging is taken up again in Chapter 5 and throughout Part 2.

least, a cultural object) does so “along the lines of usage”, κατά το χρῆσιν. It is not to be known or understood by any pre-given essence (or grammar, perhaps). Rather it is dependent on the particular usages, manipulations, forms of governing, administration, or just sheer “handling” in operation as its own usage, its own coming or moving into being.

At the same time as this movement-usage, coming-to-presence brings both order (rule) and reck (care, heed, consideration) into place in and as the particular thing that is coming to presence. The constitution of the thing is reflexively bound to the constitution of both order (as natural, social or cultural order) and the “looking after”, “looking for”, “caring for” and “taking heed of” that must go on in the tending of the thing. This is as much as we can say that we can look for in this general condition of coming to presence: we can look for its own usage-as-order(ing)-as-caring/tending/heeding (χρῆσιν-δικη-τισις).

In some ways, this may not be a marked advance in our thinking. At the same time however, it has opened a new way of thinking being, whether cultural or otherwise — and such that the distinction may not matter — and such that the distinction not mattering is important. This new way of thinking being is pragmatic in a much less crude sense than any we have seen so far. It is pragmatic without recourse to a simple translation of cultural (as opposed to natural) objects as *pragmata*, merely practical things. Instead, the χρῆσιν suggests a threefold coming-to-presence as a very definite direction for a pragmatically oriented cultural theory — such that it might begin to take what was formerly and narrowly known as “cultural production” to be χρῆσιν (usage) in a much broader sense; and such that this version of “usage” no longer requires a representationalist division into “what is created” (cultural object, commodity, and so on) and “what it is created from” (raw material, nature, and so on). For, now, χρῆσιν must mean a “usage” or “practice” outside the very thinking of such a division: and a fortiori, outside the divisions between human and divine creation, thing-representing and thing-represented, the empirical and the transcendental, the essential and the existential, and so on (through a whole range of representationalist tropes).

If this little term, χρῆσιν, seems obscure, then it may be worth ending with Heidegger’s account of its errant genealogy. It starts, as we have seen, as “the earliest name for what we have thought of as the εὐν of εὐντα”, and hence as the mark of the conditions of utter

undecidability of any instance (indeed of every instance) of presencing — its aleatoriness, its unpredictability, its accident and its errancy. Its synonyms are *ἐνεργεια* in Aristotle and *ιδεα* in Plato, *Λογος* in Heraclitus and *Μοιρα* in Parmenides. But this thought, according to Heidegger, quickly transmutes into terms which align it with the merely present (that which happens to be present): the *ἐνεργεια* comes into Latin as *actualitas*. This becomes *Wirklichkeit* (“reality”) in German thinking and this, in turn, soon becomes *Objektivität* (“objectivity”). Under the influence of Heidegger’s *χρεων*, though, we might think these very terms themselves back into the singularity of being as the early Greeks experienced it. “Objectivity” becomes a concern for objects (things) in their presencing — it comes, paradoxically to signal anything but their pregiven (objective) status; *Wirklichkeit* becomes the “workliness”, artfulness or effectivity of *χρεων* as custom, usage and practice; *actualitas* sets itself off from “reality” as a way of thinking being which is open to the accident, errancy, and undecidability of the actual (as opposed to the supposedly more deeply “real”).

Our challenge, then, is to try to think culture as processes of coming-to-presence; as “objectivity” (care), “workliness” (artfulness) and “openness to accident” (the fall of the event). This little phrase, “along the lines of usage”, is so familiar on first inspection but so daunting the closer we get to it. Thought inside Heidegger’s re-translation of the Anaximander fragment, it literally opens a series of lines, of lines out of and away from representational thinking, of what Deleuze would call “lines of flight”. Is it possible, then, to follow such lines? Where will they take us? What, along such lines, lies outside representationalism?

Chapter 4

Talking (Across) Cultures:

Grace And Danger in the House of the European Inquirer

I.

Wondering where the “lines of usage” might lead, in this chapter I want to take up just one possibility that could come under our new triple rubric of “objectivity” (care), “workliness” (artfulness) and “openness to accident” (the fall of the event). This possibility is opened by asking how the work of art is worked and cared for in a culture that allows a much more radical accident to the work than is routine for “us in the West”. And it involves re-tracing Heidegger’s path into the elsewhere (in this case, Japan) as opposed to the elsewhere (the early Greeks).

In this way, we can continue to contemplate the possibility that “our” ordinary and familiar concept of culture can be thought outside its homeground of modern Western thought. As we have seen, for Heidegger, the thinking that dominates that homeground is representationalism. And so a large part of what I want to do is to continue to shake the concept of culture from its dominant representationalist moorings.

Heidegger’s problem with the history of Western thought may be repeated as follows: in this tradition, the difference between being-as-such and mere beings (the ontological difference) is forgotten so that being comes primarily to be considered in terms of beings. Then beings are, in turn, considered in terms of their *relations* to one another, with the being called “man” routinely standing to one privileged side of those known as “objects”. So thinking about being is reduced to the question: how is it that “man” relates to objects? The problem is compounded when the answer to this question can only be given epistemically as: man *knows* objects.¹ And it is even further compounded by the dominance throughout all of this of representational thinking: the idea that man knows

¹. As we have seen, this is the central and limiting problematic of Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1970).

objects only “indirectly” through their representations. To challenge representational thinking in Heidegger’s sense, then, is to challenge not just a “way of knowing” but also the dominance of “man” (Foucault’s central uptake of Heidegger), the separation between “man” and “things”, subject and object, and, ultimately, it is to challenge the very idea that being-as-such is no more than an aggregation of empirically knowable beings.

To find alternatives to representational thinking Heidegger (as we saw in the previous chapter) looks elsewhere — or, more precisely, by turning to the pre-Socratic Greeks, *elsewhen*. He does this throughout his work but most explicitly in *Early Greek Thinking* (1975). Yet even this work barely distinguishes between (what we would now think of as) natural and cultural production in any clear way. Instead, it appears there as if the ontological difference itself — the difference between being and beings, between sheer coming-to-presence and that which happens to be present — is of such urgent importance that it cuts across the apparently less important distinction between natural and cultural varieties of beings. As an advancement of his claims about the ontological difference (as a neglected and almost unthinkable difference today), the Heidegger of *Early Greek Thinking* in effect obviates the nature/culture distinction *along with* representational thinking.

If the modern Western concept of culture, then, depends for its existence on the prior existence of a constitutive outside (such as nature) then is it possible that culture as such (whatever theory of it we hold) is irrevocably part of representationalist thinking? Is it intrinsically representationalist — from, say, Hobbes to the present day or, indeed, in whatever past or future manifestation — by virtue of its dependence on a culture/non-culture distinction? If this is so, again, there is a remarkable consequence for all the cultural disciplines and for cultural studies in particular. It is this: any non-representationalist approach to culture would be a contradiction in terms; so that, by virtue of it being specifically *culture* we are interested in, our interest will be necessarily representationalist. Outside representationalism, what we are dealing with could not be culture as such — at least, for any modern Western version of culture. The sorts of objects which we have, until now, thought of as cultural objects (photographs, museums, policy documents, forms of dress, music and so on) become interesting and significant outside representationalism only to the extent that they instantiate the ontological difference. And

they may do this in a variety of ways and so with no guarantee of being mutually assembled into a single set called “culture”. We can, that is, no longer afford to think of the cultural as ontologically separate in any way. Instead, the move from representational thinking would mean that objects of whatever kind — to re-quote: “gods and men, temples and cities, sea and land, eagle and snake, tree and shrub, wind and light, stone and sand, day and night” (1975, 40) — are effects of the distinction between coming-to-presence and merely happening to be present. And they ought to be experienced, inspected and understood for what they are, fundamentally, in this respect. What would this mean?

One occasion where the later Heidegger does treat “cultural” matters (in several senses and by, perhaps for the first and only time, going across cultures) is in his “Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer” (1971).² This strangely readable little colloquy needs inspection, I believe, if we are to proceed any further along what the Heidegger of *Early Greek Thinking* calls “the lines of usage” and into the peculiar territory beyond representational thinking — even at the risk of losing sight of what “culture” has always meant, today, in the West.

From the start of the exchange, we are, peculiarly enough for Heidegger, dealing with two recognisable cultures. One is Eastasian (or more specifically Japanese) and the other European (and perhaps German). What emerges early on in the dialogue is that these are specifically different and distinct tensions of Da-sein, different “houses” of existence (5). Moreover, this difference means that “a dialogue from house to house remains nearly impossible” (5). And this is not simply for Dr Johnson’s famous reason — namely, that they are arguing from different premises. On the contrary, the two speakers, “the Japanese” and “the Inquirer” are not arguing at all, and if they have premises then they consist of a more-or-less shared idea of what is important in philosophy. They both appear to be “Heideggerians”, for example. And one of them, the Inquirer, also claims to have written *Being and Time* and to share other biographical details with the historical Martin Heidegger. The other, the Japanese, as he is called, appears to be a student of the European

² Two other central locations for Heidegger on culture are “The Age of the World Picture” and “Science and Reflection” (1977a; 1977b). These essays, especially the former, are discussed in detail in Chapter 12. For convenience, references to the “Dialogue” will henceforth be to its page numbers in brackets without the date reference.

Inquirer's works and, accordingly, appears to want to help him grasp the Japanese understanding of that work.

This is one sense of "the cultural" in the dialogue: its depiction of two members of two different macro cultures attempting to explicate effectively the same philosophical positioning. A second sense has to do with the topics of the discussion: art and language. That is, the Japanese, to continue the general conceit of the drama, seems to take his specific purpose as that of helping the Inquirer to understand how "Heideggerian" thinking has become important for certain Japanese philosophers of aesthetics. And this in turn involves the Inquirer coming to understand certain aspects of Japanese language and thinking.

The topic may then be art. But, as with so many things in this "exchange", even this is not particularly clear. The Japanese term in question is *Iki*; which may be aesthetics, the aesthetic, or perhaps art — or else none of these. For now, to begin with (though we are already well begun by this stage) *Iki* is at least just *Iki*: that which lets some hidden thing (say, *y*) be known by something closer to hand (say, *x*). It is the "sensuous radiance through whose lively delight there breaks the radiance of something suprasensuous" (14).

This division is the start and turning point of the two interlocutors' mutually constructed argument. Shortly we will have to go on to list the various actual *x*'s and ideal *y*'s that can make up the formulation of *Iki*. But for now, though, we should take stock of what is already in place in the dialogue as it were before any argument has yet been constructed. For, already, there is something "cultural" being hinted at. Here is its model — one which should, by now, strike certain familiar chords. Works are written in German by the European Inquirer. They bear the titles of books, lectures and essays written by Martin Heidegger. From the ways they are described, both in terms of their contents and in terms of the historical contexts of their construction, they appear uncannily like those of Martin Heidegger. They are translated into Japanese and read in Japan by local distinguished philosophers. Indeed, several of these philosophers also travel to Germany to learn more. What is guiding this textual exchange is (for the Japanese philosophers) the attempt "to consider the nature of Japanese art with the help of European aesthetics" (2). At once the Inquirer is sceptical. He suggests that these European musings will be of no

help at all to the Japanese. He seems, like any good European cultural relativist, to think that the indigenous system of aesthetics must be a better place to begin the inspection of its own art. On the other hand, it is clearly the case that the Inquirer's own works have been mobilised by the Japanese in their efforts. His position is not a straightforward one; its axis is twisted. In denying the usefulness of European metaphysics to his interlocutor, the Inquirer is, to an extent, denying his own effectivity. But only to an extent. The Inquirer must be able to establish his position as being in Europe but not of it; and what is, of course, most distinctive about European metaphysics is its deep and abiding embedding in representational thinking. Yet this deep immersion remains all but unthought — where could it be thought from, except in the thinking of the Inquirer himself?

So what are we to think about this dialogue as it proceeds along these lines — from these assumptions? Firstly, as with all written dialogues, especially those in philosophy, where we know from long experience that they are written to make a point or an argument, the temporality is peculiar. An author, Martin Heidegger, sets in train a path of thinking between two mutually-supportive characters. At the same time, he, the dialogue's writer, has already traversed this path, knows each step of the way. He has thought his way there and placed the way-markers along it. No doubt he has even annotated and edited the maps so as to be able to do what he does: which is to set these other two, fictional, thinkers along the same course. This time, though, which must be at least the second time through, the two thinkers proceed as if the way were new and uncharted. "As if": they work in the mode of fiction. They hesitate and withhold. They ponder and reflect on which turns they should take at various points. They contemplate the dangers that may (or even must) lie down certain tracks, and they guess or hint at the bearings they must take to reach.... Well what? What *must* they reach? The word for the destination is "grace".

The temporality is, indeed, strange then: for the "grace" that is to be the hard-won destination appears merely *accidental*. It appears through hints, guesses and hesitations, through bearings considered and reconsidered. But all the time we, readers, who are also invited to think along the same path, always know that there is one who has gone before

us and left all the signs in place — one who is, perhaps, already grace-ful, having arrived. The legend is familiar then: the philosopher-author has already arrived. He is present in the place of grace. The Inquirer and the Japanese, however, are fictional characters who are still coming to that presence — and their way is fraught with danger.

To complicate the matter more, however, one of the travellers, the Inquirer, as we have mentioned briefly, claims descriptions of himself (being the author of *Being and Time* for example) that consist of a set of predicates which uniquely identify Martin Heidegger himself. But we *must* hesitate to say that the Inquirer *is* Martin Heidegger. As a ficto-philosophical character, it is possible for the Inquirer to bear predicates that uniquely identify Martin Heidegger and yet for him not to be Martin Heidegger. After all, the character called “Napoleon” in *War and Peace* bears predicates which uniquely describe the historical Napoleon. But he is not he. (And would we be less cautious were “Napoleon Buonaparte” the name of the author of *War and Peace*?)

For all this, the Inquirer is, to say the least, very much a Heideggerian. And from the way he talks about avoiding dangers, going a certain way, taking a certain path, and so on, it is also possible to say that he shares another important predicate with the historical Heidegger: he too has been down this path to grace before. So, in a sense, he has and he has not. He is both there (present in grace) and also yet to arrive there (coming to grace’s presence). He is at once but one of the travellers and also the guide. A double ambivalence, then, for the European Inquirer: both traveller and guide; both inside and outside European thought.

As for the one called “the Japanese”, then, we must also be suspicious. The Japanese is a translator and he is soon to leave Germany for Florence. We know little else about him, except his acquaintance with the Inquirer’s work and also with the work of the great Japanese aestheticians. We wonder, as we watch him travel, and as we, too, are guided into his steps (as he is guided by the Inquirer) whether he is a Japanese at all. Or else, perhaps we should say, we know he is a “Japanese” but we do not quite know what that means for the one who made him Japanese; that is, Martin Heidegger. And this is important, for no small part of our problem with culture would, in effect, be overcome if we knew what it was about, say, the Japanese that makes them Japanese. If we could

know what constitutes Japaneseness, we would know how to recognise an instance of a culture (in this case, for some of us, “another” culture).

The Inquirer, however, already knows the answer to this question. He is even given to telling the character called “the Japanese” what is truly Japanese and what is not (for example Japanese emulations of Europe in thinking, technology and industry). At the same time, however he is, after all an inquirer — and he means, like any good anthropological inquirer, to find out what it is for the Japanese character himself to be Japanese — that is, to discover his *experience* of being Japanese. So here is another instance of the duality of the Inquirer. He is at once emic and etic in his approach to the Japanese character; his interest is both inside and outside what it is to be Japanese. And this double interest (or demand) on the part of the Inquirer means that the character called “a Japanese” is not just a Japanese character, he is *the* Japanese character (in the sense of the cultural distinctiveness of a nation). And that character will be found in the character’s thinking: particularly his thinking about art and about language. If we need to know, then, we must proceed into this next stage of the journey to grace: *Iki*.

Iki, we will remember, is what lets some deeper thing (y) be known by something more readily available (x). Just from the dialogue itself, we could extract several values for x and y:

x	⇒	y	System
aistheton (sensuous)	⇒	noeton (nonsensuous)	W. Metaphysics
sound and script	⇒	signification	“ ”
real	⇒	ideal	“ ”
<i>Iro</i> (colour + ...?)	⇒	<i>Ku</i> (emptiness + ...?)	Japanese

The Inquirer wants to know what *Iki* is. And its easiest translation, from the dialogue itself, would be “the nature of art”. But insofar as this translation speaks of a “nature”, the question of what *Iki* is appears to have to do with a further explication of that nature. So the short definition is important: the “sensuous radiance through whose lively delight there breaks the radiance of something suprasensuous” (14). *Iki*, then, may not be strictly

identical with the first (x) term in our set of pairs — but it is clearly more closely associated with it than with the second (y). *Iki* is a *sensuous* radiance; but of a particular kind. And this particular kind must be something in which we take a “lively delight”. Without that delight, the “radiance” on the other side, on the side of the suprasensuous, will not break through. *Iki*, then, is x in the company of delight, acting as the medium for the revelation of y. It is a very particular kind of sensuousness — one which is already abstract (since it is a form of radiance) and one which is not, by definition, an instance of itself without the accompanying delight. Finally, the test of its authenticity is whether, in the company of delight, it allows a still more ideal form of radiance to break through. *Iki*, then, is not “between”. It is not the *relation*, for example, between *Iro* and *Ku*. Rather it is all *Iro* — but of a very specific kind. Risking tautology: it is *Iro* in the form of an artwork. Not all empirical colour is art (far from it) — but there is no artwork without it. “J: ... We say: without *Iro*, no *Ku*” (14).

The empirical, then, has a crucial place in this thinking: without it, no ideality. And in the next chapter, we will see this captured once more by the phrase “in the *event*”. This must not be forgotten — if only because it can head off those criticisms of Heidegger which find his interest in “the nature of ...” and “the essence of ...” to be questions about matters (language, art, being...) in their sheer ideality.

Still, to return: without *Iro*, no *Ku*. This is what the Japanese says the Japanese say; and this is what the Japanese is reported as saying to the *Inquirer* that the Japanese say. That is, for the *Inquirer* (and also, perhaps, for Heidegger), this analysis does not get us to the core of Japanese aesthetics. Not by a long chalk. What it is, so far, is the effect of a *dialogue*. And that, where grace is concerned, is a danger.

The problem of this (and indeed, of any) dialogue, for the *Inquirer*, is that it must be set forth via the distinction it would ideally discuss — that between sensuous language and its deeper signification. The x/y table, that is, contains an entry marking a distinction (sensuous language/signification) which is the condition for its own discussion. The danger, then, is that the discussion (ostensibly about art), since it is a dialogue, since it is “in language”, already assumes that sensuous language is “artful” enough to allow what it signifies to break through from ideality. And if it only assumes this, it cannot be *about* this.

Yet this is what it *must* also be about if the Inquirer and the Japanese are to approach each other's thinking (and in particular, each other's aesthetics). And this must hold whatever language they speak.

Or must it? Is it possible that there is another way of conceptualising language (another way of thinking language) that does not need the representationalist distinction drawn on so far (between the sensuous signifier and the suprasensuous signified)? Moreover, is it possible that this other way of conceptualising (so different that it may not be an instance of conceptualising in the strict sense) is Japanese?

Here, then, we come to a preliminary sense of what, for the Inquirer, it is to be Japanese. "Japanese" in this dialogue means (it is by definition) the capacity to think (or perhaps to experience) language outside representationalism. But the idea of speaking from different "houses" also means that Japanese thinking is not based on this separation and so is impermeable to the European Inquirer *as a European* (but possibly not as Martin Heidegger). This impermeability makes it "the mysterious" (16). For example, it cannot be caught by photography or film (17) and it is essentially non-technical outside its "Europeanisation" (15), its "technicalization and industrialization" (3). Or at least this is the case for the "true" Japan, for the "background" as opposed to the "foreground" "world of Japan" (17). The "mysterious" then is not the suprasensuous (as representationalism would have it) but is rather that form of thinking that does not quite (or not easily) translate into the *difference* between the sensuous and the suprasensuous. It does not so much translate *into* it as stand *outside* it — outside representation. It is, then, akin to (but not identical with) that "nothingness" or "emptiness" (cf. *Ku* above) which stands outside all (mere) presence and absence and, indeed, outside the difference between presence and absence (19). Hence *Ku* is more than just emptiness, it is "emptiness + ...": "To us [Japanese], emptiness is the loftiest name for what you [?] mean to say with the word 'Being'" (19). What we see from this idea of Japanese thinking is a large number of the binary pairs so familiar to Western metaphysics being worn away; and the point of this erosion is to give us a rough guide to what may lie outside representational thinking.

Entr'acte

We can see now what is at stake here. It is no more and no less than this: whether in this dialogue we are *experiencing* a cultural difference. And this means no more and no less than the question of whether we are experiencing the presence of culture(s) at all. Put another way: the essay in question (in the form of a dialogue) may be an instance either of a *cultural* difference or dialogue; or else of an accidental similarity or monologue. Let us look briefly at both possibilities.

If the first, then we have a clear lesson (on the model of the “danger” of language): the nature of culture *cannot* derive from a metaphysical distinction between culture and contenders for the title of “non-culture” (for example, physical nature or science or barbarism); for anything that was a culture would have to be already in place in order to generate such a division (or anything like it) to start with. The name, then, of this prior condition cannot be “culture” itself. But that is precisely how the cultural disciplines have used the term — “cultures”, we hear, are what *make* the “nature/culture” distinction — albeit that each may do it in its own way. This is why the cultural disciplines cannot imagine a culture which does not, in itself, have a deeply-seated representational *concept* of culture as its ultimate ground. Anthropological thinking — in its broadest sense, not just in reference to a specific discipline — entails the search for the other’s meaning of its own (anthropology’s) idea of culture. In effect, it cannot imagine a culture outside Western metaphysics but must forever translate “different cultures” into versions of it (albeit with minor empirical differences). So if the name of the *condition* for the nature/culture distinction (that is, the name of the nature of culture) cannot be “culture”, instead its name must be “representational thinking” — at least for all cultural theory to date. The modern concept of culture’s ultimate antinomy would be that it would rest upon the assumption of its own universal presence while also denying cultural universals.

If the second reading holds — if, that is, we are not, in this dialogue, undergoing an experience with culture at all — then the “Japanese” is no more than a token non-European Heideggerian. He is whatever may be non-European “in” Heidegger himself. He is a fictional device for having Heidegger’s fellow Europeans (his readers) see how it is possible to think outside Western thinking — or at least to get a glimpse of such a

possibility. He is a stooge, a ploy, what's more, an "orientalised" ploy: a classically European fictional depiction of the mysterious Orient and its inscrutable thinking.

So much, as I have said, is at stake in how we read this work. And a number of very important issues depend on our (necessarily ethical and political) decision as to how we should read the essay. For if the first reading prevails, cultural difference (or whatever term we decide to use to replace it and its ultimately limited horizon) is not something, in itself, of its nature or essence, that can give any comfort to notions of "orientalism" or "stereotypes" or any of the other tropes of fashionable (cross-)cultural criticism. Instead, the cultural itself, wherever it is predicated on Western representational thinking — and so far as we know, there is no other available in the modern history of our thinking — is intrinsically Western thinking. There is no outside of Western culture (the Western concept of culture) for that culture to grasp — whether it *would ideally* grasp it in scientific, anthropological, liberal humanist, cultural relativist, orientalist, colonialist or racist ways. These "ways" and the differences between them have no meaning on our first reading. They are all, in effect, one way.

But if the second reading prevails, then all is well with Western representational thinking. It has no problem. All cultures do, factually, have a Western concept of culture at their core, albeit of a particular inflexion. They are all just like us in their essential metaphysics. He who records the different tensions or versions of this single metaphysics may be a scientist or anthropologist. He who appreciates such small variations may be a liberal humanist or a cultural relativist. He who dogmatically believes in the superiority of his own tension or difference and degrades others may be an orientalist, a colonialist or a racist. But these are, on this second reading, but small variations along a single path. They are like the right, left and centre lanes of a one-way street.

So neither reading is very hopeful for today's cultural disciplines. The first suggests a much deeper-seated difference than those disciplines have been able to imagine hitherto; something much less easily grasped than the culture / non-culture distinction (and such that some "cultures" are not, in and of themselves, quite that). The second suggests that

the easy victories of principled cultural criticism and cultural identity politics are grounded on the most Western of Western thinking: its representationalist theology.³

It looks as if there are only two possibilities: either culture rests upon a bed of difference that lies so deep as to remain forever outside Western thinking; or every other is ultimately, at the deepest point of difference we *can* think, a version of the West. But on both sides of the divide, the initial *idea* of culture — the idea that prompts the double question of this Entr'acte — is culture-as-presence: “are we in the presence of a cultural dialogue?”; “are we in the presence of a culture talking to itself?” If we could move even a little way from this and begin to think of culture-as-coming-to-presence (or just as “to come”, to invoke a Derridean variation on the theme), then it turns out that the “decision” between the two readings is a necessarily *undecidable* matter within representational thinking itself but that, as we begin to move elsewhere, the decision becomes irrelevant. But we must reserve this (in)decision for another occasion and proceed with the dialogue at hand.

II.

To proceed, we must continue with the dialogue's attention to language and particularly to the “danger” of speaking *about* it. Language, that is, has a nature but it is concealed (by the representationalist difference between the sensuous and the suprasensuous) and this concealing is a “danger” (21). One contender for the nature of language is to take it as “the house of Being” (22). Again, the *house* — and this prompts us to remember that, earlier on, the two cultures were described as different “houses” (5); different “language realities” (24). And so “the nature of language remains something altogether different for the Eastasian and the European peoples” (23). In fact, it is so different that the question of what language *is* may not be a possible one for the Japanese (23). He insists that the Japanese “pay no heed” to such a question, the question of the nature of language. Instead they have a word that “says the essential being of language, rather than being of use as a name for speaking and for language” (23). So this is not a referring word but rather a “hinting” (24) word. And the “hint” would be what the Japanese translator feels when he

³. On this matter, see Hunter (1993).

feels the “wellspring” from which such different languages as German and Japanese might arise. He also describes this in terms of a “radiance” (cf. his gloss on *Iki*, above). This “hinting”, or “gesturing”, or “bearing” (26) must not, the Inquirer demands, be clarified into a form of “conceptual representation” (25). Were it to be, we would miss its nature outside Western representationalism. There is no analytic or empirical equivalent of “the nature of language”. To think so is itself an instance of the worst sorts of metaphysics at work.

Hence this metaphysics “establishes itself even where we do not expect it” (25). For example, it establishes itself in the language disciplines of all kinds, in “the elaboration of logic into logistics” (25). This concealed form of metaphysics — concealed because it often thinks of itself as avoiding metaphysics by turning to scientific analysis, without seeing how that very turn is a metaphysically grounded turn — this form in particular does violence to “the nature of language” (25).

Following through the dialogue, we also find that to ask about the nature of language is also to ask the hermeneutic question in its non-standard sense; that is not as a methodological question about the means of interpreting texts but as a (non-)metaphysical question about what interpretation itself *is* (29-30). And this in turn has to do with “bearing” (as in bearing a message, being a messenger — gesturing, bearing, hinting). The so-far unannounced Japanese word for the nature of language, on the one hand, and the question of what hermeneutics is, on the other, stand together. “Man stands in hermeneutical relation to the two-fold” (32), where “the two-fold” is glossed as presencing (coming-to-presence) and present beings.

This hermeneutical relation, however, is complex. It involves man in preserving the two-fold (32) and also in the two-fold (presencing/ present) using man (33). And, sadly enough, this idea of “use” can no longer mean merely empirical *usage* in its quasi-linguistic sense. For, as we soon learn from the rest of the essays in *On the Way to Language*, the linguistic arts and sciences are thoroughly representationalist since they begin with the assumption of the simple existence of present beings (forgetting coming-to-presence and language’s criticality to it) and consider language, as it were, to come later as a means of and for their re-presentation. (And this is, I would argue, precisely the functions that

terms such as “language”, “discourse”, “signification” and “image” have in, for example, cultural studies.) Nevertheless the alternative to this mistaken view of language, the alternative that Heidegger calls “the hermeneutic relation”, is agentic. In fact it is doubly so. It involves, that is, practices (of preserving and using): “the sway of usage” (33) and “the sway of the two-fold” (34). The Japanese claims that there is a kinship between this thinking and his (or their) own (41). Moreover, this kinship has its own “site” (41) and that site is the *Ku*, the “emptiness + ...”.

Naturally enough, representationalism is not up to the task of understanding this kinship (41) but the name of what *can* understand it, of what lies outside metaphysics, perhaps, cannot be uttered; “We leave it without a name” (42). Still, at least with respect to the aesthetic aspect of metaphysics, the term *Iki* itself is one contender (42). It can be translated as “the gracious” (43) or just “grace” (44): “the breath of the stillness of luminous delight” (43). Here then is the “lively delight” that must accompany sensuousness in the case of art. Language and art are inseparable in their most general senses. And, from here, I want to inspect the assumption that at least these two (in their difficult, sometimes paradoxical and almost utterly ineffable Heideggerian senses) are crucial parts of culture (as it might, one day, be thought outside representational thinking). One possible word to describe their confluence, or their neighbourhood, would be “poetry” (literally, “making”).

The so-far-unspoken Japanese word for “language” turns out to be *Koto ba*. *Ba* is leaves, blossoms, petals (45). And *Koto* is “that which in the event gives delight” (45) and this, in turn, is akin to “grace” and, so, to *charis* (46). This *Koto* is, then, the “more”, the “+...” already appended to both the *Iro* and the *Ku*. So *Koto ba* is “the petals that stem from *Koto*” (47), a blossoming forth of what-gives-delight in the event — which now, we must assume, is the empirical, sensuous event (and how crucial this could be if returned to any understanding of cultural practice). The Inquirer offers a more elliptical translation of *Koto ba* as “Saying” — “saying and what is said in it and what is to be said” (47). Thinking it as “Saying” (as saying in general, as the “showing” that Saying, *saga*, is) is the beginning of a path to the hermeneutic relation (and hence, possibly, for us, to a cultural hermeneutics) to a point where, as “man”, we become the bearers of the message of the unconcealment of

the two-fold (48). What this “Saying” *is* is, too, a “mystery” (50) and the danger, in talking *about* it, is to miss it as a mystery. The mystery is that language *about* language always assumes what it must arrive at — it must have arrived before it can depart. Or, from earlier on in the dialogue: “The language of the dialogue constantly destroy[s] the possibility of saying what the dialogue was about” (5). This is the Inquirer’s sense of “the hermeneutic circle” (51). And it suggests that we must do something other than speak *about* language (51). We are fully returned, then, to the danger of this (or of any) dialogue announced at the start of the conversation.

Postscript

While they travel, then — these two — they are also in houses. They remain at home. More specifically, they remain in the house of the European Inquirer. And they never leave. This is why — to return to the question raised in the Entr’acte — our second reading has cogency; this is why this Japanese is an imaginary Japanese, complete with classically European versions of the East and its mysteries. But it is also true that, to restate the matter, when they remain at home they also *travel*. In this sense, they do indeed travel. It is more than just a case of the door being open, with the two looking out into the difficult landscape, discerning possible paths to another place. They also travel there and travel into (and via) a “thinking experience” with language and art, hence with poetry, with what culture (in its own nature — as opposed to culture-as-opposed-to-nature) might still be. So the dialogue, too has a postscript. Since its form is non-scholarly, it can hardly have references. But in the “References” section (1971, 199) we read

A DIALOGUE ON LANGUAGE

The heretofore unpublished text originated in 1953/4, on the occasion of a visit by Professor Tezuka of the Imperial University, Tokyo.

Chapter 5

Why (Then) Culture?

I.

Here we must begin to pick up, after all our travels, the threads of the idea of culture as *owning*. In Chapter 2, we saw briefly how this might operate via a kind of doubling: that whatever secures cultural “knowledge” as something owned by a cohort or collectivity also secures its capacity to be used by another. At that point, the exact term for that (undecidable) double eluded us. Now, however, there may be a name for it: (ap)propriability. That name is close to, and an extension of, the term that inhabits all of Heidegger’s later work on language, including our discourse with the Japanese translator (1971a). The term in German is *Ereignis* and different translators render it in different ways, sometimes as “appropriation” (1971b, 127), sometimes as “propriation” (1993b, 415). To move away from representational(ist) versions of culture, that is, we must insist on the necessity of this (mis)ownability as the double that strangely enough *secures* the cultural object as “coming to presence”, as “object-ing”, as never quite settling down to a finished and final ontic status, as “artful”, and as open to accident, subject to the fall of the event. Our thesis will be: since what comes to count as a cultural object is always actually flickering or hovering between two states (of finally being owned-propriated and of finally being misowned-appropriated), it is never quite an object as such but is, rather, a movement back and forth. And this movement can be called its event-ness or eventality, since, as we shall see *Ereignis* also marks the idea of an event.

Ereignis, according to Heidegger, comes before speaking, writing, art, before even being itself, as its “essential origin”. He writes:

The matter [of *Ereignis*], while simple in itself, still remains difficult to think, because thinking must first overcome the habit of yielding to that view that we are thinking here of “Being” as appropriation. But appropriation is different in nature, because it is richer than

any conceivable definition of Being. Being, however, in respect of its essential origin, can be thought of in terms of appropriation. (1971b, 129)

If *Ereignis* has this function then it is obvious that it is far from a settled and easily definable matter in Heidegger's thinking. *Ereignis* itself appears to be open to appropriation. Yet it is also obvious that, in our earlier consideration of (mis)owning, we were closer than we knew to the nature of culture. To appropriate is, as such, to seize, adopt, confiscate, allocate, secure, take away, expropriate, usurp. And, by the same token, appropriation, is to keep something as one's own: to guard it against seizure, adoption, confiscation, allocation, removal, expropriation and usurpation. *Ereignis*, then, is the double that means both of these apparently exclusive motions, towards and away. It has roughly the following etymology.

Although Heidegger (1971b, 127) warns us against taking it this simply, *Ereignis* is literally, in ordinary German: event, happening, occurrence, incident. And this means not *just* an odd or peculiar incident but also an everyday occurrence. It is related in another way, however, to "peculiar" as in "particular" or "idiosyncratic", as we shall see shortly. It might also be thought of as referring to a singularity, an event which is *utterly* an event rather than, say, a mere token of a type. *Ereignis*, that is, points us in the direction of event-ness or eventality. It is also connected with *Auge*, and so refers to:

"that which becomes visible, real" ("Das Unzulängliche, Hier wird's Ereignis", Goethe, *Faust II*). (Farrell 1977, 110).

The related verb is *ereignen*: to happen, to occur, to take place, to come about, to come to pass. In this sense, *Ereignis* is the coming about, perhaps even the coming to presence, of the object-event. It is the event-ness or eventality of the event: its "eventing". And this marks an instability in terms of settled, completed and finished matters or affairs. In fact, it may mark as much a "calling" (from a possible, conditional, or future state of completedness) of the object-event.

Heidegger's translators move, naturally, following Heidegger's own glosses on the term, in the direction of "owning" and "(ap)propriation". How is this? Strictly, to appropriate is *aneignen* (which is also to acquire). The related nouns are *Aneignen* and *Aneignung*: adoption, (mis)appropriation, usurpation, seizure, and even assimilation (in

the physiological sense). But the root to which both belong, allowing their functional similarity, is *eigen*, the adjective meaning “own” as in “one’s own” — a marker of what is not shared, a peculiarity or a characteristic feature (*Eigenart*); and here we re-intersect with the idea of the peculiarity or singularity of eventness. Hence: *Eigenschaft*, a particular quality or characteristic, and also the verb, *eignen*, to belong. And, since it is fairly customary for us today to associate culture with belonging, one way of referring to the double of (ap)propriability would be to imagine English having a word that was the opposite of “belonging” (such as “unbelonging” or “disbelonging”). Then we could reconfigure culture as (ap)propriability by imagining a constant movement (flickering, hovering, haunting) between belonging and disbelonging. *Ereignis*, then, is all of these shades of events and ownings and their opposites, as well as the unsettling movements between them.

With so much room for manoeuvre, Heidegger’s own usage is not straightforward. Rather it works and plays with *Ereignis* to get the effect of what is peculiar to something; but this can only be “in the event”, in the coming (about) of the event, in its eventing, eventness or eventality. “Cultural” specificity, then, is never quite settled, always open, hovering between its completion (as a “cultural trait” or as a definition of culture) and the impossibility of that completion. And it is in this respect that we can see why what we earlier called “hybridity” is never quite off the agenda, even in the most seemingly settled of cultural matters. When something’s nature is to be unsettled (even if a “settlement” might be the first mark of a culture), it is nomadic, in flight. And we mistake that nature as soon as we think of culture, a culture, or a cultural object (a component of a culture) as something which has taken root. Even in settling, we are always settling in another’s territory — as they, too, are settling in ours. Eventality points to this unsettlement of the event, even in its most apparently settled forms.

And, at the same time, because this “process” is not fixed, neither is the full sense of property, being proper, being utterly of one’s own and not shared. It comes, in and through the hovering event-to-come, also to contain and require contamination, appropriation, mis-appropriation, seizure, adoption and assimilation. *Ereignis* is what (as a general quality) in the event, the singularity of the event, is its coming about, its coming to

be visible as one's own but which never reaches the full destination of complete property or propriety since it is always made "impure" and im-proper along the way (essentially) with what is not one's own, with what is appropriated. Or else: it is the appropriability's coming to pass.

If we were still in the business of looking for definitions, this would be about as good a definition of culture as we could wish for. And the name of the approach that puts this first (prior to any "subject", representation or conceptualisation) would be "empiricism" or, much better, "eventalism".

II.

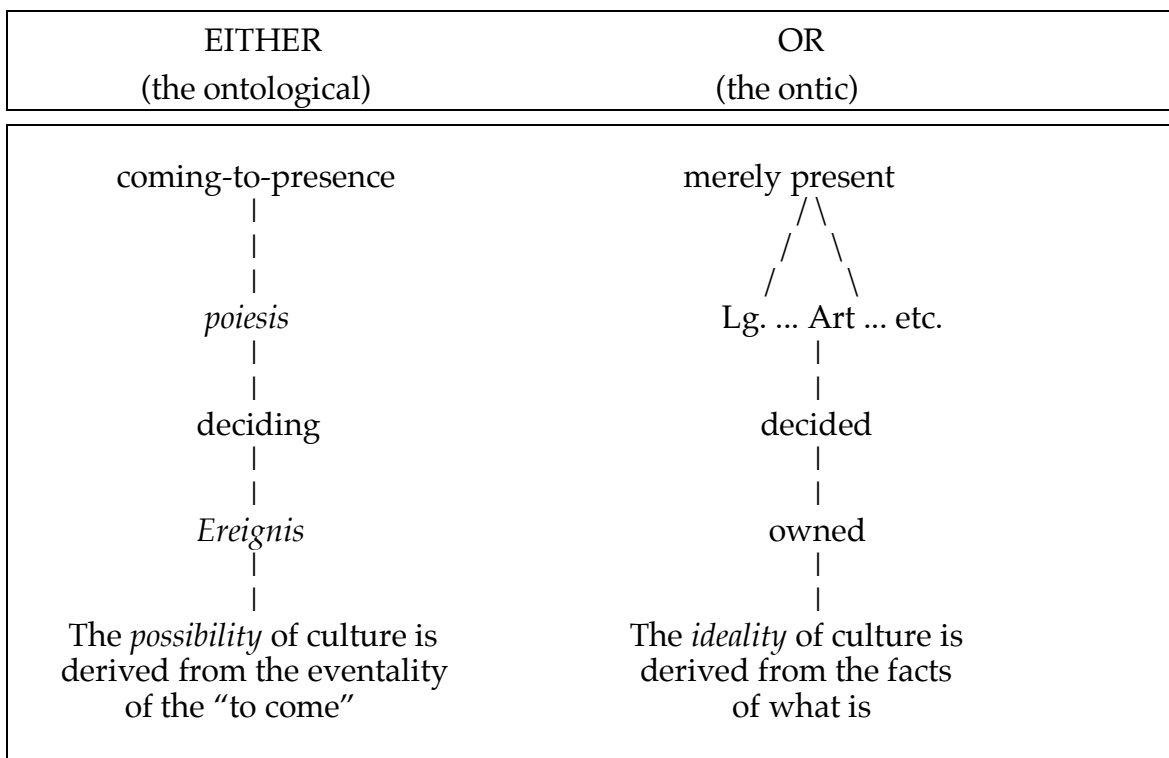
As we start away from representational thinking and towards eventalistic experiencing, then, the critical feature, if such it is, of the cultural, is its fragility: a fragility that, paradoxically, we can never dwell upon too long for we depend upon "cultural givens" for every move we make. So we could think of non-representational thinking as starting from the ontological fragility of the ontic. Here, the "ontological" would point to the domain of coming-to-presence while the "ontic" would point to the merely existent; in fact, the latter would point to what is only *apparently* completed as an object. At the same time, this ontological fragility of culture is its artefactuality, marking the essential becoming-ness or incompleteness of an artefact (cultural object) but also offering this fragile ontological status as its *nature*, its (f)actuality beyond the mere facts.

This is another kind of thinking about culture, then, which does not begin from the sheer givenness of any cultural artefact. Rather, fragility-eventality (fragi-ventality?) suggests an insubstantiality to all definite substances.¹ In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida (1994a) writes of this capacity of the unfixed, of the to-come, as its *spectrality*. The ghost of the undecidable haunts this other kind of thinking. But "fragi-ventality" is also coming-to-presence — which is not a coming-before (in the sense of a determinate narrative history of origins) — rather it is a counter-ontological claim against the sheer ontic presence of what is (or its absence). To return to Deleuze, it is an insistence on a transversal axis of

¹. In light of the questionability or uncertainty (*Fraglichkeit*) of this coming-about, we might also speak of "Frage-ventality".

historical contingency (see Chapter 2), of an irreversible arrow of time with no further determination “behind” it and allowing no possibility of prediction or calculation.

Although several terms will remain tendentious, we can begin to express this diagrammatically, beginning with the ontological difference and ending with two distinct propositions concerning the cultural domain and its nature — for, as we have seen, even the most overtly empiricist versions of culture are predicated on a general description of its nature. They cannot be outside metaphysics in this respect. Indeed, as the diagram shows, their grounding version of culture (as derivation from facts) is much more problematically metaphysical than the non-representationalist alternative to the left.



If, according to the ontological description, culture is only possible as a derivation from what Derrida calls the “to-come”, then it is still always already coming about. Heidegger’s and Derrida’s common mentor, Nietzsche, puts it this way: “a kind of becoming must itself create the illusion of being” (1968, #517). But this “illusion” does not say that what is (the empirical-real) is a mere construction of ideality. Rather it says that the empirical-real is illusive when looked at in its ontology. It turns out that it is a creation (of becoming or eventality). And that creation or making is *poiesis*. The seemingly solid givenness of the ontic is, ontologically speaking, its com-position — its position with or alongside an other

which is not “properly” part of it. What comes about is com-posed. And so becoming in the *ontological* sense is not, strictly, empirical (ontic) becoming (as was, for example, the “poetic” for Vico). It is the coming-about of the ontic, but it is separate and distinct from those empirical “production” processes that are the descriptive objects of, for example, ethnography when it asks: How does the photographer make his photographs? or How do people actually work in order to make conversations? When the cultural disciplines turn to “processes of production”, they stop the radical ontological sense of poetic becoming in its tracks. They assume the presence of cultural objects (as ontic matter(s)) and then assume an equally ontic “process” behind it, in its crudely empirical history. This (history) is where it comes from, on this story, and sheer immediate presence is where it goes to and stops in its completion. It then becomes merely an instance of a cultural ideal pre-existing it, in its “history” (“photography”, “conversation” — a rule).

To move away from this picture, empiricity has first to be freed from the representationalist distinction between the empirical event (token, datum or instance) and the ideal event (type, principle or law). One way is to think empiricity not as a property of the ontic but, instead, as eventality: coming-about, derivation from the “to come”, passing through the “ordeal” of the decision (as Derrida puts it), *poiesis*, com-position. This takes us to the groundless but grounding eventality of the “to come” — which in the sphere of “culture” (and no doubt, now, elsewhere) is *Ereignis*. What is to come is to do so through acts and deeds in their eventality, as “what happens”. Elsewhere “what happens” has been taken as definitional of community (Nancy 1993, 162). But now we must, along with Nancy, remind ourselves that this is not a subject or a substance in the ontic sense. Rather, what comes about does so through and as “community”, in the sense of a history of decisions made, and decisions still to come. So a community — a “cohort” in Sharrock’s (1974) terms — is not an empirical presence (a substance or a subject) but rather an event-ness — a call or calling towards. And this call always comes from what it is *possible* for a “culture” to be. Culture, then, cannot be “empirical” in the sense of a shared, given/fixed substance. Its empiricity is its event-like-ness — its evented character. It is, in and through its dependence on passing through the “ordeal” of the decision, given to undecidability. And this distinguishes radical eventalism from the empiricism of facts. Such an

empiricism partly rejoins (although it differs from) what we have already encountered as Hume-Deleuze's transcendental empiricism — precisely because of its insistence on the essentiality of the undecidable, the “to come”, the coming-about as the ground of presence itself (or indeed of absence).

If eventality is undecidable empiricity — the passage through the “ordeal” of the undecidable, the condition of the decision, the poetic — then culture does not *derive* in any strict sense. What could it derive from? Rather it revolves; it constitutes a revolution. It revolves (or perhaps wobbles) unpredictably around (ap)propriation. It is in this important sense only that *Ereignis* is a revolutionary concept.²

If we had, then, to reorient Deleuze's position in line with the Heideggerian movement away from representationalism (and thereby, incidentally, bringing it closer to Derrida's ethics of decision) we should have to say that the becoming-empirical (reaching to empirical presence) is the transcendental-empiricity of culture. And this is another way of speaking of its eventality. Any cultural instance (what we have previously called a “cultural object”) is a call-event which is never fully answered, and so never fully settles into that which is present in the ontic sense (the empirically finished). It would not matter where we went to look, we would never find this condition, as it were, lurking “inside” a work of art, a fragment of dance or a TV program. And yet, on the other hand, every time we look at such things, we *cannot fail* to be close to that condition. But our proximity cannot be rendered by analysis, only by hinting, by alluding, by an openness to the spectral. It is not a question of whether or not it is experience that brings knowledge (the old question of empiricism) — rather it is a question of *how* we experience and according to what differences. And this too is a de-cision (a cutting out of particular possibilities from an indefinite array of possibilities). How it is made has to do with the ethics of what I used to call “analysis” (McHoul 1996, 191-211).

The empiricity (that is, eventality) of culture is, in this sense, of a different kind from that of the finished (the perfect) object which is the “proper” object of the cultural disciplines (from anthropology to cultural and literary studies and including the “arts”).

² This, incidentally, is why culture cannot be legislated or made subject to policy — since legislation (like ethnography) begins with accomplished facts, the ontically-empirically completed. This is why it works in the perfect tense to try to calculate and secure the future. We are clearly reminded here of the essential fallibility of governance (Malpas and Wickham 1995).

And in beginning to think this way, we move to a realisation very similar to Heidegger's realisation about language. Where the "sciences" of language begin is with the supposedly ontically complete state of a language. If, instead, we turn to its *Ereignis*, Heidegger found, we begin to see how it is that language itself (that is, our (ap)propriation of language and its (ap)propriation of us) is the bearer of a message — how it, in its nature, calls attention to becoming-ness or bethinging (*die Bedingnis*) (1971b, 151). Then we see that it is this call of language which has itself brought about the change in our thinking. By the same token, if we move away from the representational thinking of the cultural "sciences", we see that culture is whatever calls us to perpetually rethink our (and indeed anything's) objectness as empirical becoming. We find that it is the spectral aspect of culture itself (outside representational thinking) that calls us to change our thinking.

Hence, the "essence" of culture cannot be found in the ideality that derives from the inspection of empirical objects, cultural facts. Rather its nature is not to have an "essence" as such, but rather what we might call an origin in the space or possibility of eventality. And this is a step to one side of, say, Foucault's (1981) insistence on positivity as essential facticity (and so on the method of "eventalisation"). If cultural objects have an "objectness" (origin), it lies in the *radical* incompleteness of their objectness, their empirico-evental becoming. The search for the defining characteristic of cultural objects ends up (once the word for "characteristic" has become *Ereignis*) as an insistence on their incompleteness. And this incompleteness is not an imperfection — except perhaps in the grammatical sense of the imperfect — but rather an opening to eventness.

Cultural hermeneutics could, henceforth, be the doing of this opening (of oneself) to eventness. Then hermeneutics would not be analysis in any strict sense. Rather it would be a kind of experiencing as opposed to traditional empiricism's derivation from experience. What this hermeneutics would experience is the event as empirical; not in the sense of the empirical vs. the ideal (which is a division within representational thinking) — but rather in the sense of stemming from eventality, from the always-open-in-and-to-becoming, whose finished form cannot be known in advance.

By contrast with this indefinitely open picture, the cultural disciplines consist in the fixing of the other in (or as) definiteness — which denies any *other* other yet to come. This

is so *a fortiori* when those disciplines are “relativistic” (or “emic”) towards the other; for then they do not intend and cannot see the violence of their appropriation, believing themselves just and fair to the other, when in fact their justice and fairness are certainly their own but not necessarily the other’s. In this sense, it may be true to say that only the West is culturally relativistic — or at least that cases outside the West are either accidentally similar to it or else effects of assimilation.

Cultural relativism, then, denies the singularity (*Ereignis*) of the other by its (unseeingly violent) imposition of its own rule (as law and right, as legislation). Any rule (as law and right or legislation) must be both in excess of and less than any possible singularity. Any case of an other which is not, in itself, culturally relativistic defeats or falsifies the rule and is done an injustice or violence by it; and yet the first rule of cultural relativism is also “do no violence to the other”. So while there may be, as we have noted, empirical cases of culturally relative non-Westerners, cultural relativism remains intrinsically Western by virtue of its demand for its own universality. It appears to be a kind of judgment which runs from the particular case to the general rule, but underlying this “methodology” is a still more general rule that stipulates the universality of “culture” as presence.³

What the cultural “sciences” cannot see is the ontological difference. Therefore they have no sense of what is coming (to presence). And what is coming (to presence) is *called* (forth) by the undecidable which is, in terms of its tense perhaps, the conditional. Cultural relativism, then, cannot hear this call, since it “respects” all cultures only as perfect (finished) instances effected or perfected by their pasts (their histories, in the narrow sense). It runs out, for example, in cases where cultures turn against their previous “traditional” characters — for example, where the synthetic (“foreground”) Japan of

3. Mindful no doubt of the distinction between determining and reflective judgment in the third *Critique*, Lyotard (1987, 35) writes (after Kant) of two “movements within the realm of critical agitation”. The first uses given universal rules to understand particular cases while the second works in the opposite direction, taking *cases* as given and deriving rules from them. The “empirical” cultural disciplines such as ethnography, then, appear to operate with the second kind of methodology (a variation of induction) but in fact, through their insistence on the universality of culture as presence, operate according to the first kind (a variety of deduction). By contrast, the project of a new empiricism / eventalism would be that of reconstructing induction *purely*, as an experiencing hermeneutics oriented towards the openness of culture, cultures and cultural objects.

microprocessors and artificial intelligence displaces the traditional (“background”) Japan of kimonos and rice-paper walls (Heidegger 1971a, 17).

By contrast, we would have to hold that “coming to be” is always in principle contestable. Hence my experience is of what I own (*Ereignis, eignen*). And my experience of the other is of what I have appropriated (*ereignen, aneignen*) from it. And the reverse also holds. Either way, this is a distinction between my Da-sein and its — a distinction unavailable to the cultural disciplines.

No amount of ethnographic training will get us to the fundamental nature of the relation to the other: that it is only ever a *possibility* — and so cannot be stabilised as a rule or accessed by a method. The fact of it being only ever possible is essential (but not “an essence”). It is necessary (unequivocal — un-equi-vocal). The equi-vocal (for example, the ideal speech situation) is only ever still to come because what we now call “culture” is only ever (ap)propriation: never a final “property” or “properness”. Nor does it reside entirely in the domain of the other.

Culture *itself*, therefore, is still to come (as the unknowable hybrids of appropriability). It is *itself* an example of (just one case of) an other and not the “key” to the analysis, experience or understanding of all others. For it to be such a key, the cultural disciplines would have to (as they probably do) share Kant’s aim: to close the gap between the actual and the ideal. But no singularity is ever *either*. It is, itself, an instance of a possible closure — but never an “ideal” one. Kant’s ideal of closure is always distant — away — missing the singular. It remains in the hinter-land of the singular (*hinter*: “behind” and also “beyond”).

The mistaken way of starting to look at culture is to say: “culture is already here” (now analyse it). Then, for the cultural disciplines, culture is only ever dead on arrival, corpse not corp(u)s. Instead we should begin by thinking “culture may never be — how can it come?” This alternative could be thought of in terms of the virtuality of culture — its still coming to actuality. And this takes work. Or else we could think of (ap)propriability as possession in Derrida’s spectral sense. Then we might speak of culture as the virtual/spectral. What this would mean would be that everything cultural would be open

to its own exteriority — to that which is not its own, its property. The openness is (ap)propriability.

III.

As a sheer matter of ethics, we *must* attempt an outline, if not a definition, of culture. But such an outline remains — strictly — impossible while we are still using the term “culture” as a proxy for a concept. For, as we have seen, it is impossible to shake that concept from its foundation in representational thinking. And we *must* do this for the following reason. To date, the cultural disciplines have done one thing only; they have tried to unveil what cannot be unveiled — and they have done so in the name of speaking the “truth” of either culture-in-general or else of *a* culture (its “insiders’” experiences) — when the truth of either is to remain veiled or, more precisely, to flicker between veiling and unveiling. Cultural “science” insists on disclosure; while cultures as such must retain their secrets (their future conditionals not even experienced yet by “insiders”) in order to perdure. The patient has to be paralysed before the cultural disciplines can operate. In place of the always unspecifiable grounds of cultures, the cultural disciplines invent proxies — “conventions”, “customs”, “rituals”, and so on. This is domestication: grand appropriation, colonisation. The ethical demand for an alternative is the demand for an end to this colonisation. If the worst confession of the professional anthropologist is “I do not understand them” or “I cannot analyse them”, then it is also the point of departure for cross-cultural thinking in a more radical sense.⁴

So to get to (what we must still call) culture, we must let it go *as a concept*. It is to be deconceptualised. And the first step (again following Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism) is to insist that the event come utterly before the concept(ion). This is only the beginning. But it does point us in the direction of an experiencing of *Ereignis* — which could be called “eventalism”. And this would be different from any straightforward empiricism. Straightforward empiricism affirms usage as *use* — a single kind of use; such as the transformation of nature into commodities. By contrast, eventalism affirms usage as

⁴. Cf. Georges Perec’s (1988, 105-12) tale of the misunderstood anthropologist — a man with just this problem. The realisation of the cause of his problem, in this case, turns out to be too much for him to bear.

indefinite usability *in the event* (should it happen to come about). What is proper or improper to a culture is not decidable in advance of that event. Rather this (ap)propriability suggests or hints at a gap — which is ethical in the sense that it has to do with de-cision. The gap between propriability and appropriability is, as such, the ordeal of the decision.

IV.

A final and very hypothetical thought, then, which is also just a beginning, just the first glimmering of a thinking of culture outside representation. Would it be possible to think this?: that we went slightly wrong earlier on (at the start of Chapter 4) in thinking that Heidegger's work on the Early Greeks stalls a thinking of culture by disabling the distinction between culture and its outside (nature)? Might it be possible, instead, to say that the term "culture" could itself be a gloss for coming-to-presence in and through undecidability (Deleuze's transversal axis of contingent history, Derrida's ordeal of the decision, Heidegger's flickering *Ereignis*)? If this were possible then — again finally but also as one way of starting — culture would be this: the contingent and accidental lines of usage whereby whatever *is* is brought into (and so comes to) order for a while by tending and caring — with this always poised on the necessary contingency (the possibility of the accident) that it may not come. If so, even what some cultures call "nature" could be said to culture itself.

That, if anything is, is as far as we can go towards a counter-representationalist formulation of culture for now. It opens so many possibilities of a cultural studies (a genuine study of culture) yet to come. But what has the *official* discipline called "cultural studies" offered us? Throughout this book, we have argued that that offering must be limited, mired as it is in a representationalist (and therefore ultra-limited) version of what can count as culture in the first place. But is this the case? To see it clearly, we have to turn to the home ground of official cultural studies itself: to one of its official pieces of self-promotion.

Chapter 6

Representation and Cultural Studies

I.

Stuart Hall has edited and compiled a manual on the subject of representation called *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practice* (1997).¹ This is the only book I know of to put cultural studies' position on the question of representation so directly. But is, as we must now suspect it is, the very idea of working — critically or otherwise — *within* representational thinking itself unquestionable? Can the question of representation *itself and in general* be so easily bypassed, albeit with a preliminary nod towards the various theories of *how* it may work, so that the representational "work" of particular texts and images can become the central focus of investigation? Is not the decision to work within a representationalist framework *at all* itself a political decision? And if so, why not explicate the details of that politics, especially when political explication is among cultural studies' self-appointed tasks?

But why ask such a question when, at first blush and in another sense, Hall's book's "political" credentials are impeccable? After all, it questions the ways in which American blacks are represented in advertising, the ways women are "stereotyped" in anatomical representations, the ways the colonised "other" has been established through ethnographic and museological regimes of representation, and so on. Everything in representation of recent "political" consequence, then, is up for analysis and criticism in this cultural studies training manual. Any and every representation is, at least in principle, questionable.

But why is *the very idea of representation* itself practically immune from historico-political questioning, today, in the ways that the ideas of, say, realism, colonialism, tradition, taste, sexism, exploitation, and so forth, are not? Is representation any less a canonical and problematic trope of Western modernity? For example, when undergraduates hand over their £19.95 (or the inflated equivalent in any number of

¹. See, in particular, Hall's own chapter, "The Work of Representation" (1997, 3-64).

colonies and ex-colonies) for the paperback of *Representation*, what unexplicated tradition, what concealed canon of thought are they signing up for as they are formed and instructed by it, and especially if they enlist in the cultural studies movement itself as a consequence? What remains unspoken about the historical-political condition of the cultural studies critical intellectual? The way I see it (and hence my insistence on an historical politics of the concept), the long tradition of representational thinking is an integral part of the common sense of modernity, dating from at least 1600 if not much earlier. Hall half-agrees when he writes:

One common-sense usage of the term ["representation"] is as follows: "Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people". You may well ask, "Is that all?" Well, yes and no. Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged by members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. (1997, 15)

Note: "yes and no", which includes "yes". And, as we shall see, even when it also includes "no", modernity *as* representational thinking remains undisturbed. So how could a radical and critical attempt at representational pedagogy such as the Hall book be just another instance of modern thinking's reproduction of itself? To answer this question, we have to ask once more what "representation" has meant in the modern (Cartesian and post-Cartesian) Western canon of thought. That means we have to trespass yet again into the realm of philosophy, the discipline (perhaps by accident and no doubt with its own imperfections) currently authorised as the archivist of Western ideas.

II.

What, if anything, binds philosophers of all persuasions is care or, perhaps, carefulness; particularly care for concepts and their proper application. To care, after all, is the *phileein* — just as the concepts are the *sophia* — of philo-sophy itself. And this must mean caring for *all* and not just some concepts. Caring, however, can also be a form of shepherding or governing — in the way that animal "lovers" confine and constrain their "pets". The philosopher, friend and lover of the concept, is also its guardian and controller. Then, as

with many a form of governance and love, things can always, perhaps accidentally, in an off-guard moment, slip and fail. In everyday life we may lose our keys or take a wrong turn. In philosophy, similar failures of care can arise — as they must when, in pursuit of one particularly difficult and straying concept, another is simply left behind, taken for granted as part of the flock, the basic foundation of the shepherd's craft. From time to time — although rarely — we may catch the philosophical carer explicitly in such a moment of lapse. One case arises in the following popular discussion for laypersons; and in this case the explicitly unproblematic concept in question is my own object of care and concern — representation.

[T]he principle that we never have “immediate” knowledge of external objects, or that we know objects only through “representations” of them, is open to a variety of interpretations, varying from a platitude which *hardly anyone would want to question* to an alarming sceptical paradox. Let me try to explain. Take first the view of sensations as “representations” of things. As it stands, it's *almost entirely neutral or non-committal*. *Everyone would agree*, I think ... that in normal sense-experience things are acting on us and causing in us what are in some sense or other *representations* of those things. We are acquiring information *about* things through their effects on the sense organs. The interesting philosophical questions and disputes arise with respect to the nature of those effects, and the proper explanation of their representative role. (Ayers in Magee 1988, 124)²

Put simply: representation is in place, unproblematically; it needs no particular care; and the proper philosophical questions have only to do with “the nature of [the] effects” of representation. So even in mainstream philosophy, the official guardian of concepts, let alone in cultural studies (its young and often lazy apprentice) the idea of representation *as such* is all but neglected. And so another duty of care — from what discipline I know not — might prompt us to ask once more: what of representation itself? What may be the mode of caring for it, as a concept in its own right? Can representation itself become one of the problematic creatures in philosophy's conceptual fold?

But before we return directly to representation, we might first note that there are other (and related) problematic — if unproblematised — concepts at play in this off-guard

². Here Michael Ayers is commenting on Locke and Berkeley in a discussion with Bryan Magee. The first three emphases are added.

moment. They are: “us” and “we” on the one hand; “objects” and “things” on the other. That is, there has to be an arrangement of the philosophical landscape already well established and in place before representation can become such a placid animal. There has, that is, to be a separation or fence-arrangement with “us” and “we” on one side and “objects” and “things” on the other. The representational view of the world — by which I mean the view according to which representation is both foundational and taken for granted — depends on two things. The first is that philosophy should both amount to and explain a “view of the world”. The second is that this “view” should be that of an “us” or “we” contemplating an “object” or “thing”. With this already in place, the only remaining question is the “representative role” of the effects of those “objects” upon “us”. But *is* any such arrangement “already in place”? And we must ask because the idea of concept-care (philosophy) by no means implies that a “view of the world” should be its correlative. Still less does concept-care require any such view to be split into a subject (“us”, “we”) and an object (“object”, “thing”). We can take meticulous care of concepts without such a picture; and perhaps without any picture (view of the world) at all.³ Representationalism, however, can only operate in a landscape whose foundational question is: how does a subject (“us”, “we”) come to *know* what lies before it (an “object” or “thing”)?

This view, or view of the world — which extends well beyond philosophy as such — is common from at least Descartes onwards and is shared by empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, Hume) and rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) alike. And in some ways, it is not up for grabs as a model of how we *know* things. We may, indeed, and probably do, *know* most things in this way — and the question of whether we stress the agency of human reason or the sheer primacy of the sense organs is almost all that separates rationalism from empiricism in this case. (And so Kant’s “resolution” of the two may not be so remarkable). The problem is that this model of *knowledge* becomes, with modernity, with Cartesianism and right up to the present day, the model for how it is that “things” and “objects”, “we” and “us”, *are*. The question that has to be asked is whether this or any version of how human persons happen to *know* such-and-such has anything to do with how things (human or otherwise) *are*. It has to do with the primacy of epistemic thinking in the period

³. The problem of the world (as) picture is taken up in more detail in Chapter 12.

we are calling “modernity” and its essential forgetting of the possibility of the primacy of being. Could it be that a certain dependence on representational thought (the centrality of representation to modern ideas) has colonised all but a corner of the philosophical landscape and distracted it from thinking about — and caring for — concepts and their otherwise manifold (that is, not merely representational) relations to being?

The problem, then, is the version of being necessitated by the modern epistemic model — the ontology emerging from the epistemology. It has to do with the dominance of knowing-about-beings over being-as-such, the *sine qua non* of modernity — namely that what *is* is always and only an effect of what can be *known*, and that a knower, a human subject, is always the first among beings and the one whose acts of knowing *effect* other beings as “objects of knowledge” (photographs, novels and skyscrapers — not to mention rocks, mountains and clouds).

Representationalism then (and Hall’s book is a case in point) begins with a separation between “us” and “things”: perceiver and perceived, subject and object, and so on. And this is not merely a dualism in thought but a proposal for a division within the realm of being. It opens what was, before modernity, an unaskable question: what is the difference — and subsequently the epistemic re-connection — between people and other beings? And the question itself conceals an ethics — one in which the beings called people (or, in philosophy, “men”) stand before all others. From this point on, people can no longer be considered as mere “things” and no non-human beings can have a standing above that of people. The realm of being as such — the whole question of what it is to *be* — is relegated to the background and becomes secondary. In its place the central and “critical” question becomes an epistemic one: what can we, people, men, *know* of what is?

Methodologically, with this arrangement seemingly established, representationalism proceeds to find a model for *how* people and other beings can be connected. And how it is that they are primarily connected, on this model, is via “knowing”. Or else: the subject *knows* the object. Then how it knows it is via a “representation” that the subject has in mind by virtue of an impression made on its bodily sense organs by the object.

Schematically:

1. S <k> O

2. $\langle k \rangle = \text{im} \Leftrightarrow \text{org} \Leftrightarrow \text{mi}$

Or: (1) an object is “mediated” to a subject; the process of mediation is called “knowledge”; and (2) knowledge consists of an impression (im) made on (\Leftrightarrow) the sense organs (org) and relayed to (\Leftrightarrow) the mind (mi).

In this “system of representation” (to use Hall’s term) or more precisely in this *picture* — and later we will see how central the concept of picture is — a series of proxies is mobilised. The proxies stand on behalf of the representatives of a system — representation — which is, itself, characterised by “standing on behalf of”. The subject’s proxy is the mind. The object’s proxy is the impression. The central proxy of mediation, therefore the proxy for knowledge as such, is the sense organs. In other versions, the proxy has other names such as “understanding”, “experience”, “language” and so on.

But, in this picture of things, we also have to consider the *processes* called “making on” (the impression *made on* the sense organs) and “relaying to” (the impression *relayed to* the mind). With “making on”, the object becomes active. The object *makes an impression on* the sense organs which receive it, as it were, passively. With “relaying to”, the sense organs become active and *relay* something (the impression) *to* the mind which, in its turn becomes passive. This at least is the standard empiricist or realist account. Hall calls this “approach” to representation “reflective” because, according to it “meaning is thought to lie in the object ... in the real world, and language functions like a mirror to *reflect* the true meaning as it exists in the world” (1997, 24).⁴

In a rationalist or idealist account, the process simply begins at the other end, with an active mind *creating* ideas about what the sense organs are allowed, as it were, to *pick up* of the external world. Hall calls this “approach” to representation “intentional” because, according to it, “it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language” (1997, 25).

In either case, the general model of *knowledge* (bodily-initiated and passive or mentally-initiated and active, “reflective” or “intentional”) as the model of how things stand with the world — the world *for us* — remains the same. That is, in either case, representational thinking claims that the world must be mediated through knowledge. Or else, using Hall’s

⁴. In the space of the ellipsis, Hall adds the misleading terms “person, idea or event”.

own proxies, “meaning” must be mediated “to us” or “by us” through “language’. And all of this is no less true of Hall’s preferred third way or approach to representation which he calls the “constructionist” approach. According to this, effectively a de-individualised reconstruction of the intentional approach:

neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meanings in language. Things don’t *mean*: we *construct* meaning using representational systems — concepts and signs. (1997, 25)

To put this another way: the whole representationalist picture, as we have seen, requires a subject-object division to be mediated by knowledge (or, if we accept Hall’s proxy, language). So, even in the constructionist or social-intentionalist version, the general representationalist picture is sustained. In this respect it is not as if “subjectivism” and “objectivism” were opposites. Rather they are minor stresses and emphases upon different sides of a major and mutually-agreed binary. Each implies the other and each is (despite its apparent antithetical status vis-à-vis the other) complicit in forming a general representational picture. The fact that, in Hall’s third way, the form of mediation between the two happens to be conceptual “work” or signficatory “construction” does not alter the overall picture. This is part of the problem with representational thinking. The other, and much more serious, part is that it is a *picture* at all. (This question is taken up in section III below.)

So what we have to ask, despite the philosophical tradition and Hall’s idiosyncratic uptake of it, is as follows. If things stand differently from this with the world (that is differently from the dominant picture of knowledge- or language- or work-mediation and perhaps even differently from the very notion that the world is somehow — anyhow — pictured), then the representationalist model itself, empiricist or rationalist, realist or idealist, reflective or intentional (including Hall’s social-intentionalism) falls. And then so does not only some philosophical thought but also a great deal of what passes today as “cultural theory”.

But how can it fall? The only thinker who has even begun to ask this question is Heidegger — by no means a welcome figure in the halls of cultural studies, given the discipline’s long-standing subscription to identity politics. But if we can surmount this

minor obstacle of fashion, then we may just begin to discern an alternative to the limiting confines of representationalism. Let me try to get to at least the flavour of this.

The main philosophical figure to embrace an explicit (as opposed to a merely background or commonsensical) version of representation is Schopenhauer.⁵ In many ways he is the precursor not only of Freud and psychoanalysis (via his dark and foreboding underworld of will or drive) but also of cultural studies (via his explicitly constructionist concept of representation), and of identity politics (via his privileging of the body and its birth). And this is not to mention obvious parallels with so-called post-modernism, Baudrillard and the simulacrum — or Schopenhauer's status as perhaps the only 19th century philosopher with a socially-positive (if biologicistic) theory of homosexuality. He opens his book *The World as Will and Representation* with the representationalist slogan par excellence: "The world is my representation" (1969, 3). He calls this great insight:

this thought ... which has been sought for a very long time under the name of philosophy, and ... whose discovery is for this very reason regarded by those versed in history just as impossible as the philosophers' stone. (1969, xii)

By contrast with Schopenhauer's self-assessment, Heidegger writes:

Schopenhauer's main work, *The World as Will and Representation*, with its altogether superficial and scanty analysis of Platonic and Kantian philosophy, gathers up in one all the basic directions of the Western interpretation of beings as a whole, although everything there is uprooted and cast down on the level of understanding befitting the positivism then on the rise. (1991 / 4, 181)⁶

Is it even vaguely possible that today's cultural studies and its reliance on a constructionist "theory" of representation (not to mention psychoanalysis, identity politics and so forth) holds a similar position to Schopenhauer's in 19th century philosophy? Is it possible that Heidegger's objections to such crass (and indeed to comparatively sophisticated) forms of representationalism have some consequences for cultural studies today? Let us see.

⁵. Some of these sketches of Schopenhauer are returned to in Chapter 12.

⁶. "Positivism", here, should be read as any concern for the description and explanation of merely empirical beings — those "given" to the senses.

III.

After *Being and Time* and certainly after his supposed “turning”, Heidegger’s opening of the question of being becomes more overtly historical, as we have already seen to some extent. The question of the truth of being, that is, becomes historically relative. If, today, what *is* is primarily thought in terms of what can be known by and to human subjects (if, that is, being has become representationalised) this has not always been so. Dominant as representational thinking may be today, to paraphrase Foucault, things could always have been otherwise. So while, for example, Hunter (1984) has shown (I think correctly) that it is almost impossible to arrive at a general *theory* of representation and that we should speak instead of piecemeal assemblages of representational techniques or technologies, it may still be possible, via Heidegger, to outline what Wittgenstein would call a “natural history” of representation and thereby to arrive at some basic parameters of representationalism today.⁷

So if one of the fundamentals of representationalism is the subject-object distinction and its (always necessarily incompletable) reconnection via “knowledge” (or “language”), then Heidegger’s question could be put as follows: how could it be that things stand otherwise than as a collection of objects for a subject? The problem with the tradition of modernity, for Heidegger, then, is as follows. In this tradition, the difference between being-as-such and mere beings (the ontological difference) is, as we have seen, forgotten. The former (being-as-such) comes primarily to be considered only in terms of beings. Being is thought of (if at all) as a sum or aggregation, as the set of all possible beings (“beings as a whole”). In turn, beings are considered in terms of their *relations* to one another, with the being called “man” routinely standing to one privileged side of those known as mere “objects” or “things”. In this way, thinking about being-as-such is reduced to the question: how is it that man relates to objects? The problem is compounded when the answer to this question is given as: man *knows* objects (Hall: “Things don’t *mean*”). And it is even further compounded by the dominance of the idea that man knows objects only “indirectly” through their representations (Hall: “we construct meaning, using representational systems — concepts and signs”).

⁷ In *Remarks on Colour* (1977), a central text for Hunter’s (1984) argument, Wittgenstein distinguishes between a “theory” and a “natural history” of colour.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (and as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 12), Heidegger (1977a) traces the historical moment of the emergence of the subject and object of representation to Descartes' *Meditations* of 1641 and places great emphasis on the *cogito* as the central foundation of Descartes' *subjectum*. But even before this, in his early works, Descartes insists on both a subject-object separation and its reconciliation via the medium of knowledge. That is, as early as 1628, he writes in the *Regulae ad Directionem Inegonii* (*Rules for the Direction of the Mind*):

Where knowledge of things is concerned, only two factors need to be considered: ourselves, the knowing subjects, and the things which are the objects of knowledge. As for ourselves, there are only four faculties which we can use for this purpose, *viz.* intellect, imagination, sense-perception and memory. It is of course only the intellect that is capable of perceiving the truth, but it has to be assisted by imagination, sense-perception and memory if we are not to omit anything which lies within our power. As for the objects of knowledge, it is enough if we examine the following three questions: What presents itself to us spontaneously? How can one thing be known on the basis of something else? What conclusion can be drawn from each of these? This seems to me a complete enumeration and to omit nothing which is within the range of human endeavour. (1985, 39)

And throughout his later philosophical writings, Descartes held to this firmest of foundations. Note how close it is to Hall's formulation. Subject and object are split in the name of the question of knowledge. Descartes posits, as does Hall, an order of knowing (or reason) pertaining to the subjects of knowledge (ourselves) and an order of things (or beings) pertaining to the objects of knowledge. These orders are different and distinct, hence the task is to bring them firstly to a workable similitude and ultimately (*per impossibile*) to completeness. Hall recapitulates Descartes when he writes:

According to [the constructionist approach], we must not confuse the *material* world, where things and people exist, and the *symbolic* practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate. Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. (1997, 25)

Here the order of *knowing*, as it does for Descartes, constitutes a human power over (or,

more strictly, before) an order of *things* among whose central questions are the representationalist question par excellence: “How can one thing be known *on the basis of something else?*” Materiality is not denied (objectivism is sustained), but neither is the *power* of the subject: both of these hold for both Descartes and Hall.

At the centre of this picture, then, is the subject, Descartes’ *subjectum*.⁸ As Heidegger notes, this term does not essentially have to refer to the human being, its mentality or its constructional powers. It can refer, in principle — and before modernity it did in fact refer — to any subject:

We must first remove the concept “man” — and therefore the concepts “I” and “I-ness” as well — from the essence of *subiectum*. Stones, plants, and animals are subjects — something lying before of itself — no less than man is. We ask, For what is the *subiectum* a lying-at-the-base-of, if man becomes *subiectum* in an emphatic way at the beginning of modern metaphysics? (1991 /4, 97)⁹

With modernity, then, with Cartesian metaphysics, a particular kind of “throwing before” (*sub-jectum*) is emphatically established above others. And this happens, from then and right up to the present, to be “man”. The movement, then, is nothing essential in “human nature”; it has nothing to do with “man the rational animal”. And still less does it have to do with a merely “subjectivist” moment in Western thinking. Rather, it is historical: a moment of emphasis in the range of possibilities of the *subjectum*, an emphasis which eventually becomes all but a singling out. There is, then, something fundamentally and not just etymologically wrong in identifying the subject purely and singly with social or individual man:

What is decisive [with modernity] is not that man frees himself to himself from previous obligations, but that the very essence of man itself changes, in that man becomes subject. We must understand this word *subiectum*, however, as the translation of the Greek *hypokeimenon*. The word names that-which-lies-before, which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself. This metaphysical meaning of the concept of the subject *has first of all no special relationship to man* and none at all to the I. (1977a, 128, emphasis added)

⁸. On further consequences of the concept of *subjectum* for culture today, see Chapter 12.

⁹. This passage varies the spelling of “subjectum” to “subiectum”. Either rendering of the Latin is acceptable.

Purely historically and therefore accidentally, however, it eventually *comes into* such a special relationship to “man”, thereby establishing the separation between subject and object and the corresponding metaphysical conundrum of their ideally incompletable correlation. From this point on, the world ceases to be thinkable in terms of being-as-such:

... when man becomes the primary and only real [*ersten und eigentlichen*] *subiectum*, that means: Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational center of that which is as such. But this is possible only when the comprehension of what is as a whole changes. In what does this change manifest itself? What, in keeping with it, is the essence of the modern age? (1977a, 128)

Heidegger’s answer to this question is: the modern age can only take the world to be merely represented, as a picture. The essence of modern representationalism is the world *as picture*:

... world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth. (1977a, 129-30)

... “to represent” [*vorstellen*]: to set out before oneself and to set forth in relation to oneself. Through this, whatever is comes to a stand as object and in that way alone receives the seal of Being. That the world becomes picture is one and the same event with the event of man’s becoming *subiectum* in the midst of that which is. (1977a, 132)

If we then turn to Heidegger’s counter-assumption, to the effect that being-as-such cannot be simply reduced to the set of all possible represented beings (that is, if we are prompted by him to remember the ontological difference), then we have to call into question the central trope of modern representational thinking, namely that all beings must be *mediated* (via “knowledge”, “language” or some other form of “construction”) in order to be — where “to be” rapidly degenerates thereby into “to be known by man”. Throughout his more historically conscious work, Heidegger refers to this problem as more than just a problem of “subjectivism”. He continually reminds us that representational thinking, if “subjectivist”, must also be “objectivist”. The two — on Hall’s

gloss, the “reflective” and “intentional” approaches to representation — must always and necessarily go together. For “subjectivism” asks how things stand with us, as subjects, operating our concepts and signs (social or mental), while “objectivism” asks how things stand with brute beings (either simply “in the world” or put there via the work of “culture”). And then representationalism, in its turn, asks how it is that the two (and so always *given* the two) should be connected. In this sense, both the object and the subject of representation become fragile. The object loses substance because it becomes merely what is pictured in a representation. It can no longer be directly connected to being-as-such. But the subject is no less fragile, no less caught up in the picturing move, no less detached from being-as-such, as Heidegger shows in his analysis of the Cartesian *cogito* as the *cogito me cogitare* in the last of his lecture series on Nietzsche:

... the representing I is ... *essentially* and necessarily *co-represented* in every “I represent”, namely as something toward which, back to which, and *before* which every represented thing is placed. For this, I do not need an explicit turning toward and back to me, the one representing. In the immediate intuition of something, in every making present, in every memory, in every expectation, what is represented in such fashion by representation is represented *to me*, placed before *me*, and in such a way that I myself do not thereby really become an object of a representing but am nonetheless presented “to me” in an objective representing, and in fact only in such representing. Since every representing presents the one who is representing and the represented object *to* the representing man, representing man is “co-represented” in a peculiarly unobtrusive way. (1991 / 4, 107)¹⁰

Representational man, via an illusory privileging perhaps, as the one *before whom* every other being must now stand, becomes less a being (and *a fortiori* less of the realm of being) and more a picturing medium, the sum of all possible mediations: “knowledge”, “language” and so on. Representational man, in his representing capacity, arrives at himself via the co-representation that leaves him, as such, nothing more than unobtrusive, unproblematic.

¹⁰. The whole of section 16, “The Cartesian *Cogito* as *Cogito Me Cogitare*” (1991 / 4, 102-10) should be consulted for its full implications.

IV.

Hall's chapter on "The Work of Representation", although it seems to offer a more up-to-date version of representation, is in fact a clear instance of the metaphysics of modernity at work, as described by Heidegger. To be sure, the subject, on Hall's account, is almost but still not quite the Cartesian ego. It is still the subject of the picturing relation; but its first twist on the picture story is its privileging of "concepts and signs" over "things in themselves" (which it does not deny *as such*, only as *directly knowable*). In this respect, it is the inheritor of the Kantian inflection of representationalism. Its second twist comes from the 19th century post-Kantian romantics (such as von Humboldt) who attempted to make the order of knowing (language, concepts, signs) into a social and political (rather than just an individual) order. Finally, Hall's position is dependent on a revival of romantic (social) post-Kantianism in the late 1970s and early 1980s when "post-Saussurean" versions of representationalism came back into fashion once more in what was then called "critical theory".

Catherine Belsey, for example, almost exactly states Hall's position some seventeen years prior to his own version:

Post-Saussurean theory, therefore, starts from an analysis of language, proposing that language is not transparent, not merely the *medium* in which autonomous individuals transmit messages to each other about an independently constituted world of things. On the contrary, it is language which offers the possibility of constructing a world of individuals and things, and of differentiating between them. The transparency of language is an illusion. (Belsey 1980, 4)¹¹

Manifestly, then, with Hall's uncritical version of representation, we are still inside modernity, inside its subject-object politics, and inside its thinking of the world as picture, even if the representational subject is now more like its painter or author than its viewer or reader. This cultural studies version of representation, accordingly, offers no great advance into the thinking of cultural being. It simply repeats what the modern tradition (from Descartes, via Kant and the post-Kantian romantics, to the likes of Belsey and beyond) has uncritically assumed all along. The best that can be said of it is that it

¹¹. This passage is also quoted in Hunter's (1984) "After Representation" referred to earlier. His analysis of it is still pertinent in the context of the present discussion.

occasionally — like Schopenhauer — makes some of this explicit, thereby turning the metaphysical grounds of common sense into a “theory”.

But is Western European modernity everywhere? Is it the totality of the possibilities of thinking the question of being today? Are there not non-modern and non-Western forms of thinking being? Perhaps so, but if cultural studies is (as it most definitely is) in the global export business, then along with its nice bright publishers’ packages comes not just a “theory” of representation (perhaps not *even* a “theory” of representation) but also a hidden “view of the world” — in fact a “view of the world” in which the world is, everywhere, subject to socially-constructed *views* and pictures, and where many of these pictures are found wanting. Concluding one of his analyses, Hall gives us a good idea of the kinds of signs and concepts that trouble him in this respect; those that he finds (as “data”) and finds wanting:

So far we have analysed some examples from the archive of racialized representation in western popular culture of different periods ..., and explored the representational practices of difference and “otherness” It is time now to turn to the final set of questions posed in our opening pages. Can a dominant regime of representation be challenged, contested or changed? What are the counter-strategies which can begin to subvert the representation process? Can “negative” ways of representing racial difference, which abound in our examples, be reversed by a “positive” strategy? What effective strategies are there? And what are their theoretical underpinnings? (1997, 269-70)

What we must strongly suspect is that whatever challenge, contest or change is in the offing here, it will still consist of a strategy of representation as such, whether “positive” or “negative” hardly matters in the larger historical scheme of things. Ultimately, the “theoretical underpinnings” of any “resistance” to “dominant” modes or systems of representation must necessarily be representationalist. And this continues to be a problem if only because, as we have seen, from its beginning, the subject-object model (no matter how mediated) is always incompletely re-solvable. Both subjects and objects remain, in representationalist thinking, incomplete. And cultural studies, selling its “positive” strategy globally these days, always carries with it that message of ethical incompleteness. It tells us, above all, that we can never satisfy the complex dialectic between ourselves, our

pictures of things and how it is that things are. The form of the aesthetico-moral training of modernity whose central and uncriticised tenet is representationalism is the one thing against which cultural studies does not — and cannot — have a counter-strategy.¹²

Outside the narrow limits of representationalism, what might be considered instead is the very possibility that Hall (1997, 24) rejects from the outset: a kind of realism. This would not mean (as it does for Hall) a realism in the weak epistemological sense (“How can the real be known?” “How is it reflected in language?”). Rather it would mean trying to think realism in its strong ontological sense — perhaps to the point where the term “real” itself becomes superfluous. Such an ontological “realism” would ask the question of being-as-such; and, in the case of cultural studies, the only genuinely critical question — the only question that might take us beyond the dominant straits of representationalism — would concern the *being* of culture as such. And that, the being of culture, is our topic in Part Two of this book.

¹² The only cogent defence of the concept of representation against Heidegger’s criticisms in “The Age of the World Picture” (1977a) that I know of is Derrida’s (1982b). Again, Chapter 12 takes up this debate in more detail.

PART TWO

Doubles

Preface to Part Two

In the first part of these investigations, we have marked out an approach to culture that attempts to turn away from representation (as the core concept of what it is for something to be a cultural object) and from representationalism (as the rarely problematised guiding thread of almost all hitherto existing studies of culture). In doing so, we have moved from asking what culture is in terms of what it represents to asking what it is in terms of what it does. That is, instead of asking the question of culture in such a way that the only answer can be something like “culture is always a representation of something non-cultural” (for example, of the economy, of nature, of a society’s image of itself, and so on), we have asked it in terms of cultural practice as such, in terms of making and becoming, objectivity (as care), workliness and openness to accident. Where we have arrived, then, is at a point where what culture does is to assemble itself (or come to presence) as always already doubled: doubled in terms of the cultural technologies that “collide” in order to generate cultural objects, and hence doubled in terms of the hybridity-in-general that is both appropriation (properly constituted ownership) and appropriation (the always necessary fallibility of total ownership). This double condition of possibility we have found to correspond closely to the later Heidegger’s idea (or path-displaying guide) of *Ereignis*.

In this respect, having shifted from representationalism to pragmatics, we have arrived after all at a way of describing cultural *being*. Replacing the being of culture (as representation) with its doing (as self-assembly), we have returned to the idea that its being (its condition of possibility) is its do-ability as *Ereignis*. That is, as *Ereignis*, the condition of possibility of culture turns out to be a condition for doing, action, practice, becoming, coming to presence. The being of culture is the condition of possibility for what it does: that is, assemble cultural objects as *events*, as *pragmata* in an ever unfolding field of the empirical, the singular, the particular and the factual. And so, we must now necessarily re-visit two domains that have appeared throughout the book so far: the transcendental (in the Kantian sense of the conditions of possibility) and the empirical (what the conditions do, what they produce in their instantiated unfolding). Our

investigations so far have hovered uneasily between a search for conditions of cultural objecthood (transcendence) and an insistence on the transformation of all such conditions into the priority of singular events (empiricity).

In this second part of our investigations, then, I want to inspect this double in a variety of ways. In Chapter 7, I want to rehearse some of its contemporary configurations in the field of what has loosely come to be thought of as poststructuralism. Here, I will turn to Heidegger again — but in this passage through his thinking I will be looking at Heidegger as the critical precursor to the quite different poststructuralisms of Irigaray, Foucault and Derrida; and I will be looking at all four thinkers as inheritors of the Kantian tradition of thinking through (in their distinct ways) the paradoxes and contradictions of the empirical-transcendental distinction. The purpose of this first investigation, then, is to ask, broadly, whether these poststructuralisms constitute alternative pragmatic traditions to the Heideggerian (and, in its initial impetus, Deleuzian) position arrived at in the first part of the book. Do they add to, can they help flesh out, our so far rather awkward arrangement of Heidegger's transcendental eventalism (clustering around *Ereignis*) and Deleuze's transcendental empiricism (which insists on the firstness of the event-as-repetition precisely *as* a loosely transcendental condition in its own right).

Having Foucault as a pivotal figure in this first passage through the empirical-transcendental — and remembering that Foucault's outline of the history of representation sparked off our very first investigation (Chapter 1) — I then want to go on, in Chapter 8, to look at how his historicisation of the transcendental-empirical condition arrives at a theory of the subject. If this path is followed, does it turn out to be parallel to the Heideggerian? Could it be that the subject as empirico-transcendental doublet intersects with the idea of culture as also grounded in the double of ownership and disownership?

These first two chapters in the second part of the book, then, revolve around the central questions of poststructuralist theory and they offer a number of important supplements to the sketch of the *Ereignis*-condition in the first part. But what of that other contemporary theoretical bloc known as “postmodernism”? Does it have anything to offer us along the same lines — the lines of usage? Turning in Chapter 9 to the herald and celebrant of postmodernism, Jean-François Lyotard, I examine an early avatar of his so-called

postmodern condition: paganism. Is the condition of paganism a pragmatics of culture in its own right? Can it help us traverse the gap of essential hybridity-in-general between Heideggerian conditions and Deleuzian singularities?

In several important respects, as we will see, postmodernism (or paganism) falls short of these possibilities. And this returns us, then, to Deleuze himself — another Deleuze — as the main contender for configuring the empirical-transcendental in a way that at least points towards (even if it never quite reaches) the Heideggerian condition-in-general of all objects and events that are cultural. That is, while Deleuze's empiricism was, in Chapter 2, very much the impetus for the turn to a pragmatic reading of Heidegger, it has to be remembered that *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1991) was Deleuze's first book and that, in later work, particularly his meditations on Spinoza and Leibniz, he rethought much of the transcendental empiricist program in philosophy.

One of the central figurations in this later work is the fold. In re-folding Deleuze into our still fuzzy (and necessarily incomplete) picture of what it is to be cultural, it may turn out (and, if I may hint, *turn in*) that thinking the empirical-transcendental *as* itself doubly enfolded and unfolded may provide the grounds for an almost final pragmatism of *Ereignis*. Our final point of arrival, then, is still only a step on the way, a staging post, and a point of departure for what may one day prove to be the first new cultural theory since Marx. How all of this can be finalised as a theory of culture is then reserved for Part Three: a single chapter that turns the double of the fold into a twist of mixed doubles.

Chapter 7

Poststructuralism and Cultural Pragmatics

I.

Since at least Kant, the European speculative philosophical project has identified itself with metaphysics and against anthropology (in Kant's sense of these terms).¹ That is, its self-understanding has been constructed in terms of a search for the general grounds of being, knowledge, ethics and so on, as opposed to an understanding or analysis of concrete human affairs.² To put this another way: philosophy-as-metaphysics always involves the search for transcendental grounds, where these are construed as more general and more valuable than the merely empirical, the merely sensible. For all this, the empirical has not gone completely undetected by the philosophical radar screen that one can imagine as a curtain across the English Channel and the North Sea — and this may be due to the purely logical consideration that the European valorisation of the transcendental *requires* (if only for purposes of contrast and opposition) that a position be taken vis-à-vis the empirical. In order to *be* metaphysics, philosophy has to, as it were, dirty its hands with considerations of daily life, the empirical, the sensible, the anthropological, the pragmatic.

Even in Kant's work itself, the problem of the merely sensible will not go away. If the transcendental-real (as opposed to the empirical-actual) is pure noumenality, then it is, according to the Kantian phenomenal-noumenal distinction, unavailable in its purity to human understanding. The path to the transcendental-real is always blocked by our nature as sensible and finite beings. Nevertheless, that is the path of philosophy: the overcoming of man's empirical nature, of his fall from purity, and his always incomplete

¹. In what follows (for brevity and in accord with particularly the French philosophical idiom) I will gloss the expression "the European speculative philosophical project" as simply "philosophy".

². This is certainly the case with respect to Kant's ethical and religious writings. However, it should be noted that, in the critical works, Kant is against dogmatic metaphysics. If the world cannot be known in itself, then it is the task of the critical metaphysician to target any dogmatic metaphysics that holds otherwise.

guidance towards pure transcendence. As Hunter (1995a) has pointed out, for Kant, man always has a necessarily double nature. He *is* the empirico-transcendental doublet announced by Foucault, at the end of *The Order of Things* (1970) as the “Man” of modernity (see Chapter 8, below). To this extent, while Kant would prefer the transcendental condition to be available to him, he also knows full well that this can never actually obtain in any specific case. The sensible is always with us — albeit as a form of corruption of our natural state — and so philosophy must always be incomplete; it must always be in fact a form of practical spiritual *training* towards the possibility of transcendence, necessarily held back by the specificity of the material and the sensible. This is perhaps why Kant, later in his life, actually turned his attention to the pragmatico-anthropological domain and away from questions of pure transcendental morality (Kant 1978). At that time, he even went so far as to consider two possible versions of the good: the physical and the moral. What he has to say on the question of this doublet is revealing; and so it is worth rehearsing a passage quoted earlier (in Chapter 1):

The two kinds of good, the physical and the moral, cannot be mixed together, because they would then neutralize each other and have no effect on the purpose of true bliss. Rather, inclination to pleasurable living and inclination to virtue are in conflict with each other, and the restriction of the principle of physical good by the principle of moral good constitute *through their very conflict* the whole purpose of a well-bred, partly sensuous and partly ethicointellectual human being. (Kant 1978, 185, my emphasis)

This being the case, philosophy may, in its purely ideal self-understanding, wish to strive for transcendentality, and yet — as this passage from Kant shows — it must necessarily end up as a balancing act, a pragmatically guided discipline or regimen for *managing* the essential duality of man as a “partly sensuous and partly ethicointellectual” being (cf. Hunter 1995b).

Philosophy since Kant can be reconstructed in terms of its acknowledgement of the unattainability of its goals; in terms of the sheer unavailability of philosophy as pure metaphysics. In the contemporary field, there are a number of important instances of philosophies that can be read as such forms of practical management of the empirico-transcendental double. Below I will confine myself to the Heideggerian “line” flowing

through the work of Heidegger himself and into the “political” philosophies of Irigaray and Foucault. Following this, I will pick up on Derrida’s deconstructive-grammatological version of the empirical-transcendental. For now, each is equally important: only later will we see how they fold into (or out of) the idea of culture as grounded in *Ereignis*.

II.

We could read Heidegger’s work as a continual insistence that philosophy has taken a wrong turn in even beginning to ask its own question in terms of what it is that persons can *know* about their own transcendental conditions. This turn of philosophy to the subject, marked most clearly in the work of Descartes, is, for Heidegger, philosophy’s downfall; its fall from the early Greek question of being (as revealing) via its uptake of the question of beings-as-subjects. Against Descartes’ *cogito*, he insists — again, as we have already seen in Chapter 1 — that:

This proposition has the peculiarity of first positing that about which it makes an assertion, the *subjectum*. What it posits in this case is the “I”. The I is the *subjectum* of the very first principle. The I is, therefore, a special something which underlies (*Zugrundeliegendes*) — *hypokeimenon, subjectum* — the *subjectum* of the positing as such. Hence it came about that ever since then the “I” has especially been called the *subjectum*, “subject” That the “I” comes to be defined as that which is already present for representation (the “objective” in today’s sense) is not because of any I-viewpoint or any subjectivistic doubt, but because of the essential predominance and the definitely directed radicalization of the mathematical and the axiomatic. (Heidegger 1967, 104-5)

In the face of this mistaken turn (the radical positing of the subject as the locus of the philosophical path — and remembering that, for Kant, the path to transcendence is blocked by the fact that specific subjects can never *know* the noumenal realm), Heidegger argues for a return to being-as-such as the proper ground of philosophy and hence of metaphysics — such that any question we might raise about the transcendental-empirical antinomy would always be able to be tempered by that elementary return. Heidegger’s position, then, is radical: it is not that the empirical has contaminated the possibility of the transcendental; rather the whole of the empirical-transcendental is itself, as one instance of

a metaphysics predicated on the subject, in fact (and in principle), an historically located contamination of the proper ground of metaphysics: being — where being is to be construed not in terms of a *cogito* that is present to itself as object, but rather in terms of “the multiple presencing in which things present emerge from absence” (Schürmann 1987, 13). So, after all, the Kantian question survives as a problem for Heidegger — albeit as one to be overcome by thinking the return to being (as presencing) as the ground of the transcendental-empirical itself. But, in a sense, we already know this from our earlier forays into Heidegger. The question is, how has this Heideggerian re-orientation of the Kantian problematic been taken up?

III.

Taking up this very Heideggerian problematic, Irigaray shows instead that this solution to the problem is more of a dissolution. In dissolving it, it ignores another crucial dimension of any philosophical thought: the sheer fact that it must take place in a quite sensible, empirical and material *medium*. Colebrook (2008, 86-87) puts this succinctly:

Irigaray’s feminist critique ... does not merely *associate* Heidegger’s notion of metaphysics as presence with *masculine values*. That is, notions such as objectivity, reason, visibility, representation, the a priori and identity are part of a specific relation to Being, a relation which, insofar as it is specular or representational, is also masculinist. The phallic logic of metaphysics can be read in its refusal to deal with the empirical or sensible. If metaphysics has proceeded by determining being in terms of representation, then it has done so by forgetting the *medium of representation*. In presenting thought as transparent representation, philosophy has to forget the means by which it represents itself. Thinking can only coincide with itself if it takes a detour through representation, but that detour or medium remains (must remain) unrepresented.... For Irigaray ... this medium of representation is the maternal body. The unrepresentable ground is, for Irigaray, the formless, nonideal chaos of the corporeality of being.³

³. The point here is not that Irigaray is offering a “critique” of Heidegger so much as that she is extending and altering his general insight into what philosophy has forgotten. Insofar as Heidegger gestures towards a forgetting of corporeality — for example in his insistence on “earth” as a replacement for “world” (1993a) — Irigaray can be said to be relying on Heideggerian thought. However her unique and additional insight is that this actual corporeality is *sexual*,

On this version, then, if the double empirical-transcendental nature of man is but a version of representational thinking predicated on a subject-ideal, what it forgets — even though half of itself as a concept appears to involve “the empirical” — is something more radically empirical and sensible; in fact it is so radically empirical and sensible that it cannot even begin to enter into the representational schemas that generate man as doubly transcendental *and* “empirical”. This then suggests a turn away from philosophy-as-metaphysics altogether in a struggle to find a *non-representationalist relation* to the unrepresentable: corporeality in its actual, empirically-encountered, chaotic and perhaps even pre-conceptual state.

IV.

As we have already seen, Foucault has paid particular attention to the empirico-transcendental doublet — and indeed his thinking in these sections of *The Order of Things* (1970, 303-87) owes much to his early readings of Heidegger (albeit that these are unacknowledged, by and large, in his text). Foucault’s argument, picking up from Heidegger’s history of philosophy in the *Nietzsche* volumes (1991), is that the transcendental-empirical distinction itself only exists in a specific historical moment.⁴ As we saw in Chapter 1, this moment (although Foucault insists that it displaces representation in the narrow sense) marks the arrival of modernity (1970, 46-77). That is, this idea of Man — the idea of an empirical object *as* a transcendental subject that knows itself as object and (ideally) overcomes it — is but one idea. It has a historical beginning and, Foucault speculates, an end when “one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea” (1970, 387).

The solution, in this case, is perhaps the opposite of Irigaray’s. Instead of posing a completely radical empiricity anterior to the empirico-transcendental doublet, in the form of the corporeal body, Foucault argues that the doublet is, itself, but an *idea* which can therefore be historicised like any other. Then, however, his position comes to sound much

opening a path to political and moral matters beyond Heidegger’s own thought. See Colebrook (2008).

⁴. Deleuze, in a series of important footnotes (1988a, 146-9), marks out Foucault’s uptake of Heidegger and also some points of difference. One significant remark of Foucault’s runs as follows: “My whole philosophical evolution has been determined by my reading of Heidegger. But I recognize that it is Nietzsche who brought me to him” (quoted in Deleuze 1988a, 149).

more like Irigaray when he argues — via Nietzsche — that history itself (as discursively constituted) is an empirical *medium* which can be inspected for its positivity, where the notion of positivity might be thought as a radical form of empiricity, as a medium made up, essentially, of particular cases and which cannot exceed them (Foucault 1977; 1981).

Here, of course, we begin to see the intersection of Foucault's and Deleuze's thinking. In this case, the idea of the empirico-transcendental doublet is not *merely* an idea; it is also an ideal which has radical empirical-historical grounds, and which can never realise itself since it is always drawn back to those grounds, to its ineluctably historico-pragmatic conditions. Such is the importance of this turn towards the historical and empirical grounding of the empirico-transcendental idea that we will return to it at length in the next chapter.

V.

Heidegger, Irigaray and Foucault, then, offer us three relatively recent, and interconnected, schemes of thought (and schemes of thought about schemes of thought) which show that the essential contamination of any supposedly pure metaphysics by an ultimately resilient and pragmatic empiricity is perhaps, today, philosophy's main problem. From here, I want to deal with yet another case, that of Derrida's grammatology, and to inspect it for its potential insights into the domain of contingency that has traditionally been the proper object of the anthropological disciplines (in Kant's sense of "anthropology"): sociology, psychology, politics, economics, law, medicine, history, linguistics, philology and, above all for us, the pragmatics of culture.

Derrida is notorious for his supposed "critique of metaphysics". But this "critique" is, itself, often misunderstood. It is often thought of as the emergence of an idea that goes beyond or overcomes metaphysics, that puts it to one side, finally and forever. Nothing could be further from the truth of the grammatological project. In fact, that project may have, as its outcome, the view that there *is* no escape from metaphysics. At the colloquium on "The Linguistics of Writing", one of Derrida's interlocutors asked a question about "transgressing" the metaphysics of presence. Derrida answered in a way that, for many, is strange in terms of the assumptions that are often made about him:

The question is difficult. Just a word. I've never said nor thought that the metaphysics of presence was an "evil", "the evil". I'm inclined to think exactly the contrary, that it's good. There is no "good" outside the metaphysics of presence, which defines "the best". (Derrida 1987, 257)

Instead of thinking Derrida's "critique" in the sense of overcoming an "evil", then, we might see it as an acceptance of a necessary arrangement of things which will always define, for us, the "good", the "best" and, indeed, pretty much anything we care to name. Then, what is problematic, for Derrida, in philosophy, is that it does not always see this arrangement clearly — in terms of the necessity of the metaphysics of presence and, equally, of its violent (but necessarily impossible) exclusion of everyday contingencies. In that way, the grammatological project can be construed as an almost Wittgensteinian therapy for philosophy: as a set of assembled reminders for returning philosophy (or indeed any body of ideas) to its necessary imbrication in a metaphysics contaminated by mundanity. But even a brief inspection of Derrida's work will show that this is by no means straightforward.

Unlike Kant, that is, Derrida does not construe metaphysics as the opposite of anthropology — as the possibility of the suppression of the contingent, the factual, the empirical, the accidental, the happenstance, the everyday, the merely sensible, from the proper path of moral and spiritual development. On the contrary, for Derrida, *this* metaphysics — the metaphysics of ideal purity or pure ideality — is not, and has never been, possible. It remains what he often refers to in the *Grammatology* (1976) as a "dream". Pure metaphysics is an oneiric fantasy.

In place of this view, as we have noted, Derrida wants to argue that we are always inside the space of an essentially contaminated metaphysics: a metaphysics contaminated by — if this is not a pleonasm — the empirically contingent. It is in this sense that we cannot easily transgress the borders of metaphysics, and it is in this sense that there are always two possible mistakes, each stemming from an illusory idea of purity or propriety / properness. The first mistake is, as we have seen, to think that there can be a pure metaphysics-as-transcendence such as that which we find in certain versions of Kant. This supposes a set of purely general conditions that apply universally and that are free

from accident, the contingencies of the moment, the specificities of the particular case. For Derrida, these can never be entirely deleted.

In the case of textual interpretation, for example, we can never find an ultimate metaphysical ground to which the text always and essentially attaches itself. It is always subject to the *determinations* made, the decisions gone through, in specific contexts. Again, this does not mean, as some have thought, that Derrida allows any text to mean anything, that contextual meaning is a semantic carnival, “an open, hermeneutic vortex” (Coulter 1994, 690) or anything of this sort. Rather, in being detached from any idea of a “proper” and “essential” meaning, texts must always pass through a moment of *decision* that will be *determinate*, but determinate only in the sense of actual and possible contingencies. Hence, in his “Tympan” (1982), for example, he reminds Hegel that his speculations about a pure, universal and utterly totalising law of history are contingent upon such things as the material motions and “forms” of the printing press and, what is more, that Hegel’s own text displays this, not least in the typographical metaphors that it uses and returns to in its explication of a transcendent history.

The second mistake — equally grounded on a “dream” of pure propriety — is to think that any analyst can adduce purely empirical meanings, meanings that are tied solely to the contingencies of the moment in some completely innocent state, free of all generality, dislodged from any transcendental assumptions. Writing itself, for example, is always and necessarily “violent”; it is not innocent, not simply the representation of the pure presence of the event-moment or of the writer/speaker as the ground and guarantee of its meaning. So when Lévi-Strauss proposes the existence of an ahistorical society, innocent by virtue of its severance from any idea of writing, Derrida simply cannot tolerate such a proposition, and he accordingly gives over a chapter of his *Grammatology* to a deconstruction of that particular notion of purity: a purity based on the innocence of a people outside history, outside writing, living inside a purely present moment (Derrida 1976, 101-40). Likewise, against Foucault’s early conception of madness, Derrida (1978) argues that there can be no pure and single event. Just as the violence of philosophy, then, stems from its attempt to erase its own historical specificity, so the violence of anthropology (or any empirical social

science) involves an equal and opposite attempt to erase its complicity with general metaphysical conditions.

Hence a revision of the idea of what our “metaphysical” condition might be; and one that runs along the following lines. If by “transcendence” we mean pure transcendence, unattached to empiricity of any kind, we are mistaken. If by “empiricity” we mean pure empiricity, unattached to transcendental or generality of any kind, we are equally mistaken. Our actual condition is one in which every event, every moment (including every “person”), no matter how fleeting, is always both finite and conditioned by generality. This is, in line with our earlier readings of Heidegger, the metaphysics of accident, of necessary contamination, of essential hybridity-in-general, of the non-concept that always precedes the supposedly pure conception; or of the non-percept that always precedes the supposedly pure perception. This prior condition has many names in Derrida’s work: *différance*, *trace*, *pharmakon*, *prosthesis*, *supplement*, *writing-in-general* and so on. Accordingly, we could find a reasonably simple understanding of what Derrida might mean by the term “pragmatology”, a term which (as far as I know) he uses in only two passages of his work and, even then, somewhat tantalisingly.

The first, and fullest reference is as follows, from a description of the relations between literature and psychoanalysis:

Not that all fiction and all inscriptions of proper names have had a literary dimension or a relation to the work of art as such; rather, they arise in the place where, between the movement of science — notably when it is concerned with random structures — and that of philosophy, of the arts — literary or not — the limits cannot be actual and static or *solid* but rather only the effects of contextual circumscription. Neither linear nor indivisible, they would arise instead from an analysis that I will call (with some circumspection) *pragmatological*, at the intersection of a pragmatics and a grammatology. Open to a different sense of the dispatch (*envoi*) and of dispatches (*envois*),⁵ pragmatology should always take the situation of the marks into account; in particular that of utterances, the place of senders and addressees, of framing and of the sociohistorical circumscription, and

⁵. The notion of *envoi(s)* is returned to in more depth in Chapter 12.

so forth. It should therefore take account of the problematics of randomness in all fields where it evolves: physics, biology, game theory, and the like. (Derrida 1984, 27-28)

Hence a reasonably simplistic unpacking of the idea of a programmatology would be to read it as being but one side of the already constituted grammatological coin: that side which locates the accidental, the contingent within any claim to purely transcendental meanings. In this case, Derrida's "reminder" to Hegel of the sociohistorical contingency of his supposedly totalising historical law would be a case of programmatology in action. And we could go on from there to find many similar instances in Derrida, including his treatment of Freud in the "My Chances" paper just quoted. This would be a programmatology that isolated the "effects of contextual circumscription" in their specificity and determinacy in particular instances. It would focus on the textual "dispatch" (*envoi*) not in terms of finding its essential grounds in a double *différance* that pointed to the two necessary contaminations residing in every event (the double contamination of empiricity and transcendentality); rather the focus would only be on one side of that double contamination: the empirical points at which "the problematics of randomness" asserts itself, contingently, immanently, to actual events, rather than in a way that proceeds from any general law or from any generalisation (or rule) in excess of the particular case.⁶

This would be a perfectly possible way of addressing the question: what is programmatology? And it would also be perfectly in line with Derrida's assertion, in his second reference to this nascent discipline, that "Grammatology has always been a sort of pragmatics" (1988, 159). But it would thereby ignore Derrida's own (immediately ensuing) indications of a more radical possibility when he writes:

the discipline which bears this name ["pragmatics"] today involve[s] too many presuppositions requiring deconstruction, very much like speech act theory, to be simply homogeneous with that which is announced in *De la grammatologie*. A programmatology (to come) would articulate in a more fruitful and more rigorous manner these two discourses. (1988, 159)

⁶ There is also a sense in which the assertion of "the problematics of randomness" is an essential condition for Derrida, returning the gesture, then, to being another quasi-aprioristic procedure — albeit one which is quite different in character from assertions of *presence* as a grounding condition (which is what Derrida finds, by and large, in his reading of the Western metaphysical tradition).

One way to begin, then, would be to “deconstruct” all hitherto-existing variations of the discipline of pragmatics. The modesty that necessarily flows from incompetence forbids me from attempting this, or anything approximating to it. Instead I will turn briefly to the grammatological “parent” to see if its body can yield any possibilities. In this regard I want to mount a single and very tentative argument: that grammatology, as we have seen, does not preclude a certain version of metaphysics, that it is mounted in and as, specifically, a *philosophy*. To this extent, then, it will always carry a refusal of the kind of radical empiricity that we discovered, very briefly and at second hand, in the work of Irigaray (and, perhaps to a lesser extent, in the work of Foucault).⁷ To find a programmatology in its more radical sense, then, we would need to ask about the limits of philosophy as such, including grammatology. We would need to see what it is that lies outside those limits, what it is that — after Irigaray’s example — philosophy excludes: not (as in the case of Irigaray) what it excludes just for feminist politics and action, but what it excludes for *all* versions of pragmatics. For, if my argument about grammatology is right, what it (and any philosophy) excludes is the possibility of a radical insistence on facticity, even as (as with grammatology) it must allow for *some element of facticity*, construed as a “contamination” of pure philosophy, as an impassable obstacle along the road leading to the philosopher’s dream of pure enlightenment. Allowing for such an element (as with Kant), even insisting on its necessity (as with Derrida), is quite different from beginning (as do Nietzsche and Deleuze, perhaps) with a world that is construed as contingent and factual in the first place, prior to any conceptualisation (transcendental or otherwise). This would be an empiricism predicated on radical immanence. Is there such a possibility in any part of Derrida?

Plainly, there is no easy means of escape, for deconstruction itself has begun to chart the limits of, and hence the possibility of a liberation from, philosophy. In an important interview with Peter Brunette and David Wills on the spatial arts — a piece that is crucial for anyone wanting to read Derrida’s reflection on his “own” methods rather than simply

⁷ While Foucault’s and Irigaray’s positions are linked in this sense, it is also the case, as we have seen, that there are differences and distinctions. For Foucault, empiricity is a question of what is given, *simpliciter*. For Irigaray, the empirical is both *anterior* and specific.

reading another instance of them at work — Derrida announces this possibility almost from the start:

Even if, within the field of philosophy, I have worked to elaborate deconstructive questions concerning it, that deconstruction of philosophy carries with it a certain number of questions that can be asked in different fields. Moreover, each time I was trying to discover what in a determined field liberates it from philosophical authority. That is to say, I have learned from philosophy that it is a hegemonic discourse, structurally hegemonic, considering all discursive regions to be dependent upon it. And by means of a deconstruction of this hegemonic gesture we can begin to see in each field, whether it be what we call psychology, logic, politics, or the arts, the possibility of emancipation from the hegemony and authority of philosophical discourse. (Derrida 1994b, 10)⁸

What this faintly suggests then — via Derrida himself — is that there is a domain (perhaps several domains) of facticity potentially outside the controlling space of philosophy: an utterly resilient facticity that remains immanent unto itself and that at least struggles to refuse incorporation into the body of transcendental conceptualisation which is philosophy's supposedly "proper" terrain. That is, even philosophy is a cultural formation and, as such, is subject to its own (sometimes uneasy) fluctuations between propriety ("pure" philosophical concepts) and appropriation (the mobilisation of philosophy for pragmatic ends).

Let me propose one possible way — albeit at one remove from Derrida — in which to pose the question of such a pragmaticity. It would run as follows: how is it possible to *create*, to make things, make them happen, to have them come to presence, in a space of pure facticity, prior to any conceptualisation or "capture" by philosophy? (See Maras 1993). Here I want to point to a moment in the making of anything, any "cultural production" if you will. This is the moment marked by the movement of the *créons* ("let us create", first person *plural* imperative of *créer*, to make or create) — then, also perhaps, of the movement of the *crayon* ("pencil"). This particular double comes close to the double verb-object or injunction-thing that I want to try to think as pragmaticity, or even as

⁸. Again we might ask whether or not "a deconstruction of [philosophy's] hegemonic gesture" is itself anything other than a move which places philosophy first. And, reflexively, our very asking of this question is itself probably susceptible to the same problem.

culture as such. Then a radical programmatology might be the discipline that turned to that moment, as a completely localised instance or instant, a singularity, in the creation of an utterance, a text, a work, a subject, an object ... and so on. And here we would have to say that there is no creation *ex nihilo*. All creating of this sort would be a technique (*techné*) and therefore subject to the fact that technologies only arise as the grafting of one technique on to another, through a process of continual supplementation, essential prosthesis or prosthetisation (Wills 1995). In this case, any *créons*, any collective bringing to presence, would always be impure, would always contain more than a single element, would always be, in whatever counts as the first instance, already hybrid. In this case, since it has elements, it will always be subjectable to analysis.

Now, having made this slight move away from the letter of (and so perhaps towards the spirit of) Derrida, we can begin to see how any pragmaticity involves contamination: but not in the strictly grammatological sense. It involves the contamination of one factual element by at least one other, not necessarily of the factual by the in-general.⁹ The *créons*, that is, is as much an injunction to “let there not be nothing” as it is to “create”. It does not come from nothingness but — again, perhaps, following the later Heidegger — from a positive non-presence, a willed non-presence; and Peter Brunette in the aforementioned interview asks Derrida, precisely, if this moment can in fact be named. Firstly he quotes Derrida:

The baseless ground [*le sans-fond*] of a “deconstructive” and affirmative architecture can cause vertigo, but it is not the void [*le vide*], it is not the gaping and chaotic remainder, the hiatus of destruction. (Derrida 1989, 69)

Brunette’s question then is: “You point to this affirmative place in your work, but you never name it. Can this place be named?” Derrida responds:

It’s not a place; it’s not a place that really exists. It’s a “come” [*viens*]; it is what I call an affirmation that is not positive. It doesn’t exist, it isn’t present. I always distinguish

⁹ For Derrida, I guess, my very citing of the factual *as* factual would run the risk of returning us to ideality. I am unsure whether this argument would hold water — but it may be a serious obstacle to any theory of pragmatics which wishes to avoid philosophical naivety.

affirmation from the position of positivity. Thus it is an affirmation that is very risky, uncertain, improbable; it entirely escapes the space of certainty. (Derrida 1994b, 26)¹⁰

And not being a positivity, this affirmation rejoins (a certain version of) the “philosophical”, as that which insists on the primacy of the conceptual. As *viens*, it risks precisely that nothing will come, nothing will be made, no architecture, for example. It is an invitation or imperative that, by its tense, we can see is issued from one subject to another. By changing the tense to a mutual plural, and the verb from *venir* to *créer*, we achieve the effect of rethinking this moment as a positivity, as a place, as an event, as something which exists, is given, and *is present* (at least, as facticity).¹¹ Such a bastardisation would partly realign Derrida’s *viens* with Foucault’s notion of positivity, his insistence on the always-already factuality of historical events. But this does not mean that everything is assured. The *créons* is just as risky as the *viens* — not because there is a transcendental condition that blocks its possibility of fruition: rather because the accidental co-occurrence of two factual systems required for any technology (*techné*) to work, to make anything, may always lead to nothing. Hence, as we have already seen, the co-occurrence of the wine press and certain forms of metalcraft in the mid-15th century happened (*inter alia*) to generate the printing press but, as Foucault would remind us, *it need not have*. It only appears necessary after the event. After the event, we can very easily say how it came about — we can even turn its antecedents into causes if we wish. But *things could always have been otherwise*. Derrida (1994b, 27) writes: “If I knew, nothing would ever happen.... If the foundations are assured, there is no construction; neither is there any invention”.

But the condition of his not-knowing, the condition that makes it possible, for him, for anything to come about, namely the fact that it might not, is a necessary condition. For Foucault, the foundations are equally dubious: history does not have any, neither does technology, nor any of its “products”. But, for Foucault, this is a factual condition.

¹⁰. Elsewhere, Derrida (1993; 1994a) calls this “democracy” and “justice” respectively.

¹¹. We need to be clear here that this is not a proposal for a return to a neo-existentialist celebration of creation from chaos. Rather, it is much more like Heidegger’s “multiple presencing in which things present emerge from absence” (Schürmann 1987, 13). At another remove, it is nothing more than an empirical attention to (as opposed to a statement of a general condition about) Derrida’s insistence that there is nothing without the passage through a decision or determination from a state of undecidability or indeterminacy.

Here we can see how the crucial Derridean concept of undecidability can be freed from its generalist, universalising possibilities and re-thought as a radically empirical condition of cultural production (in its broadest sense). When Derrida writes that “Invention assumes undecidability” (1994b, 27), we can, therefore, agree with him completely. But we can also re-configure that undecidability in such a way that it does not lead us back to a philosophy of quasi-transcendence, but rather “forward” to an understanding of the conditions of pragmaticity, itself, as immanence. And this, of course, brings the Derridean position much closer to the Deleuze we encountered in Chapter 2: the Deleuze of radical empirical immanence (1991).

Furthermore, Derrida seems to work with a somewhat similar version of things when, in the “Spatial Arts” interview, he speaks of his relation to his own and others’ writings in terms of “tone”. This tone seems to “come”, but it also seems to be created, to have movements, specific empirical movements, that can be plotted and analysed as a completely pragmatic matter. He says of this tone (or rather of “an economy that consists in always pluralising the tone”):

I think in the end that what interests me most in the texts I read and in the texts I write is precisely that. All of this merits further analysis, but that’s it, how it shifts, moves from one phrase to another, from one tone to another. Such analyses are rarely performed — I haven’t read a lot of work on the subject — but it remains an important question. And it would be an analysis of the *pragmatic* type, one that doesn’t consist of what something means, what its thesis, theme, or theorem is, for that is not so interesting nor so essential; what is more important is the tone, and to know to whom it is addressed in order to produce that *effect*. (1994b, 22, my emphasis)

Pragmatology, then, may best be construed as the discipline (or the form of analysis) that finds, empirically, the means of the production of that — or indeed of any — *effect*. It is specifically interested not in what something “means”, but in *how* it comes, accidentally, historically, to be given, to get its effect, how it comes to be *wirkliche* or action-able — which is to say what is at work in the always plural moment of its *créons*, its pragmaticity.¹² Such a reconfiguration of Derrida — which, to be sure, drags these

¹². The term “*wirkliche*” is from Nietzsche’s *Use and Abuse of History* (1949). It receives more detailed treatment in my *Semiotic Investigations* (1996).

thoughts out of their Derridean orbit, which does a certain violence to the deconstructive project as such — nevertheless ends with a gesture, a “come/create”, that marks the will, the tone-in-general, perhaps even the key signature (sign-nature) that accompanies every cultural production as it proceeds along the lines of usage,¹³ as the flickering double of propriation and appropriation that is *Ereignis*.

¹³. In this respect, it is hard not to be aware of the vocalic similitude between the two (etymologically unrelated terms), *créons* and *χρεων*.

Chapter 8

This Body, This Tone: The Subject in a Pragmatics of Culture

I.

For Irigaray, a body. For Derrida, a tone. And added to this, no doubt, a much longer list of what philosophy forgets. So that it is as if what we call “poststructuralism” were predicated on various sets of claims and counter-claims about what philosophy (or “theory”) leaves out of account: a litany of long-standing errors which, we are told, if corrected or reconfigured, would bring us along a better (perhaps even a truer) path, a path towards the essentially unthought.

For Irigaray, a body. For Derrida, a tone. And both, body and tone, in the name of alternative figurations of being: as if these “forgettings” were avatars of Heidegger’s own version of the deep and originary forgetting that practically defines Western metaphysics. To this extent, they may be graspings after the same thing: what it is in the world that philosophical thinking cannot think; or else, what it is in the world that philosophical being cannot be. And still, at the same time, there is also a sense that there is *no* outside to philosophy: that, with the correction or the respecification, another, truer, closer, philosophy could emerge; a feminist philosophy of the body, for example, or a deconstructive philosophy of tonal difference. For among other things, Irigaray and Derrida are philosophers.

Then, in a very important sense, Foucault is not. Between the other “poststructuralists”, between their suspicions of philosophy (within philosophy), Foucault inserts a wedge of facticity. In effect, what he says, is that the philosophical battle royal between the empirical and transcendental domains is not pacified today and can never be pacified by a return to terms “outside” philosophy (such as “body”, and “tone”). The battle does not lapse into irenics, *it becomes a subject*.

What we see in philosophy (or “theory”) today, then, is only a particular historical moment where the lines of philosophical discourse are drawn around the very specific

and limited kind of subject we have become, in fact and in history.¹ In this sense, philosophical debates about the primacy (or otherwise) of one term over the other are only possible because of the kind of subject we *are* in modernity, because of a “local” configuration of what now counts as our thought and our being, and what now counts as the proper relation between them. That is, if we are constituted as the empirico-transcendental doublet, then all philosophical debate about these doubles (including debates about their “outsides”, their “forgettings”, their “unthought”) are no more than instances of what this historically-specific subject is extremely well “designed” to do. It has been built even better than it can know.

If so, it hardly matters what philosophy has forgotten: because, however it configures itself, it will never reach beyond its *own* conditions. And those conditions are not what philosophy itself imagines (after Kant) as *transcendental* conditions of possibility.² Rather (and again we approach Deleuze) they are given *pragmatically*. The empirical-transcendental distinction, the dynamo of philosophy and the human sciences since the Enlightenment, is itself an idea; and, like all ideas, it is grounded in pragmaticity, in eventality, in, as Deleuze would have it, immanence.

So it is not as if we are now compelled to say that the empirical and pragmatic side of the double must take supreme hold on the debate: for that would only reduplicate the same debate. Rather, what Foucault, in the final chapters of *The Order of Things*, compels us towards is a single, univocal thought: that all thought (including the doubles that perplex us today, and therefore including the debate between facticity and ideality as contending grounds) is predicated on specific circumstances; on events; on singularities (and the limited range of those singularities) that is our historico-pragmatic condition. It is precisely predicated on the rarity of the kinds of subject we can be, today.

¹. This is not to deny that, for Derrida, for example, there *is* the historical; but, in addition, for Derrida, there is always the *idea* of history which, itself, is not *purely* historical. Where he criticises Foucault (Derrida 1978), this is the basis of his argument. For Foucault, however, it is a logical consequence of his position that even the *idea* of history must be *primarily* factual-historical.

². And the phrase “transcendental conditions of possibility” must be pleonastic because what Kant *meant* by “transcendental” is, precisely, conditions of possibility.

II.

The “doubles” of philosophy, for Foucault, then, only arise because we are currently constituted as “man”; as a particular *idea* for understanding ourselves as subjects. To be a subject today is, therefore, intrinsically double, but this, in itself, is a matter of singular historical accident. It is to be subject to something else by control and dependence; and also to be tied to our own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.

What must I be, I who think and who am my thought, in order to be what I do not think, in order for my thought to be what I am not? What is this being, then, that shimmers and, as it were, glitters in the opening of the *cogito*, yet is not sovereignly given in it or by it? What, then, is the connection, the difficult link between being and thought? What is man’s being, and how can it be that that being, which could so easily be characterized by the fact that “it has thoughts” and is possibly alone in having them, has an ineradicable and fundamental relation to the unthought? (Foucault 1970, 325)

This double has to do, then, with an imaginable (but unrealisable) harmony between the empirical *institutions* of the self and the transcendental or *inner* self, between the self that is and the self that thinks. And so the raw stuff of modern human being is not intrinsically or naturally in-dividual, undivided. Rather, this being has to be individuated by institutions (external to it) and by disclosures or confessions (of its internal states). This version of the subject is “man” and, as we have seen, according to Foucault, it has a very short history.

But we have also seen (at the beginning of this book) that Foucault places this “man” of modernity as the emerging figure that comes to put an *end* to the “age” of representation. Although there are several points where, again as we have seen, Foucault equivocates on this finality as a cut-and-dried matter, he nevertheless puts forward a version of the history of ideas (or, at least, of the human sciences) predicated on three (st)ages or *epistemes*. To remind ourselves, these consist of the following “periods”.³

(1) A pre-classical stage lasting up to the start of the 17th century: an age of *resemblance* as the dominant figuration of both words and things — and such that there is no effective distinction between them. In this first period, human being is given by answers to the question: What do we resemble?

³. This outline re-glosses the “periodisation” that starts Chapter 1.

(2) A classical (or early modern) age that starts with the 17th century: a period that opens up a series of differences and distinctions between words and things — and such that *representation* becomes the central figuration that re-connects the two fields. Correspondingly, the question of what it is to be a subject becomes: What do we represent?

(3) A period of true modernity that begins in the mid-to-late 18th century and reaches into our own times: an *episteme* that privileges “man” as the empirico-transcendental doublet. And so the question of the subject now becomes: What are we as a new double category of man alone?

Now, as our investigations so far have suggested, I have no doubt that this final period, modernity, is much with us, despite a few announcements of “postmodernity” (see Chapter 9, below). There seems to be, everywhere, and not the least in contemporary philosophy, evidence that post-Kantian man is alive, if not entirely well. So the only problem with Foucault’s formulation (his order of things) is that it assumes that, with the coming of modernity, or of modern man, representational thinking ends; that the effects and consequences of enlightenment eventually end all versions of representationalism.

As we have seen — and this was the central theme of Part One of this book — Heidegger’s much more robust and longaevous version of representational thinking situates it as a dominant form, extending from the end of the Homeric Greek period into our own times. If Heidegger is right, then a meta-representationalism, as it were, inhabits all of Foucault’s narrower temporal bandwidth. Or, put another way, representationalism — as a weak *ontology*, as an ontology that reaches only so far as the ontic and thereby fails to see being in terms of the ontological difference — runs through all of Foucault’s essentially *epistemic* eras.⁴ In this case, Foucault’s epistemic “age” of representation could only be a period in which representational thought, accidentally perhaps, becomes clearer

⁴. Deleuze (1988a, 109) writes: “This is Foucault’s major achievement: the conversion of phenomenology into epistemology”. By contrast, Deleuze reads Heidegger’s movement as follows: “From intentionality to the fold, from being to Being, from phenomenology to ontology” (1988a, 110). The strictly Foucauldian reading, then, would have to be that Heidegger’s discovery of the almost complete absence of thinking appropriate to “Being” (and therefore his insistence on the continuity of representational thought from ancient times up to the present) is, itself, only possible under the epistemic aegis of modernity. It would, on that reading, be a classical instance of the transcendental dialectic. But that version of things would have to ignore the fact that every version of what culture is — from Hobbes to Marx — is strikingly representationalist in Heidegger’s sense.

to itself; and accordingly, the “modern” age would be no more than a more seriously deep ignorance of our continuing dependence on representational thinking — including Foucault’s own occultation of that quasi-ontological condition. Displaying perhaps his rarely acknowledged dependence on Heideggerian thought, Foucault himself voices this possible objection to his outline of the transition from classical thinking to modern man:

It cannot, therefore, be objected to this transition either that being in general is not contained in thought, or that the singular being as designated by the “I am” has not been interrogated or analysed on [its] own account. Or rather, these objections may well arise and command respect, but only on the basis of a discourse which is profoundly other, and which does not have for its *raison d’être* the link between representation and being; only a problematic able to by-pass representation would formulate such objections. (1970, 312)⁵

Then, if such “Heideggerian” and therefore counter-representationalist objections do hold, there would still be no reason to doubt Foucault’s dating of the arrival of man and modernity. There would only be reason to doubt his claim that this event put an end to representationalism in its deeper, ontological sense.

In this respect, the subject as empirico-transcendental doublet would not be the displacement — rather it would be among the possible continuations — of representational thinking: the very form of thought that precipitated the idea of culture as ubiquitous, omni-relevant and sempiternal; the form of thought that answered the question “Who are we in our strangely double internality and externality?” with a single and very recent answer — “We are cultural; for culture is our insides (mind, spirit, feeling) and our outsides (bodies, institutions, rituals)”. And that, to repeat a rather tired idea by now, is the very problem that the concept of culture poses. It shows its limits and begs for a new concept whose name might be culture-outside-representation, or culture as thought by “a problematic able to by-pass representation”, to redeploy Foucault’s own phrase.

But if a post-representationalist subject position is not yet available, then the cultural subject, today, must still be identical to the empirico-transcendental doublet. Accordingly, any investigation of the concept of culture today would need to know what that subject is. To put this another way, we could say that the subject that is limited by representational

⁵ My reading here assumes that the term “representation” is to be taken in its Heideggerian sense. But this may be utterly out of step with Foucault’s narrower sense.

thought, *is* the subject that is limited by the idea of culture as its ultimate referent, *is* the empirico-transcendental doublet. This impresses upon our investigation the need to know that subject and its ends. To find it is to see just one of the places where the peculiar idea of culture arises — and perhaps even where it may end.

For even Herder, one of the founders of the modern idea of culture, assumed that the term *Cultur* was synonymous with *Aufklärung* (enlightenment). For him, each was a metaphor (one derived from agriculture, the other from light) — but such that there was no *effective* difference between the terms (Wilson and van der Dussen 1995, 64). The cultural subject, then, pragmatically, *is* modern man. And it is this condition that is transferred to whomsoever (whether a New York city dweller or a warrior in the Papua-Niu Guinea Highlands) by the appellation “cultural”. The idea of culture, as the human condition, is no doubt a by-product of the Enlightenment; but this is only an approximation and it would therefore be a mistake to think that this (partly continuing and partly completed) moment in the history of ideas transcended representational thought. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. To think anything as cultural is to think it as representational, through and through. And to think any *subject* as a cultural being is to think it as among the multiple variations on the theme of modern man. This is where the possibility of difference and diversity, for European thought, comes to an end. All ideas of difference (of “body” or of “tone”, for example) and by definition of *cultural* differences (of bodies or tones), exist within (and never outside) the idea of the modern subject that is man, the empirico-transcendental doublet.⁶ To think an ultra-radical diversity outside these confines would mean no more and no less than a cogent alternative to representational thinking. Pending that, though still imagining it as yet-to-come, we may usefully ask what “modern man”, the specifically *cultural* subject, is.

6. This is not to say that “tone” is to be clearly associated with the Derridean idea of difference in any established or developed sense. Rather, as we saw in the previous chapter, it is something that Derrida simply expresses an interest in thinking about. But: can we imagine him thinking it without difference? And: is it possible to replace “tone”, in this context, with, say, “trace”, or any number of more developed avatars of difference in Derrida? On a Foucauldian reading, *any* such conceptualisations or counter-conceptualisations must be historically grounded.

III.

If Foucault is right, the modern way of being in the world (being a subject that is man) means an attention to a vast complexity of ultra-recent *modes* for shuffling between our inner states (for example, our thoughts, feelings and motives) and our outer conditions (the social and political institutions that are licensed to confirm and guarantee our subject positions). Early in the modern period, these modes were quite straightforward and few in number. They consisted primarily of the institutions of church and state; so that the inner self was, correspondingly, a relatively simple admixture of the soul and the citizen. Today the modes are much “freer” — so that we “want” to be different, differentiated as individuals, as complex combinations of multiple (but equally well known) technologies. Being “distinctly individual” simply means that there is now a complexity of modes for relating manifold institutions and terribly “original” selves (Miller 1993).

In quite a number of cases, the institutions of the self are the professionals of discipline, normality and subjection: the medical profession, the psychologists, the teachers and so on. To these new “freedoms” (personalised or bespoke differentiation) we owe, in return, a constant duty of disclosure; to the extent that, for example, those who are unable narrate their feelings to the satisfaction of psychologists can be incarcerated. Another instance, reiterated throughout Foucault’s work following *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, is the freedom of “choosing” one’s sexual-preference type from an extremely recent and limited menu of such types: hetero-, homo-, bi-, trans-, polymorphously perverse, celibate, and so forth. In return, this freedom of the “inner” self is balanced by the duty to constantly disclose that type as though it were one’s primal, pre-social, and ultimately authentic self (and not, as it is in fact, an effect of a recent history of sexual types). Hence the routine “reason” given for trans-sexual operations constantly runs as a variation on “*Inside I was really a woman/man*” and the rest.⁷ This might be called “the price of tolerance”.

A further instance of a category of subject is the “author”: a very recent creation of the ultra-new literary disciplines (Foucault 1986). And again, this author is always double. It is a soul, a genius, a unique person, a bundle of very specific experiences, a “life”. But it is

7. One of the first detailed cases in point is Martino (1977).

also a means of classifying, categorising and understanding a new form of writing called “literature”: crucial to the commerce in books, to libraries, to bookshops, to marketing. This double is so essential that a book without an author (or even with dubious authorship) is a scandal — socially intolerable in the age of man. Hence a figure called “Homer” has to be invented both to collect a number of pre-authorial texts and to add to them a proper subject as their “spiritual” anchor and guarantee of authenticity. Hence, too, the possible existence of two persons called “Graham Greene” — one staying home writing, the other attending to ceremonial functions in his place — creates an institutional and a biographical scandal since one can no longer rely on “the words of the author”; one can no longer return the books safely and properly to the events of “a life”. Hence, too, when an author or an artist turns out to be a separate identity from the “fictional” name on the cover of the book, or in the corner of the frame, when the hand that signed the paper is other than the fleshly hand of a definite living person (as in the cases of Helen Darville/Helen Demidenko, Leon Carmen/Wanda Koolmatrie, Elizabeth Durack/Eddie Burrup and Ray Beamish/Kathleen Petyarre) the public and the critics cry foul.⁸ And they do so not just out of sympathy for the “minorities” whose political and cultural identities, they feel, have been usurped; they are also scandalised by any event, any breaching incident, that plays fast and loose with the human condition of modernity.

A text, then, *has* to be the confession or disclosure of an author. Without this condition, its very existence (as aesthetically reliable and as a saleable commodity, which is, now, the same thing) is in jeopardy. The author discloses himself or herself in public in return for the “freedoms of expression” that flow from that status. Where the disclosure is not forthcoming, the corresponding freedom will, almost without exception, be cut off. But things have to be so in order for the discipline of literature to function and for the commerce in literature to continue. And again, the discipline and the commerce can never be satisfactorily separated (for example into “disinterested” criticism and literary “investment”). Man *has* to be both transcendental “mind” and a *properly corresponding*

⁸ These are all “celebrated” examples of authorial transgressions that received public notoriety in Australia (and, to some extent, beyond) in recent times. In the Darville case, *Rolling Stone* magazine (the Australian edition) ran a headline that tells all of this in a single phrase: “Author Tells Stories — Shock, Horror!”.

empirical, political, bodily entity. Anything short of this (or even slightly different from it) generates a moral scandal of the deepest possible order.

So wherever we turn to the “subjective” (the inner, the mental, the realm of supposedly pure ideas), we fail to find a root or a starting point — we fail to find our “essential selves” — rather we find what has come to count only very recently as our “essential selves”. And, moreover, at every point where we contact such selves, we also contact an array of external and institutional technologies for its confirmation, testing and, when all runs well, its assuring validation. The fact that we look at ourselves this way is, to repeat, a recent historical effect. And it is no co-incidence that its emergence is roughly contemporary with the first fully-fledged theories of culture, with what we now call “the human sciences”, those disciplines that would be nothing without the tissue-thin safety net of something we call “culture”.

IV.

Chief today, perhaps, among those sciences is psychology. Rivalled only by medicine in this respect, psychology (and its kin, the psy-complexes) is a discipline that has reached into the very heart of everydayness and the modern subjects that dwell there. Accordingly we now routinely have such things as “feelings” or “emotions”. We feel these may be eternal, but the ones we have are, it can be argued, historically relative. Just as the medievals experienced “accidie” or “acedia”, a kind of torpor, so we experience such things as empathy (a term that only came into being as late as the 1920s).⁹ Or else the inner states we have can be ultra-psychologised and medicalised. “Chronic Fatigue Syndrome” is a recent case in point. But the psychologisation of the self, its “training” by a discipline spectacularly constructed to measure “inner” states by utterly empirical means, runs even further than this. The very amounts and frequencies with which we do things, for instance, has now become utterly psychologised, to the point where “too much” is diagnosed and treated as a variety of “syndromes”. “Obsessive Compulsive Disorder” (OCD) is a critical instance.

⁹ This section on the psychologisation of everyday life is loosely based on a chapter from Miller and McHoul (1998).

With Harvey Sacks (1992, 57-65), we can note that everyday amounts and frequencies are routinely relative, even in medical encounters. Hence it is possible for a medical practitioner to understand that four hours sleep is “good” for one person and a “symptom” for another. The same goes for body weight and degrees of hygiene. In the case of daily frequencies, however, psychological categorisations are beginning to attempt to fix absolute values. Doing something in “too great” an amount or “too frequently” is rapidly becoming a syndrome or a disorder: OCD.

“Popular” psychology is effectively the reach of psycho-clinical thinking into the ordinary reading and viewing practices of everyday life. In one such popular characterisation of OCD, the term is applied to persons with the following sorts of characteristics:

She’s convinced she’s going to “catch” AIDS. Terrified of contamination, she washes her hands seven times on one side, seven times on the other, up to 50 times a day. She shampoos her hair for 30 minutes morning and night, more on weekends, and showers for at least an hour at a time.

Obsessed with germs and contamination, Leanne washed her hands constantly until they were raw and bleeding, and refused to touch any object unless she wore rubber gloves or used a paper towel. (Cox 1997, 23 & 25)

Notice the order of reporting here: the inner pathological state appears to *precede* the external over-frequent practice. *Because* one is “terrified of contamination”, one engages in much washing. *Because* one is “obsessed with germs”, there is, again, constant washing and over-protection. In this way the psychologistic reference to inner states appears to precede the quite ordinary inference that, for a large number of people, but not for all, 50 times per day is “noticeable” when it comes to hand-washing. The transcendental “condition”, then, acts as an “explanation” for the empirical frequency. Hence the condition and the frequency are “harmonised” or brought together in a common state of abnormality. That is, the empirico-transcendental doublet remains in order as an explanatory device for “what we are”, even as (or especially as) it finds instances of deviance.

The next stage, then, is a further clinical practice aimed at removing what appears to be the transcendental “root” of the empirical activity: the neurosis, the disorder, the pathology, or whatever :

The danger signs

Worried a friend’s acting a little strangely? “Be on the lookout for any sort of repetitive behaviour, such as a girlfriend who parks her car and spends 25 minutes checking the doors are shut”, says Rocco Crino, a clinical psychologist and deputy director of Sydney’s St Vincent’s Anxiety Disorders Unit.

If you suspect a friend is suffering from OCD, bring up the subject casually. Say you read an article about it in a magazine or newspaper and then leave it [this very text?] around for her to read it in private.

If she’s admitted she has OCD, don’t be tempted to “help” by dashing out at midnight to buy shampoo so she can wash her hair a strand at a time. Instead, encourage her to seek qualified help. (Cox 1997, 24)

“No”, this version of man argues, in effect, “leave her to confess the inner state that the psychologistic explanation produces — and then she has to cope with that account”. All (observer and observed, clinician and client, everyone’s sense of self) will then be “well”. By this point, we have moved from a very vague set of frequent empirical behaviours — including washing the body and locking doors, but not, say, gardening or using a typewriter — to an underlying disorder, and thence to a “condition” (via a medical analogy) and its “delicate” treatment which ultimately becomes the responsibility of someone who is now, and necessarily, in terms of subject categories, a *patient*.

OCD and its ilk are, then, direct products of our recently coming to think of ourselves as man, the empirico-transcendental doublet: an “authentic” inner condition and an external, public, scientific “case”. Almost every debate in the human sciences today is a debate between the two sides of this coin. As a vague and initial approximation, we might list some of the crucial antinomies that, today, constitute the body and soul of modern contentions. Each, clearly, derives from a seemingly essential, cultural, double self that is, at least in Heidegger’s sense, profoundly and continuingly representationalist:

actual	ideal
advanced	primitive
behaviour	thought
calculation	intuition
citizen	individual
civilisation	nature
conscious	unconscious
consumption	taste
data	knowledge
doing	reflecting
effective	affective
exploitation	care
fake	authentic
function	feeling
industrial	traditional
informational	poetic
institutional	inward
legislation	justice
logic	magic
machine	soul
material	mental
obedient	critical
political	mystical
practical	beautiful
production	creativity
public	private
rationality	sensibility
realism	romanticism
scientific	artistic
secular	religious
social norms	instincts
success	happiness
surface	depth
technical	expressive
training	culture
utility	personal growth
vocational	disinterested
worldly	unworldly

But in fact, as an utterly pragmatic matter, each of these doubles is like two prongs of a single fork. They are simply an instrument. So these doubles are not in fact grounds for debates but rather they display a deep agreement about an apparently fixed duality. The real (could we say, “more authentic”?) debate may be whether there is any other way of being a subject — after the set of arrangements we call “man”.

If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility — without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises — were to cause them to crumble ... then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.

(Foucault 1970, 387)

V.

The substantial body (maternal or otherwise), the ineffable tone (poetic or otherwise) are simply instances, fragments or local fractures of the indefinitely complex ways of being a subject today. Whatever it is that philosophy may have forgotten, today's very narrow but complexly fractured idea of the cultural self has not. The body and the tone rank with "obsessive compulsive disorder", "homosexual", "criminal", and all the other subject categories generated by our recently invented (and even more recently crazed) empirico-transcendental tension of representational thinking. Nothing can make them more essential, more enduring, than that.

And so Foucault's "poststructuralist" pragmatics may then offer us a great deal when it comes to understanding representational thinking today. At the very least, it signals the possibility of dislodging that form of thought — "like a face drawn in the sand...". It does so by a radical insistence on facticity and pragmaticity, on what Foucault (1981) calls "eventalisation". This is (one form of) poststructuralism, then; but could the same possibly be true of so-called *postmodern* thinking?¹⁰ What does it have to offer along the lines of usage?

¹⁰. There are sectors of the humanities and social sciences too numerous to mention where poststructuralism and "postmodernism" are conflated. Niall Lucy (1997) has convincingly separated them.

Chapter 9

Postmodern Ghost Images

I.

Before Lyotard (1985) said we were postmodern, he said we were pagan. “Pagan”, at least in one sense, signals Lyotard’s desire for an end to theology — to ghosts perhaps — and particularly to the kind of theology that attempts to ground its ethical demands in propositionally given truths. Consequently, pagan times are ethically rather than truthfully interested times; and so their ethics is always one of complete opinion severed from empirical fact. “Opinion” means, for Lyotard, the opening of a sheer situational ethics, uncoupled from any truths with application *beyond* the merely situational.

Among other things, what this account forgets is that the pagan is not strictly a-theological at all. The pagan is a local worshipper — as the connected etymologies of “pagan” and “parish(ioner)” suggest. The pagan is no atheist, but rather a worshipper of what can be found in the immediate locale. Sky, tree, rock, snake, herb. Tupperware, garden gnome, Ray-Ban, Superman comic, microwave. The pagan holds to a theology of local, situational experience and embroiders on its surface an ethics of opinion. Even Lyotard admits as much, but he fails to connect these two aspects of paganism. What he fails to see, then, is that paganism is much the same as classical theology; except that it replaces the latter’s concept of propositional truth with one of its own: immediate experience.

For all this, Lyotard still wants us to be freed from our classical moorings in extra-situational truths, to roam free in a world of ethical opinion. Hence, for many of us in the human sciences today, the sheer embarrassment of popular accounts of the “postmodern” (cf. Lucy 1997). With its coming, we are told, all fixed values are as nought; scientific inquiry gives way to a “free play” of experience and experiment; the situation’s demands dominate context-free maxims or “grand narratives”; any general politics is dead (along with God and man), and so on, and so on.

The mistake in Lyotard's thinking (and this is, perhaps, at the root of our embarrassment) stems from his sheer *desire* for a separation between propositional truths and ethics. If the move cannot be made in the first place (or even if the move is a dubious one), then Lyotard's projected world of opinion-ethics is a screwy bit of imagining; to say nothing of his assumption that this image also happens to describe the very condition in which we live today. So, in this chapter, I want to argue that there can be at least *some* connections between propositional facts and ethical values — even if not all of the former are connected to all of the latter (though, later, we will see that there may be some reasons for holding to the stronger thesis). For if there is a single falsifying example, if, on any occasion, facts and values can be connected, then Lyotard is simply wrong.

II.

To begin to see this we need to repeat Lyotard's formula for the excision of opinion from fact. It runs as follows. Pre-pagans, we hear, believed in such propositions as this (Lyotard 1985, 21):

- 1. If (if P then Q), then R

The nested proposition here is any straightforward factual proposition; and, contrary to Lyotard's formulation of it, it need not involve entailment. (Indeed, though again Lyotard does not say so, it must be a synthetic proposition.) The unnested one is ethical. So it reads:

- 1.1. If such and such a fact is true, then a certain ethical view holds.

For example:

- 1.2. If Auschwitz really occurred, then we ought not to be fascists.

Lyotard says that such formulae do not hold today because, somewhat tautologically, values cannot be predicated on facts. In fact, he thinks that these classical ethical formulae are forms of category mistake, precisely because they mix two distinct kinds of idiom, the factual and the ethical, the empirical and the transcendental. Another word he uses to describe such mistakes is "Platonic". So in place of Platonism, a pagan would have to hold that Auschwitz may indeed have occurred, but this cannot be a reason for not being fascistic. Rather, if we ought not to be fascists, it is because we have so deemed, and

purely in the domain of opinion. The ethical choice cannot be grounded in hard fact and this is what it means to say that we are confined to the domain of opinion in matters of ethics.¹

Two things need to be argued in this case, against Lyotard. The *first* is that we can indeed, and often do, use relatively unobjectionable propositions of this “mixed” kind. That is, if, as we saw in Chapter 2, propositions are fundamentally cultural objects, then there is every expectation that they will derive from more than a single cultural technology, and there is no reason to think that the factual and the ethical are other than such contributive cultural technologies. The *second* is that there is at least one other possible nexus between factual and ethical propositions: namely the inverse of Lyotard’s “Platonic” formulation. Let us take each of these in turn.

How can we relate ethical to factual propositions? Surely this runs utterly against the currently fashionable fact/value distinction? The distinction, no doubt, is Aristotelian in inspiration and has, perhaps, its strictest formulation in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* (1972). But even in the early Wittgenstein, there is no moral injunction against *mixing* propositions of the two kinds. Wittgenstein, it must be remembered, distinguishes the propositions of the natural sciences (synthetic empirical propositions) from the (transcendental) pseudo-propositions of ethics, aesthetics and religion. But the distinction is, ultimately, grounded in the two different kinds of propositions’ relations to truth. Scientific propositions, he argues, can either be true or false; while ethical propositions simply do not figure in either of these relations to truth. Their statuses differ epistemically and, therefore, according to the doctrine of saying and showing, functionally. Scientific propositions can function as statements about the world; they can be said to “say”. But ethical pseudo-propositions have no truth-functional attachment to the world whatsoever (positive or negative); they can only be said to “show”.

So while Wittgenstein enjoins us to *distinguish* the two kinds epistemically and functionally, he does not, at any point, suggest that hybrids cannot be bred, let alone that

¹. What bothers me about this is that it is either tautological or contradictory. If we accept Lyotard’s premises, the position is tautological — “ethics” simply *means* “confined to the domain of opinion”. Otherwise, we might point out that the proposition “The ethical choice cannot be grounded in fact” is itself offered as a factual proposition and, moreover, as a factual proposition, it appears to ground a proposition about ethics: “We are confined to the domain of opinion in matters of ethics”.

they are not to be bred. Ultimately, on the argument of the *Tractatus*, any such hybrid would be ethical — its truth-functionality would be cancelled by *any* ethical “contamination”. What this suggests to me is that, even on inspection of an utterly radical distinction between fact and ethics, there are no good reasons to suspect that hybrid utterances are anything approximating category errors, as Lyotard claims they are. They would, on the very strictest account, be instances simply of ethical propositions. And this suggests, further, the de facto primacy of the ethical in such matters. So, once more: how can we relate ethical to factual propositions?

III.

Instead of moving “beyond” man and modernity, we could instead move “prior” to them. And there we would encounter at least one instance of an ethics that had no problems with fact-value equations. This requires a little backtracking.

In Chapter 2, we saw that a dimension of public morality had to be added to the Deleuzian semiotic to allow it to account for empirical descriptions of the “natural” moralities that attend the emergence of cultural technologies (writing, printing and computing, for example). This does not mean, however, that Deleuze’s work as a whole has eschewed moral-ethical considerations. On the contrary. For in Chapter 2, we were only concerned with Deleuze’s first book on Hume (1991). In the later work, especially the work on Nietzsche and Spinoza (Deleuze 1983; 1988b; 1992), the question of ethics arises directly. But it is nevertheless the case that, in all of this work, public *morality* (for example, absolute judgments of good and evil) is put to one side in favour of a philosophical *ethics* as such. Still, if we follow either of these tracks, the Nietzschean or the Spinozan, we can find an ethics that is markedly distinct from Lyotard’s, and such that (perhaps) Lyotard’s “paganism” of opinion is really no more than an appeal for gross moralising against genuine ethical reflection.

In the case of Deleuze’s uptake of Spinoza (1988b) we find a rather interesting difference from the Wittgensteinian position on ethics that appears to have inspired Lyotard. In Wittgenstein’s lecture on ethics (1965), he makes a further division within the logical-ethical distinction we have already encountered. Within the ethical partition, that

is, he distinguishes the relative (ordinary judgment) from the absolute (ethical judgment). Relative propositions include such things as “This is a good football player”. Absolute propositions, on the other hand, refer to applications of universal values: “This man’s life was valuable” (1965, 6). So when Wittgenstein delimits the *properly* ethical, he is referring to the latter kind of statement, the absolute. Propositions of the first (relative) kind are just ordinary propositions — good football is an empirical matter by and large. But propositions of the second (absolute) kind are instances of what he means by “ethics” as such. They are questions about, for example, what constitutes the value of a life — “the absolute good, the absolute valuable” (1965, 12). And, for Wittgenstein, such questions become hopeless as they move us “beyond significant language” (1965, 11). Ethics proper, as the *Tractatus* has it, is transcendental — it is that whereof we cannot speak (1972, #6.421 & #7).

Then, against this division, Deleuze-Spinoza’s position would be that what Wittgenstein calls the “absolute good” is not in fact ethical at all. Rather, it is mere moral judgment; the kind of judgment that, as we saw, arises naturally at the points of emergence of cultural objects. By contrast, the ethical, for Spinoza, is instead *utterly confined* to what Wittgenstein himself would call “relative” judgments. Ethics, in this sense, *replaces* and overcomes mere judgment.

Ethics, which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence [an “ethology”], replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the judgment of God, the *system of judgment*. But Ethics overthrows the system of judgment.

The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad). (Deleuze 1988b, 23)

Deleuze-Spinoza-Nietzsche would therefore say that Wittgenstein’s identification of the ethical with the absolute would mean that it actually works on a *moral* distinction between Good and Evil. And by contrast, the alternative position would be that ethics is (and should be) what discerns the relative differences between the good and the bad, in the space of the body, the empirical, the pragmatic. Then “He is a good footballer” would be an ethical proposition through and through; not merely, as for Wittgenstein, a mere shadow of (absolute) ethics-proper cast in the light of a mistake about the word “good”.

So Spinoza would agree with Wittgenstein that absolute statements (for example, statements about the absolute good as opposed to absolute evil) are nonsensical. But he would not agree that they were ethical as such. Instead, the ethical would be, in and of itself, an empirical matter: like a physical or chemical test. It would be a direct test of a body: a question of whether some body interacting with it were either good or bad for it. This is, then, an ethics of bodies, and not necessarily human biological bodies, but also bodies of ideas, without organs, *just* bodies. It is for this reason that Deleuze calls Spinoza's ethics an "ethology" (1988b, 27 & 125).

According to this "practical philosophy", the bodies in question are constituted by what they can affect, their affects (their powers, what they can do in relation to other bodies):

Children know how to do this: Little Hans, in the case reported by Freud, makes a list of affects of a draft horse pulling a cart in a city (to be proud, to have blinders, to go fast, to pull a heavy load, to collapse, to be whipped, to kick up a racket, etc.). For example: there are greater differences between a plow horse or draft horse and a racehorse than between an ox and a plow horse. This is because the racehorse and the plow horse do not have the same affects nor the same capacity for being affected; the plow horse has affects in common rather with the ox. (1988b, 124)

If the affects increase a body's power, if the relations it engages in with another body "agree" with it (*convenientia*), then they are good; if they diminish the body's power, if they "disagree" with it, then they are bad (*inconvenientia*) (1988b, 33). And the decision, in any case, is properly ethical.

Accordingly, we can say that auto-immune responses are *ethically* good because they enhance a body's powers in the presence of another (Deleuze 1988b, 42) and that, contrastively, a genuine poison (one of Spinoza's favourite cases) is *ethically* bad because it decreases the powers (the affects) of the body it interacts with. And so, if, against Wittgenstein (who would seem to have too closely identified the ethical with the absolute) and against Lyotard (who would seem to have followed Wittgenstein into the idea that ethical propositions are necessarily absolute and therefore matters of moral judgment) it

would be possible to ground perfectly ordinary (and yet properly ethical) propositions in matters of, in this case, bodily fact:

- 2. If smoking causes lung cancer, then we ought not to smoke.

And the Spinozan ground for this (for Lyotard a “mixed”) proposition would be that any cancer would be an instance of a body (of disease) that diminished the powers and affects of another body that it interacted with, that it grew in, that it disposed itself to grow in at the cost of its host.

If this argument holds, then it would be a mistake in the discipline of ethics to construe ethical differences as differences between (“absolute”) good and evil. Such differences would lie instead in the distinction between what is good and what is bad for a body — for an actual empirical entity at a given moment (such that, for example, in an extreme case, poison might be good for a body in mortal pain). And no matter what we might think of this particular “practical philosophy”, this pragmatic or empirical ethics, it shows that there are perfectly arguable grounds — against Lyotard — on which to think that at least some propositions of value can be grounded in observable fact.

IV.

In the spirit of Spinoza today, another way of imbricating fact and value would be to turn to scientific accounts of the universe as a kind of body in its own right. Here it is tempting to invoke such physical phenomena as gravity; and we are reminded of Dr Johnson’s challenge to the effect that anyone who wanted to doubt the effects of gravity would be welcome to do so from any of his upper-storey windows. But another case in point would be the fact that every school of cosmology, no matter what its difference from the others, agrees that the present time is extremely recent. That is, every conceivable calculation of the total duration of the universe places the current time extremely close to its beginning. In a phrase: everything, without exception, is cosmically young. There is no good reason to doubt this proposition. No conceivable position could begin to adduce evidence against it. It is a condition under which all persons exist, from creative artists to creationists, from milliners to millenarians, from flat dwellers to flat-earthers. Furthermore, it is also utterly undeniable that within the gamut of this neo-natal span of the universe, the existence of

human beings is vastly more recent again. So everything is young, and we are, temporally, barely existent. On this scale of things, it seems to me utterly correct to adduce such propositions as the following:

- 3. Because we are so ultra-recent, we ought not to say we know anything significant about time.

On a crudely empiricist (that is, utterly “pagan”) epistemology then — and whether or not we agree with such an epistemology but simply in the knowledge that we are applying Lyotard’s own — we should have to say that nothing’s experience of time has been of any significance given how little time there has been for it *to* experience. The resultant ethical proposition can, I think, be defended against charges of self-refutation for, in effect, it says: given how little we know of something (not that we know nothing of it), we ought to be modest in our claims about it. Or else: do not speak if you know only a little.²

This proposition clearly connects a factual and an ethical proposition according to Lyotard’s “Platonic” formula. But I can see no good reason to deny it. Indeed, I would want to question the ethical status of anyone who did deny it and so spoke, instead, on behalf of the rights of anyone whatsoever to any opinion whatsoever on any matter whatsoever, regardless of how brief their experience of the matter happened to be. That is, *pace* Lyotard, even opinion runs out somewhere. And when it comes to universal time, we are all in the same boat.

V.

In the factual sphere, then, we have a well-grounded and healthy scepticism about (among other things, perhaps) time. In the ethical sphere, we have a clearly related injunction against speaking without some claim to experience and expertise. Because of the intimate connection between these two matters, I think we have good grounds for seeing how the inverse of Lyotard’s Platonic formula might also hold. It would look like this:

- 4. If (R) then P

² The particular example here is the question of time. I suspect that similar arguments could be mounted with respect to causation and, perhaps, with respect to the correctness of descriptions. Since all synthetic propositions are temporal (tensed) and carry descriptions of things and persons — and since no small number of propositions carry direct or indirect claims about causation — I would want to say that they, thereby, carry ethical weight. Otherwise, we would have to make claims about the utterly pure empiricity of “scientific” propositions.

According to the inversion, the nested proposition is ethical and the unnested one is factual. And in fact, such a proposition-type is already implied by our investigation so far. This is because, as we have seen, any claim to know time (for example, and among other things) is always already ethically imbued. It flies in the facts of anything's limited experience of universal time. So an instance of the reverse formulation would be such things as the following:

- 4.1. If we take it that we know time sufficiently well, then the Big Bang took place between 13×10^9 and 20×10^9 years ago.

All temporal claims, then, are launched on the basis of at least one ethically-imbued assumption and can be inspected for their relation to that basis. More micrologically speaking, given that there are no factual synthetic propositions without predicates, and given that no predicates are untensed, then all such propositions can be said to rely ultimately on ethical claims about a capacity to know time — a capacity about which I think we have good reason to be utterly sceptical.³ And yet, everything we know about human existence shows that we continually make such claims. We say that we did such and such yesterday; that we will do such and such tomorrow; that we almost always do such and such things; that we never do others, and so on.

It is this capacity — not the capacity to know *about* time, nor the fact of our *living* in time (like a kind of home) — that makes us utterly unique. For we are the only things in the universe that we know of that can make such claims and, moreover, make them in the face of what is, ultimately, factually, such diminished experience. In our communication, we constantly ignore, perhaps like a kind of “illusion” or “wager”, the fact that we can know very little about our universal temporal condition. This happens in every culture and regardless of every minute personal difference. It is, perhaps, a condition of all our communication. I would never wish to criticise this necessary “ignorance”, “wager”, or “illusion”. On the contrary, it reminds me above all things of what it is to be human. If this

³. One who transcends the category of scepticism and who is perhaps more “postmodern” (and definitely more pagan) than even Lyotard, is Heinrich, the narrator's son in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*. He argues as follows:

“Is there such a thing as now? ‘Now’ comes and goes as soon as you say it. How can I say it's raining now if your so-called ‘now’ becomes ‘then’ as soon as I say it?”

“You said there was no past, present, or future”.

“Only in verbs. That's the only place we find it”. (DeLillo 1984, 23-4)

is the kind of “ghost” we must have, it is infinitely preferable to Lyotard’s pure-opinion variety.⁴

Hannah Arendt puts this character of sheer temporality into the most stark and beautiful terms, even as she elucidates its centrality for practical social life, its central (ethical) problems, and the pragmatic solutions we routinely bring to those problem. She writes (and note the necessary admixture of the factual and the ethical here):

... though we don’t know what we are doing when we are acting, we have no possibility ever to undo what we have done. Action processes are not only unpredictable, they are also irreversible; there is no maker or author who can undo, destroy, what he has done if he does not like it or when the consequences prove to be disastrous. This peculiar resiliency of action, apparently in opposition to the frailty of its results, would be altogether unbearable if this capacity had not some remedy within its own range. (Arendt 2000, 180-1)

And the ethical remedy for this general factual state of human action?:

The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility is the faculty of forgiving, and the remedy for unpredictability is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises. The two remedies belong together: forgiving relates to the past and serves to undo its deeds, while binding oneself through promises serves to set up in the ocean of future uncertainty islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind would ever be possible in the relationships between men. Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer’s apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell. Without being bound to the fulfilment of promises, we would never be able to achieve that amount of identity and continuity which together produce the “person” about whom a story can be told; each of us would be condemned to

⁴. Wittgenstein’s meta-ethical position is similar, though grounded in a quite different ethics: “My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it” (Wittgenstein 1965, 11-12).

wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of his own lonely heart, caught in its ever changing moods, contradictions and equivocalities. (Arendt 2000, 181)

And that, precisely, is where Lyotard's "pagan" subject would be: condemned, outwith the factual question of action-time and its ethical corollaries, to its immersion in a solipsistic mélange of opinion, condemned "to wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of his own lonely heart, caught in its ever changing moods, contradictions and equivocalities".

As Foucault found in *The Order of Things* (1970), there is no instance where the transcendental can be finally separated from the empirical.⁵ This clearly suggests that no pure instances of the ethical can exist unalloyed by matters of fact; and vice versa, no utterly factual matters can be adduced without ethical weight, no matter how slight; for man *is* the empirico-transcendental doublet. And while Foucault, as we saw, imagines a time when this version of the subject would disappear, I for one have seen no signs of this occurrence lately — no signs of a postmodern *condition*; nothing like Lyotard's pagan, released from the ethical consequences of factual temporality.

In this light, Lyotard's call for a paganism of utter opinion, predicated on an injunction not to mix genres (the ethical and the factual), is an unsatisfiable (indeed a romantic) demand. And how peculiar that something called the "postmodern" should be grounded on an injunction not to mix genres — that is, on a refusal of essentiality of hybridity. And perhaps too, how peculiar that the very "modern" condition that a happily dwindling body of recent theory wishes to obviate (through its desire for an end to theology) should be constituted as a perfectly ordinary condition of essential hybridity. Maybe, then, what passes as "the postmodern" (which is to say, as "postmodern theory") is nothing but a romantic celebration of a single side of the modernist coin, a push towards the peculiar transcendent called "opinion".

In this case, the "postmodern" condition would be nothing more than a superficially reconfigured arrangement of the modern. If modernity were a supermarket (and why not?), Lyotard's thinking would only address a particular day when the shelves happened

⁵ While the term "transcendental" is problematic here, we might remember that Wittgenstein, too, calls ethics transcendental. Sometimes, in both Foucault and Wittgenstein, the term seems to be used in the Kantian sense of referring to "the conditions of possibility". Sometimes it has the more general sense of "the unspeakable" or "the ineffable".

to be rearranged in a fairly minor way, though much to the confusion of opinionated, sweet-tempered, but sadly feeble minds:

The supermarket shelves have been rearranged. It happened one day without warning. There is agitation and panic in the aisles, dismay in the faces of older shoppers. They walk in a fragmented trance, stop and go, clusters of well-dressed figures frozen in the aisles, trying to figure out the pattern, discern the underlying logic, trying to remember where they'd seen the Cream of Wheat. They see no reason for it, find no sense in it. The scouring pads are with the hand soap now, the condiments are scattered.... They turn into the wrong aisle, peer among the shelves, sometimes stop abruptly, causing other carts to run into them. Only the generic food is where it was, white packages plainly labelled.... There is a sense of wandering now, an aimless haunted mood, sweet-tempered people taken to the edge. They scrutinise the small print on packages, wary of a second level betrayal.... Many have trouble making out the words. Smearred print, ghost images. (DeLillo 1984, 325-6)

Chapter 10

More Ghosts

I.

Here we begin another entr'acte where we struggle with the ghost of Marx, the last cultural theorist (give or take the occasional anthropologist, the quirk of, for example, Geertz).¹ In these spaces, these in-betweens, as we did in Part One with the "Grace and Danger" excursion (Chapter 4), we have now to speculate — to spectre-ate or expectorate; to spit it out. What are those spectres that haunt us — precisely? Except that even to say "precisely" is to miss what any ghost is on (stage) about. The ghost is always imprecision — the matter (or, more likely, the non-material) that haunts us.

And so, culture, the concept (or else the "thing", as with the idea of "a culture") is what haunts us. After all, it has always been identified or mis-identified with the spirit (of a nation, of a people, of whatever culture appears — wrongly — to belong to). Then, like any spirit, its belonging is always wrong or untimely. The spectre haunts us because it never quite belonged — in any time. It brings *itself* back; for what else would force it to return, as a revenant? Culture is beyond forcing from above, for it, as itself, as culture, already declares the moment of secularity. (Arendt: "there is no maker or author who can undo, destroy, what he has done if he does not like it or when the consequences prove to be disastrous".) It cannot return under compulsion. Its revenance is entirely its own. For that is precisely what it was designed for — to be *the* secular spirit, the ghost of the Euro-human, "man".

So we grapple with Marx and his spectres today — the awful threat or promise that culture may be nothing but the evaporative effect of increasingly global economic conditions. And still we have to struggle: to find a way beneath the Marxist radar.

And what we have to say is that we *can* say. And then it is a very small step (in the face of the ghosts) to say that we can utter. But what we have to utter is something other: a

¹. The spectre of Marx, here, is, of course, that of Derrida (1994a).

move against all spirits, even as they insist upon their peculiar presence amongst us. What we insist upon, against them — especially after Irigaray, Spinoza and Arendt — is our materiality, our embodiedness, facticity, pragmaticity, immanence. So culture is always a body, what a body does, and what it is, what it makes. And this materialism should satisfy the spectre of Marx, should make his spectre (and all spectres) go away. But it will not: for they are spectres. We live in a time when materialism itself has become spectral.

The spectre is whatever it might be that returns us to (or carries us off towards its own) immateriality and representation. So then we face the paradox of culture: it is the physical making that gives us our materiality, our sense of ourselves (over and above pre-secular spirits, religions, theisms), but it is also what makes us ourselves in a “new” (non-secular) form still to come — and the historical conditioning we have (our failure to forgive and forget old conditions) disposes us to think of culture as the replacement for (and therefore the equal of) the spiritual. The radicality (the anti-representationalism) of the idea of culture has not quite penetrated. The radical potential of culture outside representationalism has not yet begun to have its effects.

And this means that culture, ultimately, a culture to come, will be an end to spectres. It will be an a-theology and (in the Spinozan sense) an ethology. Not even a hanging on to culture as a “ghostly” binding of persons in some ethereal compact — and neither a total and (equally theological) sense of the self. Perhaps then, a sheer attention to movements.

II.

- What moves (intransitive)? Or: what is simply movement?
- Materially, the *body*, is the only thing that moves, is movement.
- What moves *us* (transitive)?
- Non-materially, what we might still call the *tone*, is the only thing that moves us.

If culture is this body and this tone, then we may have to take back everything we called a “forgetting” in Chapter 8. We may have to fold it back into the relentlessness of a pragmatics of culture. How do we begin such a fold?

Chapter 11

Folding — The Return to Deleuze

I.

If, as we saw in Chapter 9, the idea of the “postmodern” takes us nowhere other than back to man and modernity, to the familiar double we have encountered there so many times, then it most likely has nothing new to offer our investigation of what it is to be cultural, as *Ereignis* or (ap)propriability. And so we are left today, perhaps, squarely in the hands of the “spawn” of Heidegger, particularly in the form of Foucault but also, to some extent, the other poststructuralists (particularly Derrida) — to the extent, that is, that they also contribute to our generally pragmatic outlook. But quite early on, and repeatedly throughout this inquiry, we have also found some elements of compatibility between pragmatic readings of Heidegger and Deleuze’s empiricism. Is there, then, as a penultimate way of tying up these loose ends — these doubles to which any insistence on a *purely* empirical locus for cultural conditions always seems to lead — any mileage for us in Deleuze’s strategy for the (non-)resolution of doubles (including tones and bodies, spirit and matter): the strategy of the fold? Or, put another way, can the relation of appropriation to appropriation (*Ereignis*) itself be given in the form of a fold?

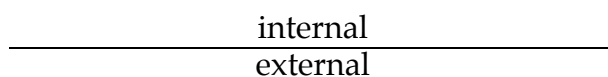
II.

Deleuze picks his sense of the fold up, and out, from Spinoza (Deleuze 1988b; 1992), Leibniz (Deleuze 1993) and, above all others, from Foucault (Deleuze 1988a) whose intimations of the fold are, for Deleuze, ultimately Heideggerian. What then is the importance of the fold and folding in this sense? Roughly, it is that doubles arise, not when two orders are posited *against* one another in the form of a straightforward or linear opposition ($x | y$), but rather when two orders come together as (or in) a fold. Or more accurately, as we shall see, the linear arrangement that traditionally connects and disconnects doubles (the bar in the expression “ $x | y$ ”) is only *one* possible moment in the

dynamic of folding. It is the brief and often rare instant when a constantly refolding surface just happens, accidentally, to be linear or frozen in a moment of linearity.

To take an example of a fairly simple double: the “internal subjective world” might be one such order and the “external objective world” its other. The perennial question of philosophy, with regard to these (or any) two orders, would be: how are they connected? The idea of the fold, then, is a unique answer to such questions. To see how it is so unique, we might look at the matter graphically for best effect.

In traditional (or, as Deleuze puts it, “state”) philosophy, in what might be called “the Western metaphysical tradition”, a double order is arranged laterally or hierarchically, like a fraction in arithmetic, with one term arranged to one side of, or else above, the other and a line clearly drawn between. So, taking our example of the internal and external orders (which, to reiterate, would only be one case), the traditional picture would look as follows:



The question, then, concerns the nature of the linear (dis)juncture separating and connecting the two orders. It is as if two orders of *space* were being postulated; separated by a border or territory marker of some kind. Traditional thinking, that is, territorialises concepts. It allots them to their proper places, either side of a fixed line. And then it imagines how it is that the border between these places could possibly be traversed: by a treaty, an exchange, a diplomatic mission or envoy, for example, or else by a raid, a skirmish, a battle, or even a war.

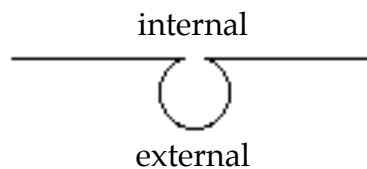
This is why, to shift examples, Kant, ultimately, finds no way from our givenness as fleshly, worldly, empirical entities into a transcendent state of spirituality. As we saw, he resigns himself, later in his life, as he writes his *Anthropology*, to saying that the highest good we can attain is not to join the world of the spirit but rather to manage, here and now, a continual “conflict” to keep flesh and spirit (the empirical and the transcendental) in check (Kant 1978, 185).¹ We become split (the very split that Kant once thought could be overcome): partly sensuous, partly ethical; partly outer, partly inner. And the name for the

¹. The relevant passage is quoted in Chapter 1 and re-quoted early in Chapter 7.

line or bar that marks the border between these realms is, in this particular case, “conflict”. The zones of order are both territorialised, then, and at war.

However, this “problem” (separate territories) and its “solution” (war) may be no more than an effect of how dual orders are traditionally construed in the first place: *as* distinct and linearly separated spaces. The idea of the fold challenges this initial arrangement. It says in effect that relations between orders are never singular or linear. Rather, they are always *complex*.

Let us pause here for a while to see how “the fold” actually *means* “the complex”. The root of the word “complex”, in Latin, is *complicare*. The central syllable in this term is, literally, the fold, from *plicare*, to fold. It is from this source that Deleuze’s French arrives at *le pli* (the fold) via the Old French *pleit* and *plait*. And it is from the same source that English gets the terms “plait” and “pleat”. What is complex, then, is folded *with* (*com-*). For any pair of orders we care to name, their complexity is constituted by their folding *with*: and if complex, then non-linear. The divide that is made by a fold is both a divide and not a divide: it separates only to bring together, as it were through another dimension. If we look at a three-dimensional fold two-dimensionally, from its side, we can see how a complex (*com-plicare*) arrangement of orders operates:²



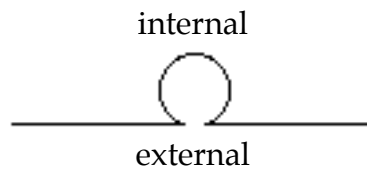
Here the two orders appear not as separated by a linear frontier but, rather, as completed in a multiple relation. That is, each domain folds into the other by a complication of the entire space in which the apparently separate domains exist. Taking things a step further, if we imagine the “gap” at the “points” of the fold (shown in the sketch above as a clearly visible gap) as being, in fact, infinitesimal (but a gap none the less), then we can see a number of important features of the complex arrangement.

Firstly, there appears to be a kind of “third space”; a space that is neither internal nor external. This is the space of the fold itself. But secondly, we can also see that the fold does not quite (because of the gap and its almost-but-not-quite touching points) constitute its

². This diagram is a stylised version of Deleuze’s freehand sketch (1988a, 120).

own space. So, thirdly, there is a between-spaces that is also both-spaces. That is, fourthly, each space pushes into the other — for, fifthly, anything occupying the space of the fold (the almost-but-not-quite space of the “circular” fold) is on the lower (“external”) side of the space but is, in fact, openly connected with everything on the upper (“internal”) side. The realisation of the fold, then, is the realisation that, when it comes to doubles (or dualities of order), they are complex and that it is possible for objects or events within them to occupy spaces that are “both/and”: for example events may be *both* internal *and* external.

But what we have seen in the model so far is only an *en*-folding. In addition to this, we can equally construct a reverse flexion, or *re*-enfolding:



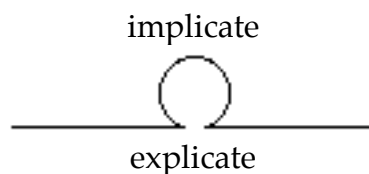
Now if we imagine the internal-external space flexing between both of these arrangements, then we can see that the fold is, in fact, in itself complex and dynamic. It constantly moves between enfolding, briefly unfolding (or becoming linear) for an instant, and re-enfolding. Accordingly, the once-territorialised spaces become both re-territorialised and de-territorialised as the flexing and unflexing of the fold proceeds. So, in the field of what were once distinctly double orders, we can see that objects and events can (in addition to being “both/and”) be “neither/nor”. They can, depending on quite unpredictable circumstances, be *both* internal *and* external, or else *neither* internal *nor* external.

What is com-plex in this sense, is therefore made essentially of *movements*. One set of movements (the en-folding and re-folding) is the im-plication of the object/event. The other (the un-folding) is its ex-plication. As the translator of Deleuze’s *Expressionism* puts it, this is a

system of *implicatio* and *explicatio*, enfolding and unfolding, implication and explication, implying and explaining, involving and evolving, enveloping and developing. (Joughin 1983, 5)

What may appear as distinct and eternally separable spatial orders turn out (and in), with the fold, to be pliable, plastic and flexible inter-fields of, for example, appearances and realities, specificities and general conditions, empirical and transcendental qualities, factual and ethical substances, and so on, spreading over the vast range of conceptual orders that supplies philosophy (indeed all “modern” thought) with its puzzles and its solutions.

In fact, what Deleuze is proposing is (and here we see another dimension to the model) an unstable double order *of* unstable double orders. This condition can be shown as follows. Taking the “implicate” and the “explicate” to stand for the dynamics of en-folding and un-folding (though this is obviously a simplification), we can see that these two are themselves subject to exactly the same arrangement as any other orders we care to mention. For example:



That is, the very movement of the “ordinary” en- and un-folding of conceptual terrains is, itself, subject to such movements. At one moment a meta-object or meta-event (such as one finds in philosophy, for example, or else in cultural analysis) may be caught as an apparently “pure” im-plication, as “folded in”. Here, it is seen internal to its own “frame”: as a specific text, a unique image, a particular method or technique, and so on. It appears utterly singular and “in itself”. At another moment, the “same” object/event is caught as an apparently “pure” ex-plication, as “folded out”. Then it is seen as subject to what lies outside it: its other, its context, its surrounds, its field of concepts and so on. It then appears as an “instance” and always “in relation” to a condition.³

For Deleuze, this is not a “contradiction” or a “puzzle” to be solved. It is not a problematic situation to be disentangled. Rather, it is the very condition of possibility of every contradiction, puzzle, problem (im-plication) — and also of every corresponding

³ Think here, for example, of the debate in media studies between the analysis of texts or products (such as films) and the analysis of the industrial conditions of their production. Inside a fold-logic, there need be no such debate. “Aesthetic” (or “semiotic”) and “industrial” (or “productional”) facts and values would become virtually identical.

certainty or solution (ex-plication). It means, for example, that questions cannot be returned to, say, pure empiricism for their answers; and neither can they be returned to pure transcendental questioning. Neither of these alone will suffice; yet neither will they suffice together as a strictly linear double. An event cannot be understood (it does not have “meaning”) in its utter singularity, its sheer empiricity; and neither can it be understood only in terms of its conditions of possibility, its transcendental grounds. (Hence, again, the term Deleuze adopts for his philosophy, “transcendental empiricism”.) According to the logic of the fold, this is not a field of contradiction. Rather, it is possible to see that the sheer facticity or empiricity of an event can itself *be* a condition of its possibility. The space of the factual, that is, can be folded into the space of the transcendental. The pragmatics of a particular repetition can be just as “grounding”, in this sense, as the similitudes and differences that make this particular repetition part of a field of events in general. What makes, for example, this sentence what it is is just as much its specific and unique qualities as it is the whole syntax and semantics of English sentences (of which it is one instance).

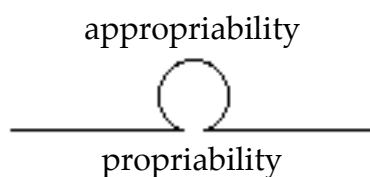
This is a surprising outcome of fold-logic: that a cultural object or event can alter its properties depending on the implicate-explicate aspect under which it is viewed. Hence an emotion can be seen “below the line” in the internal space of a unique subjectivity where it is seen (or felt) to reside. At the same time, it can be located in its conditions; for example, in a “history of emotions” (such that it is seen to have both a particular historical origin and also a time “before” when no such emotions were felt). We can feel “genuine” empathy and also know that the possibility of understanding ourselves as able to do so does not arise until as late as the 1920s. Neither of these — the uniquely felt and the historically conditioned — is the “real” emotion. Neither the factual nor the general, the internal nor the external, guarantee its “reality”. Rather, the enfolding of the factual into the general, the inner into the outer, and the reverse unfolding, constitute a multi-plexity that “brings about” the emotion, as it comes to presence (its ontology) and as it is simply present (its ontic status). Any debate over which is the “real” or “primary” emotion can only arise by wrongly imagining a strictly territorial border or bar between the two. And

the same must be true of any object or event that has “meaning”. That is what it is for something to have meaning; for it to be “cultural”.

III.

In this way, we have come a good distance from the relatively “simple” hybridity we once located at the centre of what it is to be cultural (Chapter 2), even if, at that point, we also suspected a kind of hybridity-in-general to be operating in the sphere of cultural meaning. What is important, now, is that we should be able to name and understand the form of that double specificity-and-conditionality that constitutes cultural being. It is easy enough to say, on one reading of transcendental empiricism, that specificity *is* the condition of culturality. But this is only part of the picture. The other part is made up of the general terms between (the possible orders between) which culturality flows. And this too might be given by the Heideggerian double of *Ereignis*.

This, we will remember, is the double propriability / appropriability of objects and events. If culture comes to presence along accidental lines of usage, as objectivity (care) and workliness, then we need to see the conditional terms that govern (or attempt to govern) that movement from coming-to-presence (ontology) to being-present (onticity). Is it possible that this condition is the double of *Ereignis* itself — not read as a linear, dualistic and contradictory double condition, but rather as a com-plex, folded order? If so, the picture we would need would be something like this:



We have already seen that at least two cultural technologies must come into play along the pragmatic axis in order for a cultural object to form (and, as always, I take the term “object” to include anything cultural, including events). But now we must ask: what is the tension or the *contention* that brings them into place? If the model proposed here (a terrible, even teratological, hybrid of Heidegger and Deleuze) is right, then the contention is, after all, over *ownership*.

The fact that, at their base level, cultural objects are *appropriable* is, effectively, a scandal. If allowed to be simply open to appropriation, then, because of this condition, cultural objects would have no value in any system. Culture would *be* anarchy. Against this sheer appropriability, cultural objects have to be brought, folded through, on to the side of propriation (clear, definite and proper ownership). And this is effectively the function of what, elsewhere, we call “economies”. Or else we could say, the term “economy” is defined as the movement or motion towards propriation — the setting of the values inherent in the passage towards propriation.

And this would explain why Marxism has been the most successful and fertile intellectual ground for cultural analysis to date: because it centralises the economic conditions of the production of cultural objects; because it recognises propriation as primary. The problem, however, is that Marxism, thereby, only sees a small part of a complex movement; it does not ask (and so it does not know) what economies are *for*. It does not know what they are when considered as the mechanics of a single motion of the complex and dynamic fold of (ap)propriability. When seen this way, the economic “conditions” of cultural production are, to be sure, very significant. But they are so only as a secondary *effect* of the primary condition of cultural objecthood as such — namely (ap)propriability as a folding double. Economies exist, that is, as clusters of cultural technologies whose function is to try to end the scandal of cultural objects’ endogenous appropriability — to try to bring them safely back to an imaginarily “pure” state of propriation. And so they must always be constellations of (more) cultural objects rather than baseline explanations for them.

This is what commodities are and commodification is: the tension (tensile flex) of the fold of (ap)propriability *towards* (but never completely reaching, and never resting at) a “pure” state of proprietorship. All cultural objects are commodities insofar as they are pulled by this flexion of the fold. But, at the same time, the opposite flexion tends to pull them back into appropriability as such, towards their always possible (but equally never reachable) “pure” ownerlessness. In this sense, they are also never commodities as such. The commodification hypothesis works, except that it has no answer to the question: if commodification is a process (as the term implies), what is it that *cultural* objects are as (or

before, or after) they come into that process? Commodificationists must always arrive at a non-answer: objects, if not commodities, are not cultural at all, so they must be natural. For me there is a perfectly good answer: before they are commodities (propriables), they are *appropriables*.

This is the primary tension at the centre of cultural production: the en-folding and un-folding of the doubly concrete and abstract forces of appropriability and propriability. Neither is, as it were, ever completely satisfied: for no object ever finally arrives at a state on one side of the line or the other — for the line (the line of usage) is always folding. We can find instances of this at play in cultural production: in the coming to presence of cultural objects. Two might suffice to capture just a small fraction of the immense range of possibilities that must now open up for cultural analysis.

IV.

A painter begins to paint. The brush is about to touch the canvas for the first time. Already the flexions of cultural becoming have played themselves out, countless times before this moment. The canvas itself is already a cultural object, caught between the ideal desires of the artisan who stretched it and the exigencies of the trade in materials. The same is true of the brushes and the paints, as well as the building, selling and renting of the studio. And no doubt a host of other object-events are critical to this moment. The cultural technologies at play in the birth of this painting yet-to-come are already multiplicitous. And still the canvas has not been touched.

From this point on, there are questions of ideas, perhaps. These are neither “inside” or “outside” the painter. The two orders inter-fold as even the first strokes are about to be made: something utterly new (an event in itself) has to be created; but there is also the “school” of art to which the painter belongs, the allegiances formed and the masters emulated — or else the painting is destined to re-announce a minor painter as a misunderstood master. The painting must be utterly unique and yet understandable in terms of the “grammars” of the visual sub-genres to which it belongs — or, as we must say, will yet belong. For still nothing has been painted.

And before all this, too, there are questions about the value of the work almost in progress. Is there a market? Or markets? What is it that they demand of this painting? Will it be given away — or else sold? How will it be pulled by these conditions? The effect. The *éclat*. How will it register in these respects? The future of the painting is contemplated as part of its very productional “inspiration”. And still nothing has been painted.

V.

Tonight I write a web page for the Internet. Every time I compose a graphic (and such that my involvement in it is no less complex than that of the painter in the previous example), I know that it must go out there, into the realms of appropriability. I think of it as “my” work. But digital versions of anything (music, film, photographs, paintings ...) are identical in their copies. If I make it and I post it to a website, *it* (not a vague simulacrum) is anybody’s. To produce work in this medium is to give it over to complete and utter reproduction. I can add © signs to my heart’s content. But nothing can stop it stopping being mine.

At the same time, these graphical works have to be made out of already existing digital images. All I do is assemble them for my web page. I scan existing images; I download them from the net; I reassemble them in, say, Photoshop software; I use the enhancing tools that come with the software; and occasionally I return to a graphics package that allows me “free” artistic skills to produce my own freehand (or freemouse) images. The materials that compose the “work” are hardly owned. They have already, despite their cultural labour, been freely posted or else sold as software.

Each of the elements of my work has traversed the flexions of (dis)owning — even before I take these elements up, to make my own. And every one of them has undergone the same conditions. So I wiggle in and out of a sense of personally owning this unique electronic image and a sense akin to utter plagiarism and theft. Still, neither of these senses gets close to what I am doing. For the indefinite reproducibility of the digital — along with the indefinite accessibility of the Internet — means that the distinction between, say, ownership and theft is never settled, always folding. Anything owned is already

composed of the appropriated. Anything appropriated can have the look of being (and there *is* only the look of being) unique.

PART THREE

Mixed Doubles

Chapter 12

The Twisted Handiwork of Egypt

I.

At several points in this book, particularly in Chapter 6, we have touched on the importance of Heidegger's essay "The Age of the World Picture" as a way of thinking through the standard representational pitfalls of the concept of culture. In this chapter (which has consequently become a part of the book in its own right), I want to conclude (add a coda and a summary) by offering a more positive uptake on what culture might be by working slightly more carefully through this important essay.

In the first paragraph of "The Age of the World Picture", Heidegger says something of utmost importance for and about *our times*. Let us see why this is the case. The paragraph reads:¹

In metaphysics reflection [*die Besinnung*] is accomplished concerning the essence [*das Wesen*]² of what is [*des Seienden*] and a decision [*eine Entscheidung*] takes place regarding the essence of truth [*das Wesen der Wahrheit*]. Metaphysics grounds an age [*ein Zeitalter*], in that through a specific interpretation of what is [*eine bestimmte Auslegung des Seienden*] and through a specific comprehension of truth [*eine bestimmte Auffassung der Wahrheit*] it gives to that age the basis [*Grund*] upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds complete dominion over all the phenomena [*Erscheinungen*] that distinguish the age. Conversely, in order that there may be an adequate reflection upon these phenomena themselves, the metaphysical basis for them must let itself be apprehended in them. Reflection is the courage [*der Mut*] to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into the things that most deserve to be called in question. (1977a, 115/75)

¹. The original is: "Die Zeit des Weltbildes", in *Gesamtausgabe, Band 5: Holzwege*, Frankfurt, Klosterman, 1977, 75-113. References in the text are followed by the relevant page numbers of the English and German editions respectively.

². In an extended footnote on the term *das Wesen* ("essence"), the editor of the Nihilism lectures notes that:

Heidegger emphasized the verbal sense of *wesen* as "governing" or "effecting", while retaining the fundamental reference to "presencing". (1991/4, 140).

This should be taken into account in every use of the word "essence" in this chapter, especially that in the last sentence.

Before we get to this critical paragraph itself, we need to think about the title “The Age of the World Picture” and its several terms, as well as about the expression “our times”. First, the title: the days of the fashionability of the term “world picture” are, after the end of the 20th century, long gone. That term seems to us, today, to mark an historicism that is already, itself, an item for investigation by the history of ideas. It may have begun with Spengler (1932), but it had its heyday among such writers as Karl Mannheim (1952), E.M.W. Tillyard (1963), Lucien Goldmann (1964) and perhaps even Michel Foucault (1970), not to mention the whole detour through “ideology”. And no doubt the great forebear of the “world picture” is Herder’s *Volkgeist* (1969). But cultural historicism is far from Heidegger’s sights as he levels this first paragraph of a paper about the age of the world picture. Still less, by employing the word “age” or “time” (*die Zeit*), is he trying to out-historicise this historicism by, as it were, simply confining it to its own age or time. This is, then, far from a kind of meta-historicism.

The age or time that Heidegger does bring before us in this essay is no less than the whole of modernity (*Neuzeit*), the new age, the new time. And its inception is marked, as in so many instances for Heidegger, by the Cartesian *cogito*. The time or age, then, is the time from Descartes’ *Meditations* (1641) — perhaps even before — to Heidegger’s present (1938) — perhaps even beyond. And what marks this age of modernity is its world picture. But, if this is not the world picture of the historicists, then what?

This age of modernity, for Heidegger, is a time in which there simply is a world picture; or, rather, in which the world *becomes* a picture: “The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture” [*Der Grundvorgang der Neuzeit ist die Eroberung der Welt als Bild*] (1977a, 134/94). So, “world picture” is to be read as “world as picture”. And, perhaps echoing Schopenhauer via Nietzsche, the world as picture is equivalent to the world as representation. The difference, however, is that while Schopenhauer (1969, 3) builds an explicit philosophy on the grounding idea that “The world is my representation” — that everything that *is* is an object for a subject and nothing more (such that things can never be, strictly, “in themselves”) — Heidegger gives this “picturing” an entirely different status. With Heidegger, the picturing relation to the world, the “philosophy of representation”, is always already implicit in all the thinking of

modernity from Descartes to Nietzsche. As we saw in Chapter 6, Schopenhauer's (1969, xii) explicitation of it — which he calls “this thought ... which has been sought for a very long time under the name of philosophy, and ... whose discovery is for this very reason regarded by those versed in history just as impossible as the philosophers' stone”³ — is merely that, an explicitation, hence no discovery and certainly no philosophers' stone. What Schopenhauer explicits, if Heidegger is right, every thinker of modernity must, at ground, necessarily think. This, then, is the age in which the world has become a picture, a representation. What does this mean?

II.

Derrida is lyrically sceptical of Heidegger's claim in this very essay (“The Age of the World Picture”) about the possibility of the totalisation of modern thought by representational thinking. He asks, in effect, if the collection of all thought (at least in our times, in modernity) by a single term is not, itself, a kind of totalisation. He asks whether:

in the very interior of what offers itself as the philosophical or merely theoretical usage of the word [“]representation[“], the unity of some semantic center, which would give order to a whole multiplicity of modifications and derivations, is to be presumed. (Derrida 1982b, 320)⁴

And, even if it is not to be presumed, then some other, even less definite, unity must underpin the thought (attributable to Heidegger) that all modern thought is representational. This may have to do with thought in general, in its essence, and it certainly has to do with all “collecting” and “grouping” together. Derrida refers to it as the *envoi*, the sending, a sending forth with no guarantee of arriving — perhaps even of arriving at such a definite concept as representation as the figure of our particular epoch. And so:

In order for the epoch of representation [= the age of the world picture] to have its sense and its unity as an epoch, it must belong to the grouping (*rassemblement*) of a more original (*originaire*) and more powerful *envoi*. And if there had not been the grouping of this *envoi*,

³. Again, see Heidegger's response to this claim, towards the end of section II of Chapter 6.

⁴. The original title, “Envoi”, will sometimes be used for this paper to resonate with another of Derrida's pieces, the “Envois” in *La Carte postale* (1980).

the *Geschick* [fate, destiny]⁵ of being, if this *Geschick* had not announced itself from the start as the *Anwesenheit* [presence] of being, no interpretation of the epoch of representation would come to order it in the unity of a history of metaphysics.... This grouping is the condition, the being-together of what offers itself to thought in order for an epochal figure — here that of representation — to detach itself in its contour and order itself in its rhythm in the unity of a destination, or rather a “destinality”, of being. (1982b, 321)

This is a significant statement whether we position Derrida, at this point, as disciple or as critic of Heidegger. Here a critical part of the Heideggerian vocabulary is used to alert us to its author’s proposal of a “unity” lying behind every “epochal figure” such as, for Heidegger, representation. Here Derrida discovers and homes in on the centre, not only of Heideggerian philosophy, but also of Heidegger’s history of metaphysics which, arguably, is the *raison d’être* for his counter-representationalist analytic of being. Heidegger himself explains the question of sending/destining, in “The Question Concerning Technology” as follows:

The essence of modern technology starts man upon the way of that revealing through which the real everywhere, more or less distinctly, becomes standing-reserve [*Bestand*]. “To start upon a way” means “to send” in our ordinary language. We shall call that sending-that-gathers [*versammelnde Schicken*] which first starts man upon a way of revealing, *destining* [*Geschick*]. (1977d 24)

Accordingly, any kind of revealing (and below, we shall mention the particular kind that technological, cultural and representational thinking are, *conjointly*, for Heidegger) is, in essence, a starting upon a way, a sending, an *envoi*. And, as Derrida goes on to say “It is in basing itself on this grouped indivisibility of the *envoi* that Heidegger’s reading can single out (*détacher*) epochs, including the most dangerous of all, the epoch of representation in modern times” (1982b, 322). But does this indivisibility (does *any* indivisibility) hold?

Derrida thinks otherwise:

5. As Derrida’s translators point out, while *Geschick* is often translated as fate or destiny: the German equivalent of “*envoyer*” is “*schicken*”, and in Heidegger the term “*Geschick*” ... occurs in connection with the emergence of the idea of Being, which is as it were “sent out” from some origin as “destined”. (1982b, 294).

In Heidegger, too, it is made to resonate with the word *Geschichte*, history. The long footnote to the second page of the English translation of “The Turning” is also worth consulting in this respect, particularly since it lists “skill, aptitude, fitness” among the translations of *Geschick*. See Heidegger (1977c, 37).

If there has been representation, it is perhaps (and Heidegger would recognize this) just because the *envoi* of being was originally menaced in its being-together, in its *Geschick*, by divisibility or dissension (what I would call dissemination). Can we not then conclude that if there has been representation, the epochal reading Heidegger proposes for it becomes, in virtue of this fact, problematic from the beginning, at least as a normative reading (and it wishes to be this also), if not as an open questioning of what offers itself to thought beyond the problematic, and even beyond the question as a question of being, of a grouped destiny or of the *envoi* of being [?] (1982b, 322-3)

And so, representational thinking, as *the* way of characterising the history of modern metaphysics becomes, under Derrida's account, itself not only a kind of totalisation but one founded on "the grouping of a more original and more powerful *envoi*". Behind the idea that all *modern* ideas of presence (*Anwesenheit*) must be representational (that they must involve, primarily, man-as-subject taking what *is* as an object) lies a "sending" (*envoi*) that guarantees it. And this sending is, despite appearing as a unity, in fact "menaced" from the start by "divisibility or dissension", by "dissemination". And we know, from much of the rest of Derrida's work (and not least his "Envois"), that what is being found here is the central idea that no starting upon a way, no sending forth of anything to its destiny, is guaranteed to arrive. It may indeed arrive; but the absence of a guarantee always shows that what would be destining (*Geschick*) is always also accompanied, at the moment and event of its sending forth, by the possibility of a-destination.

But, there is also a crucial sense in which *this very* "sending", this *envoi*, the disseminational *envoi* of Derrida's philosophy — complete with its critical *a*-destinality (and this is important) — is itself *an integral part* of the counter-representational philosophy that Heidegger announces as early as *Being and Time* (1962). So, to paraphrase Derrida (1982b, 322), my question then is the following, and I formulate it too quickly: might it also be said that without this philosophy (or, at least, without one extremely like it) there would be no possibility of the *envois* that grounds the Derridean critique of the "centrality" of representation to Heidegger's history of metaphysics?

To put this another way: how can “sending” (*envois*) be seen at work in *Being and Time* and, moreover, precisely at the point of that early work’s critique of representation? While this is hard to read off either the German or the English text, an early and celebratory reading by Derrida’s mentor, Emmanuel Levinas, brings this to light. What Heidegger reads as the picturing or representationalist version of thinking man’s relation to the world, Levinas refers to, more narrowly perhaps, as “idealism”. The fact that Heidegger and Levinas mean much the same thing by these terms is clear from the following passage of Levinas’s careful reading:

The concept of the subject, understood as a substance having a specific position in the entire domain of being, presents us with difficulties of two kinds. First, how do we understand this leave-taking from the self which the thinking substance brings about and which displays an entirely original aspect? Indeed, we could say that thought, in reaching out toward objects, does not actually take leave of itself, since its objects — considered as ideas and contents of thought — are, in a certain sense, already within it. In order to make sense of this paradox, Descartes had to invoke the existence of a veridical god who guaranteed the correspondence between things and ideas. Furthermore, he had to reflect on truth’s method and criteria — a reflection and preoccupation endemic to modern philosophy. Such reflection [presumably, for example, the Cartesian version of the *Besinnung* announced by Heidegger at the start of this chapter] is a basic requirement for subjectivity enclosed within itself which must search within its own interior for signs of its conformity with being. From there, it is but a step to idealism. Henceforth, the thinking substance will not have to reunite with extended substance; it will recover that extended substance within itself. The subject itself will constitute its own object. Idealism comes to be one of the consequences both of the Cartesian *cogito* and of the theories of knowledge whose flourishing has been fostered by this new conception of the subject. (Levinas 1996, 12)

Clearly, this is the move in the history of metaphysics that Heidegger, throughout his work (including “The Age of the World Picture”), refers to as the positioning of man as

subjectum (or *subiectum*),⁶ a positioning characteristic of modernity and its several related types of thinking (technological, scientific, cultural and so forth). In “The Age of the World Picture”, to supplement our previous workings of this move, Heidegger characterises this, characteristically enough, firstly in terms of the idea of the *subjectum in general* and secondly in terms of the version of it that is *particular* to modernity (the version that happens, without any necessity, to place *man* in this position):

What is decisive [with modernity] is not that man frees himself to himself from previous obligations, but that the very essence of man itself changes, in that man becomes subject. We must understand this word *subiectum*, however, as the translation of the Greek *hypokeimenon*. The word names that-which-lies-before, which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself. This metaphysical meaning of the concept of the subject has *first of all* no special relationship to man and none at all to the I. (1977a 128/88; final emphasis added)

Derrida knows this much about the cruciality of the *subjectum* to Heidegger’s theory of the centrality of representation in the history of modern metaphysics; indeed, he refers to it (1982b, 314). What his discussion of the *terms* “representation” and “*Vorstellung*”, however, does not sufficiently emphasise, though it is crucial to Heidegger’s account, is the historically specific event that arises in metaphysics when the *subjectum* (which “has first of all no special relationship to man”) becomes, actually, in fact, as a particular historical event (*Ereignis*), narrowed down to the human domain:

However, when man becomes the primary and only real [*ersten und eigentlichen*] *subiectum*, that means: Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational center of that which is as such. But this is possible only when the comprehension of what is as a whole changes. In what does this change manifest itself? What, in keeping with it, is the essence of the modern age? (1977a: 128/88)⁷

⁶. I retain the spelling of “subjectum” here for consistency. As we saw in Chapter 6, It can also be rendered as “subiectum” or “sub-iectum”. Several passages from Heidegger quoted in that chapter are necessarily repeated here in order to follow Derrida’s interpolations.

⁷. We should note with respect to this passage (including the part of it quoted just prior) that what is effected here is not just that the *subjectum* becomes man — which is the case — but also that man becomes the *primary* [*ersten*], even the only [*eigentlichen*], *subjectum*. In a clarifying passage, that is, Heidegger states, with respect to the *subjectum in general*, that: “We must first

In Derrida's version of this historical shift to modernity, incredibly accurate though it is, the becoming-man of the *subjectum as such* is not mentioned. Instead, the historical shift is discussed solely in terms of "picture" and "representation":

If we follow Heidegger, the Greek world did not have a relation to what-is as to a conceived image or a representation (here *Bild*). There what-is is presence; and this did not, at first, derive from the fact that man would look at what-is and have what we call a representation (*Vorstellung*) of it as the mode of perception of a subject. In a similar way, in another age ... the Middle Ages relates itself essentially to what-is as to an *ens creatum*. "To be something that-is" ("*être-un-étant*") means to belong to the created order; this thus corresponds to God according to the analogy of what-is (*analogia entis*), but, says Heidegger, the being of what-is never consists in an object (*Gegenstand*) brought before man, fixed, stopped, available for the human subject who would possess a representation of it. This will be the mark of modernity. (1982b, 307)

Perhaps missing — or perhaps, in this paraphrase, assuming — the prevalence of the *subjectum as such* (which only at a certain time *happens* to become man), Derrida is able to use such a phrase as "the Cartesian or Cartesian-Hegelian epoch of the *subiectum*" (1982b, 308). And while this phrase is, no doubt, ambiguous, there is a strong sense in which we can hear Derrida, in this phrase, equating the *subjectum* (which, in general, is *anything* that lies before) with the particular version of it that Heidegger very explicitly identifies with the event of man and modernity. In this way, Derrida may miss — and, at the least, he de-emphasises — an important aspect of the historicity of Heidegger's account, which is not strictly an account of the history of being itself, but more accurately of the way, the event, in which being has been *taken*, metaphysically, in modernity. In that way, in that event, "Man comes to be the self-positing ground and measure for all certitude and truth" (1991/4, 90).⁸ What is, therefore, critical is Heidegger's answer to the question of what it

remove the concept 'man' — and therefore the concepts 'I' and 'I-ness' as well — from the concept of the essence of *subiectum*. Stones, plants and animals are subjects — something lying-before of itself — no less than man is" (1991/4, 97). In this respect we should read the advent of modernity not just as the becoming-subject of man but also, and more importantly, as man becoming the *first*, and so, for himself, as far as he is concerned, the *only* subject.

⁸. This version of Heidegger's reading of the event of the *cogito* comes from his lecture on Nietzsche's nihilism at a point just prior to his own cross-reference to "The Age of the World Picture" (see the footnote to 1991/4, 90). The "World Picture" essay was composed in 1938 and the lecture in 1940; and the point of the cross-reference is to make the reader aware that the Protagorean view that "man is the measure of all things" has a distinct meaning from its modern

means for *man*, in particular, among all the possible beings, to become *the subjectum* — to become the only subject, in a certain event or change. And this is the question, raised above, of what “in keeping with it [the change], is the essence of the modern age”. As we will be able to guess by now, this essence is the world *as picture*:

... world picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth. (1977a, 129-30/89)

... “to represent” [*vorstellen*]: to set out before oneself and to set forth in relation to oneself. Through this, whatever is comes to a stand as object and in that way alone receives the seal of Being. That the world becomes picture is one and the same event with the event of man’s becoming *subiectum* in the midst of that which is. (1977a, 132/92)

So, in a sense, it matters little whether we use the Latinate term “re-presentation” or the Germanic term *Vor-stellung* to name this *event* (this difference being one of the bases of Derrida’s argument for critical differences and divisions). For it is now clear that what Heidegger is *thinking* is that, first of all, regardless of its subsequent incarnation as “representation”, “picturing”, *Vorstellung*, or whatever, *subjectum* captures a *way* of thinking of “standing before” in the general senses both of primacy and of something standing before (in front of) something else and to which everything is given. Then, subsequently, in the *event* of modernity, it happens, as a change and perhaps as a chance, that it is *man* (and no longer, say, the Platonic Greeks’ *eidos* or the “God” of the Middle Ages) that comes to stand before all other beings as his own “objects”. *Subjectum* as such: “The word names that-which-lies-before, which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself” (1977a 128/88). Then the characteristically modern inflection of the *subjectum*: here this lying-before *becomes Vor-stellung*, the idea that what *is* stands before man-the-subject as what he re-presents. “Here to represent [*vor-stellen*] means to bring what is present at

interpretations (which ally it with the Cartesian position). The ensuing 14th section of the Nihilism lecture (1991/4, 91-5) and the 8th appendix to “The Age of the World Picture” (1977a, 143-7/102-6) both deal with this misinterpretation. Each is important as a corrective to anachronistic “re-discoveries” of modern subjectivism in the Greeks. The 15th section of the lecture on “The Dominance of the Subject in the Modern Age” (1991/4, 96-101) is a useful adjunct to the discussion of the *subjectum* in “The Age of the World Picture”.

hand [*das Vorhandene*] before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm" (1977a, 131/91).

In a crucial sense, a sense that has to do with the path of thinking, the *terms* simply do not matter. There is an event in history when man becomes the ground on which everything that is *is*. This is the event we might also call "modernity" or "the advent of culture" and which effectively reduces the world to the domain of beings (the ontic domain) — of which man is both one and the supreme one — and so effectively obliterates the question of being as such (the ontological domain) for modern metaphysics. To be able to think ontologically, then, as Levinas says in his reading of *Being and Time*, would be to think outside the ontic and, therefore, outside the field of representation or, perhaps, outside the frame of the (world) picture. Metaphysics, in Heidegger's positive sense and by contrast with what passes in modernity *as* metaphysics, is ontological thinking: an untimely thinking, a thinking out of its age and, for that reason, a thinking-out of its age.

How does Levinas read Heidegger's early thinking (in *Being and Time*) as leading beyond representation? We have already seen the seeds of this in the passage from Levinas quoted earlier: from the advent of modernity "the thinking substance will not have to reunite with extended substance; it will recover that extended substance within itself" (1996, 12). What Levinas finds in this respect, in the version that arises in *Being and Time*, is that what is crucial to the particular kind of setting-before of representation (*Vorstellung*) is *what it is* that sets everything before it: man as the kind of being that is the thinking substance. What Levinas also finds in *Being and Time*, by contrast, that leads us to a radical counter-position to this agonising reflection, characteristic of modernity, on the configuration and play between internality and externality, subjectivity and objectivity, man and world, is a completely distinct account of man's being in the world that, crucially, refuses to begin with such representationalist divisions. Instead, it begins with finitude and finite existence: "Finitude will become the very principle of the subject's subjectivity. It is because there is a finite *existence* — *Dasein* — that *consciousness* itself will be possible" (1996, 18). That is, the condition of finitude — later, for Levinas, "finitude and nothingness" which are "defined for Heidegger by 'effectivity' [*effectivité*] (*Faktizität*)"

(1996, 24) — precedes and makes possible any consideration of consciousness, the thinking substance; that is, it is the condition that grounds and makes possible every account of “man”, including the representational account itself. It is only because of finitude, then, that it is at all possible to picture a world in which everything that *is* is an object for man-as-subject. In a phrase, the *subjectum* (that which has primacy and stands before) of *Being and Time* is Da-sein as finitude.⁹

Moreover, this condition of finitude is realised not by man-as-subject in relation to objects but, instead, by virtue of “the things in the middle of which *Dasein* effectively lives”. And these are “above all, objects of care, of solicitude [*sollicitude*] (*das Besorgte*), of handling [*maniement*] (*Umgang*)” (1996, 19). In finitude, it is use — “the handling of the tool” — and not consciousness that gives us access to the tool. Levinas describes this as “movement” and he goes on:

But the movement gains access to objects not only in an *original* way but also in an *originary* way; the movement does not *follow upon* a representation. It is by that above all that Heidegger is opposed to the current opinion — an opinion still shared by Husserl himself — namely, that the *representation* of what is handled precedes the handling itself. Tools are thus objects that *Dasein* reveals by a given mode of its existence — handling. Tools are not then simply “things.” Handling is in some way the affirmation of their being. Handling determines not what tools are but the manner in which they encounter *Dasein*, the manner *in which* they are. The being of tools is “handlability” [*maniabilité*] (*Zuhandenheit*). And it is precisely because handling does not follow upon a representation that handlability is not a simple “presence” [*présence*] (*Vorhandenheit*) on which a new property is grafted.

Handlability is entirely irreducible. (1996, 19-20)

This insight of Levinas’s is crucial to any reading of Heidegger, early or late. For here is the source of the critique of representational thinking. It is Da-sein’s structure of handlability which arises from its primary condition of finitude that speaks against the world-as-picture, in the first place, even from the time of *Being and Time*. This is the ground on which all counter-representationalist arguments (against Descartes, against Kant and, ultimately, against Nietzsche) are mounted. It is because of finitude’s

⁹ Again, for consistency, I spell “Da-sein” with a hyphen, as per the Stambaugh translation used throughout this book. There are variant spellings in the direct quotations.

handlability (or “equipmentality”) that man’s being-in-the-world cannot be primordially representationalist or picturing/picturable. Rather it is handling/handlable.

What is perhaps even more critical to Levinas’s account — and here we return to Derridean territory — is the term he uses to describe the *structure* of this equipmentality: “What is the structure of this ‘handlability’? It is essentially constituted by ‘referral’ [*renvoi*] (*Verweisung*)” (1996, 20).¹⁰ Now we can, at last, see one possible meaning of Derrida’s *envois* as always repeated, as *renvois* (“referrals” or “re-sendings”).¹¹ And, close to the peak of his critique of Heidegger’s *envoi* (as *Geschick*), he offers the following incredibly lucid description of the *renvois* and, in the process, of his own metaphysical position as a whole:

Everything begins by referring back (*par le renvois*), that is to say, does not begin; and once this breaking open or this partition divides, from the very start, every *renvoi*, there is not a single *renvoi* but from then on, always, a multiplicity of *renvois*, so many different traces referring back to other traces and to traces of others. This divisibility of the *envoi* has nothing negative about it, it is not a lack, it is altogether different from subject, from signifier, or that letter which Lacan says that it does not withstand partition and that it always reaches its destination. This divisibility or this differance is the condition for there being an *envoi*, possibly even an *envoi* of being, a dispensation or a gift of being and time, of the present and of representation. These *renvois* of traces or these traces of *renvois* do not have the structure of representatives or of representations, or of signifiers, nor of symbols, nor of metaphors, nor of metonymies, etc. But as these *renvois* from the other and to the other, these traces of differance, are not original and transcendental conditions on the basis of which philosophy traditionally tries to derive effects, subdeterminations, or even epochs, it cannot be said for example that representative (or signifying or symbolic, etc.) structure *befalls* them; we shall not be able to assign periods or have some epoch of representation follow upon these *renvois*. As soon as there are *renvois*, and it is always already, something like representation no longer waits and we must perhaps arrange to tell

¹⁰. Later in this chapter, we will unpack the term *Verweisung*.

¹¹. Derrida himself first uses the term *renvois*, in the plural, which his translators render as “back-references”, close to the end of his *Envoi* (1982b, 324). A different use of the term *renvoi* — via Jakobson — for grounding a pre-Cartesian semiotics, can be found in Deely (1994, 201-44).

this story differently, from *renvois of renvois* to *renvois of renvois*, in a destiny which is never certain of gathering itself up, of identifying itself, or of determining itself (I do not know whether this can be said with or without Heidegger, and it does not matter). (1982b, 324-5)

Is it possible that this non-ground, this condition which is a non-transcendental condition, which Derrida finds — possibly with and possibly without Heidegger, though certainly with his help — and which motivates both his own “outside” to representation as well as his questioning of Heidegger’s “outside”, arises as the very “structure” of handlability which enables that move and that critique in the first place? If so, then this *renvoi* — though we must, since we are still only questioning, say “these *renvois*” — for Levinas, is/are the key to the critique of the simple-presence-before-man that lies at the heart of deconstruction, including the deconstruction of the Heideggerian critique of representation in the “Envoi” (1982b, 322). And, even against Heidegger’s later critique of technology, Levinas positions this *renvoi* as follows:

The tool is always “in view of” [*en vue de*] something, because it is not a separate entity, but always in tandem with other tools. Its mode of being entails giving precedence to the totality of the *function* [*oeuvre*] in relation to which the tool exists [*est*]. The tool is efficient in its role, and handlability characterizes its being “in itself” [*en soi*]; it exists uniquely in its role in the case where handlability is not explicitly present but recedes into the background, and the tool is understood in terms of its function. This function is itself instrumental: the shoe exists *in order to* be worn, the watch *in order to* tell the time. But, on the other hand, the productive function makes use of something in view of something else. What is handlable then refers back to materials. We thus discover Nature, forests, waters, metals, mountains, winds, etc. But Nature discovered in such a way is entirely relative to handling: these are “raw materials” [*matières premières*]. We do not have a forest but wood, waters are hydroelectric power, the mountain is a quarry, wind is wind in the sail. (1996, 20)¹²

Here — again maybe with, maybe without Heidegger — Levinas’s referral (*renvoi*) “back to materials” opens up the structure of finitude as always referring, ceaselessly to an other

¹² I halt the quotation at this point to leave behind a trace of the importance of Levinas’s mention of the hydroelectric plant, a critical trope in Heidegger’s “The Question Concerning Technology”. This is taken up again a little later.

lying outside any particular being. This is the Derridean structure of the supplement: the requirement that any “pure” being always be less and more than itself — in its division from and dependence upon an other outside it — in order for it to be what it is. No pure forest as such “in nature”, always the wood to which it refers forward and which refers back to it. No pure waters but rather the hybrid technological formation of the hydroelectric plant which becomes its prosthetic. And, with Heidegger, “... no such thing as a man who, solely, is only man” (1977a, 31).

Moreover this account of the *renvoi* even squares, in Levinas’s reading of Heidegger, with the important Derridean realisation (already mentioned re. the case of the Lacanian letter) that not all sendings are guaranteed to arrive. Because sendings are handlings and because sendability is handlability (remembering, for example, that mail that is sent, whether or not it arrives, *is* nothing without its handling), there is always the possibility that it will go astray, that the tool will not work, that the hammer will break. Interestingly enough, for Levinas, it is under these circumstances that the tool (or any cultural object) changes its status for us in terms of its, and our, being in the world:

We have emphasized that the tool is lost in some way within the function which it serves; it is thus that it exists *in itself*. However, when the tool is damaged, it stands out against the system in relation to which it *exists [est]* and loses its character of being a tool, so to speak, in order to become, in a certain way, a simple presence. In this momentary loss of *handlability*, the “referral in view of which the tool exists” [*renvoi à ce en vue de quoi l’ustensile est*], is achieved. It awakens, stands out, comes to light. And we are turned in that manner toward the totality of the system of referrals — a totality always implicitly understood but not till then emphasized. Here is a series of referrals which can only be realized in an “in-view-of-which” which is no longer in view of some other thing but in view of itself. We recognize *Dasein* itself in this structure. Put another way, understanding of the tool only comes about in relation to an initial understanding of *Dasein*’s structure, which, in virtue of the “referral to itself” [*renvoi à soi-même*] proper to *Dasein*, allows a glimpse within the things themselves of their handlability, their possible usage, their “in-view-of”. (1996, 20)

If we were to read this into the Derridean account of sending and the essential possibility of adestation (adestinality), we would see that, peculiarly, when the letter (as just one kind of equipment) works normally — when it arrives as expected — it is in fact “lost”. Its ordinary working places it beneath the horizon of our noticing it as a particular kind of presence. Then, by contrast, when it fails to arrive as expected (when, as a tool, it fails to work), it stands out against the system of referrals (*renvois*), it loses its character (of being “lost” within that system), so to become “a simple presence”. When it works, it is lost (a lost letter). When it is lost in the post, and so does not work, it stands out as a presence-at-hand (remembering that Levinas is contrasting *Zuhandenheit* with *Vorhandenheit* in terms of “handlability” and “presence” and that we might now speak of the distinction between “readiness-to-hand” and “presence-to-hand”).¹³ And while this may be underplayed in the Derridean account of sending and (failure of) arrival, or of handling and of the tool’s being damaged, it may be of the utmost importance. But let us let this stand in reserve for a short while and move on to another possibility and back to the question of culture.

III.

Suppose we were to say — too briefly and boldly, for sure — that the whole field of handlability, of Da-sein’s equipmentality, of *maniabilité*, of *Zuhandenheit*, grounded on Da-sein’s finitude, was co-extensive with the field of culture — not as it is thought today via the continuation of representational thinking, but as it might one day be thought *outside* representation. This would leave the whole Derridean analytic of sending (including adestinality, supplementarity, prosthesis and deconstruction) in place as it stands but would ground it, as an account of the *renvoi* essential to all cultural technologies, on the analytic of finitude and equipmentality as Da-sein’s primordial relation to other beings-in-the-world (outside and prior to any representationalist account). In this way cultural practice would become the field of what Levinas calls “concrete man”: “It is *concrete man* who appears [now, with Heidegger] at the center of philosophy, and in comparison with

¹³ Hence this “simple presence” is not that referred to by Derrida as *Anwesenheit* (above). It is rather the “natural objectness” (*Vorhandenheit*) that only arises subsequently to, and on the ground of, readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). Both of these terms (though they may badly translate into “natural” as against “cultural” objects) are explicitly counterposed to the idea of simple immediate presence of any kind.

him, the concept of consciousness is only an abstraction, arbitrarily separating consciousness — i.e. illumination as illumination — from history and existence” (1996, 24).

This much is, I think, at least one possible upshot of Levinas’s reading of *Being and Time*. To summarise, this would be so in six respects. (1) Levinas reveals the grounds on which all subsequent criticisms of representational thinking can be levelled by Heidegger against modern metaphysics since Descartes. (2) He shows that the *envoi* that Derrida posits as prior to any idea of representationalism as an undifferentiating “totalisation” of modern metaphysics is, as it turns out, the same as, or very like, the *renvoi* at the heart of handlability. Hence (3) Derrida’s position is effectively an uptake of Heidegger’s at least to the extent that it can only be thought *once a representational view has already been countered*. (4) In this way any deconstructive analysis might be re-grounded in the analytic of finitude such that, for example, (5) the working tool or arriving letter is *more essentially lost* than those which fail to work or arrive (and which, by contrast, then take on the secondary ontological status of the present-at-hand (*Vorhandene*)). (6) At least *in potentia*, this promises to re-open the field of the cultural, against all and any representationalist characterisations of it, as the domain of equipmentality in its finitude and effectivity.

This last characterisation of culture, however, is far from Heidegger’s own. He firmly associates the idea of cultural man not with his early considerations of Da-sein’s being-in-the-world generally, but with the more local event of modernity itself. For Heidegger, cultural thinking is a mistaken thinking that leads away from questioning of the first rank, that is, from questioning matters in their essence. Almost no other way of thinking is so quickly set aside by Heidegger in favour of philosophical thinking. For example, he begins “Science and Reflection” as follows:

In keeping with a view now prevalent, let us designate the realm in which the spiritual and creative activity of man is carried out with the name “culture”. As part of culture, we count science, together with its cultivation and organization. Thus science is ranked among the values man prizes and toward which, out of a variety of motives, he directs his attention.

But so long as we take science only in this cultural sense, we will never be able to gauge the scope of its essence [*Wesen*]. This is equally the case for art. Even today we readily

name these two together: “art and science”. Art is also represented as one sphere of cultural enterprise. But then we recognise nothing of its essence....

Science is no more a cultural activity of man than is art. (1977b, 155-6)

Accordingly, cultural thinking is always and only the thinking “of man”, the man of modernity; it is equivalent to “giv[ing] ourselves up to ordinary notions” (1997b, 156) and turning away from whatever is in its essence. Here, and returning to “The Age of the World Picture”, culture, as an “essential phenomenon” of modernity, is ranked along with science, technology, art and “the loss of the gods” (*Entgötterung*). In fact, it is fourth on Heidegger’s list after science, technology and art:

A fourth modern phenomenon manifests itself in the fact that human activity is conceived and consummated as culture. Thus culture is the realization (*Verwirklichung*) of the highest values, through the nurture and cultivation (*Pflege*) of the highest goods of man. It lies in the essence of culture, as such nurturing, to nurture itself in its turn and thus become the politics of culture (*Kulturpolitik*). (1977a, 116/75-76)¹⁴

While Heidegger drops the question of the “essence” of culture at this point, what he may be thinking here is that, insofar as culture arises only within the age of man’s self-representationality — and as “the highest goods” of so “low” a thinking — it, too, no doubt is subject to representing itself. We must guess here, of course, but this may help us see why culture’s essence (as nurturing) is to nurture “itself in its turn”. In this self-enclosure or self-enframing, and in the consequent impossibility of ever reaching out to beings beyond the realm of man’s self-representation, it becomes confined within what, by 1938, must have seemed to Heidegger to be the very lowest of low thoughts: namely politics. A little later (1940), in the Nihilism lectures, Heidegger offers us some corroboration of this reading when he refers to “The securing of supreme and absolute self-development of all the capacities of mankind for absolute dominion over the entire earth”. This, he says, “is the secret goad that prods modern man again and again to new resurgences” (1991/4, 99). Then, at this point, he offers us examples which, together, form a very useful chronicle of, precisely, the formations that *culture* (as “the consciously

¹⁴. Might we translate *Kulturpolitik* as “cultural studies”?

posited binding” of modern man for himself in his dominion) has taken since its clearest enunciation in the Enlightenment:

The consciously posited binding appears in many guises and disguises. The binding can be human reason and its law (Enlightenment), or the real, the factual, which is ordered and arranged by such reason (Positivism). The binding can be a humanity harmoniously joined in all its accomplishments and molded into a beautiful figure (the human ideal of Classicism). The binding can be the development of the power of self-reliant nations, or the “proletariat of all lands”, or individual peoples and races. The binding can be the development of humanity in the sense of the progress of universal rationality. The binding can also be “the hidden seeds of each individual age”, the development of the “individual”, the organization of the masses, or both. Finally [coming to Heidegger’s own times, via Nietzsche], it can be the creation of a mankind that finds the shape of its essence neither in “individuality” nor in the “mass”, but in the “type”. (1991/4, 99)¹⁵

No doubt each of these varieties of cultural formation as “consciously posited binding” deserves detailed investigation. What is important for us, here, however, is that, despite the apparent variety of “ways of being cultural” — a variety that sometimes dazzles contemporary cultural theory and, at all times, provides the field with its deepest entrenchments and debates — every such way is, at ground, a function of modernity and representational thinking. This comes to light when, again in the Nihilism lectures, Heidegger makes this connection between culture and the representational thinking of modernity even clearer by referring to the *anachronisms* that arise when pre-modern times are thought, retrospectively and erroneously, to be cultures:

And so as soon as valuative thought emerged, there came — and still comes — the empty talk about the “cultural values” of the Middle Ages and the “spiritual values” of antiquity, even though there was nothing like “culture” in the Middle Ages nor anything like “spirit” and “culture” in ancient times. Only in the modern era have spirit and culture been deliberately experienced as fundamental modes of human comportment, and only in most

¹⁵ While not essential to our account here, how Heidegger goes on to describe the “type”, and Nietzsche’s version of it as Overman, is instructive in terms of the very cultural history that Heidegger rarely considers. He concludes: “Precursors here are the Prussian soldiery and the Jesuit Order, which are characterized by a peculiar meshing of their essential natures, a meshing in which the inner content of the first historical emergence of each can be almost completely ignored” (1991/4, 100).

recent times have “values” been posited as standards for such comportment. It does not follow, of course, that earlier periods were “uncultured” in the sense that they were submerged in barbarism; what follows is that with the schemata “culture” and “lack of culture”, “spirit”, and “value”, we never touch in its essence the history, for example, of the Greeks. (1991 /4, 17)

Again, what talk of “culture” does is to remove us from the path of thinking that would take us to the essence of, say, history (or science, or art). What it does instead is to offer an anachronistic account of essential history, an anthropomorphic account of essential science, an “aestheticist” account of the essence of art, and so on. This is what Heidegger means when he says that cultural thinking is anthropological: “Thus today *one* thought is common to everyone, to wit, an ‘anthropological’ thought, which demands that the world be interpreted in accordance with the image of man and that metaphysics be replaced by ‘anthropology’. In such a demand, a definite decision has already been rendered concerning the relationship of man to beings as such” (1991 /4, 86). And that relationship, as Heidegger goes on to show, is precisely Cartesian-representationalist: it is a relationship in which whatever *is* becomes an “object” for man-as-subject, including among such objects man himself as *the* being (primary *subjectum*) with the capacity for self-representation.

But is not this supposed “capacity for self-representation”, itself, another way of putting the idea of culture? Is not culture, in at least one of its many “theoretical” manifestations, the idea that men represent men to men (usually of their own “kind” or “nation”)? Heidegger’s list of “bindings”, above, surely says as much. And if, accordingly, we try to step outside this particular and modern kind of thinking of man’s relation to “beings as such”, might we not find, perhaps among other things, on the other side of our stepping out, a reconfiguration of culture that would be — if not identical with, then — extremely close to the account of Da-sein’s equipmentality (and ultimately its facticity and finitude)?

“Science and Reflection” (1977b) certainly holds out hope for a re-thinking of science outside “cultural” thinking and therefore “in its essence”; “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1993a) holds out a similar hope for today’s overly-representationalist (and, therefore,

aestheticist) mistakes about art; and “The Question Concerning Technology” (1977d), once again, holds out a hope that technology might be re-thought in its origins and away from its dominant anthropocentric and instrumentalist readings today. And incidentally, while the question of technology is close to hand, let us remember that Heidegger at one point equates this field, technology, with that of culture itself: “For technology signifies exactly what ‘culture’, which is contemporaneous with it, also signifies” (1991/4, 40). If there is, then, a questioning concerning technology (or more precisely, *Technik*, technological thinking), why should there not be a questioning concerning culture — a questioning that tries to think culture in its essence as opposed to representationally, “ordinarily”, within the field of modernity?

But have we not already read Heidegger on the essence of culture? Did he not announce it as being that nurturing of the highest values of modern man which must eventually nurture itself and so become *Kulturpolitik*? Yes, this is true. But there is also a sense in which culture, above science, technology, art and, perhaps, “the loss of the gods”, is, for Heidegger, quintessentially a phenomenon (*Erscheinung*) of modernity and nothing but. When, therefore, he speaks of its “essence”, this is always an essence confined to modernity and, so, to representational thinking. As opposed to this limit, in posing the question of culture in its essence, then, I mean to open the possibility — without the anachronistic effect of simply transferring the culture of modernity to previous ages or to non-Western peoples — of seeing how culture, too, along with science, technology and art, might conceal something more fundamental when thought differently: that is, when thought outwith its “Heideggerian” positioning as the essential thinking of modernity itself. This will lead us eventually to ask whether the “nurturing” — or, as the translator puts it, the “nurture and cultivation” — the *Pflege*, of which Heidegger speaks, might not reach outside and beyond the confines of a nurturing and cultivation of representational thought by itself and for itself. On the way to that thought, we might draw some parallels with the problem of technology which, as we have seen, Heidegger practically equates with culture.

IV.

To draw a first parallel with “The Question Concerning Technology”, we can notice, among other things, the following. Heidegger is well known for his fundamental critique of technologies, especially in “The Question Concerning Technology”, but also throughout his middle and later periods. At root, however, Heidegger’s aversion is actually reserved for *modern* technologies, and not for technology as such, “in its essence”. He expresses his distaste for the hydroelectric plant — Levinas, above, notwithstanding — but not for the fishing hook and, at the same time, argues that technology in its essence (as opposed to modern technologies) “is a mode of revealing”. That is “[t]echnology comes to presence [*west*] in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alétheia*, truth, happens” (1977d, 13). But it is this very thinking of technology’s essence that has been, Heidegger argues, deleted from our modern technologies, making a deep cut or de-cision between old (authentic) and new (inauthentic) modes of thinking.

The “problem” of modern technology, for Heidegger, is the form of revealing that it conceals. This is the form of revealing called “Enframing” (*Ge-stell*), a form which technology shares with modern science, albeit that the latter precedes the former historically. Enframing “is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve [*Bestand*]” (1977, 24). “Standing-reserve”, here, refers to a thinking of nature’s energy as capable of being stored for later use. By contrast with *poiésis* (bringing-forth) as another and very different mode of revealing, science and technology as the revealing that is enframing, are ruled by a “challenging” or “challenging forth” (*Herausfordern*) of nature (1977d, 14). This, by contrast with bringing-forth, “puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such” (1977d, 14). *Poiésis*, again by contrast, makes no such unreasonable demand. Rather it cares for, which is to say “nurtures”, nature. (And here we have our first clue to a possible re-thinking of culture’s own “nurturing and cultivation” outside modernity; but this must still wait a while for a fuller consideration.) Hence, for now, we must consider the “negative” revealing of science and technology as enframing and challenging in some more depth.

Immediately following the account of challenging as the extraction of energy from nature and its storage, Heidegger asks the following question and introduces a concrete example: "But does this [the demand for the extraction and storage of energy] not hold true for the old windmill as well? No. Its sails do indeed turn in the wind; they are left entirely to the wind's blowing. But the windmill does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it" (1977d, 14). The "No", in this case, is of the utmost importance for Heidegger's thinking of technology. Without this particular turn in the maze of his thinking, the whole argument for the distinction between ancient and modern technologies, and with it the argument for enframing as the peculiar characteristic of modern technology's revealing, is in doubt. Without it, the maze goes unsolved. And has Levinas not already said that, in the analytic of Da-sein's equipmentality: "We do not have a forest but wood, waters are hydroelectric power, the mountain is a quarry, wind is wind in the sail"? If this is eternally true for Da-sein, as man's "openness for being" in general, then we might expect it to be as true of the old windmill as it is of the hydroelectric plant. Is there not a sense in which, then, the old milling techniques are, through and through, matters of the harnessing of natural energy for later use? The mill, that is, may be used to grind corn or other cereal crops. And what is this corn but the stored energy of the earth, the sun, the rain (or the rivers) and, not least, of the farmhand's labour? Is the corn not then set aside, placed in standing reserve, until there is a sufficient (ordered and calculable) quantity for milling? And then, in the mill itself, is the wind's energy not harnessed so that grain may be extracted from this standing-reserve of corn, and so that the grain itself may be stored up in granaries for later use? And, in the transformation of the grain into, say, bread, is there not a further extraction and storage of energy through the technologies of the oven and their dependence on a stored and measurable supply of fuel? In all of these "old" processes we find, as it were, not so much an absence of enframing and standing-reserve as the operation of referrals (*renvois*): the bread in the oven refers back, makes a back reference, to the store of grain which makes a back reference to the mill and the wind which, together, make a back reference to the store of cereal crops, which makes a back reference to the earth, the sun, the rain and to labour.

Here, then, we begin to question the centrality of enframing (as the kind of revealing that challenges forth) as *essentially peculiar* to modern technologies.

Still it has to be said that technology, thought as enframing-revealing, has two different statuses later in Heidegger's path of questioning. As a kind of revealing *at all*, it can be the "saving power" and so return us to technology as *techné*, and thence as *poiésis*, as bringing forth. Only as the *enframing*-revealing does technology constitute the "supreme danger" in that enframing is held to be the kind of revealing that lets all beings (including man) only ever be revealed as standing-reserve and therefore threatens all revealing as such:

Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering.

Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing which, in the sense of *poiésis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance. As compared with that other revealing, the setting-upon that challenges forth thrusts man into a relation to that which is, that is at once antithetical and rigorously ordered. Where Enframing holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such. (1977d, 27)

But, with the case of the old windmill, we have seen that, if even the old technologies (and, by extension, even the oldest of them such as the fishing hook or the net) extract and store up energy as standing-reserve, then there never is, in any technology, "this revealing as such". Moreover, there is never not ordering or calculation: for example the first writings in the cuneiform of the Sumerians (which eventually, via many referrals and eventually via the Phoenicians, becomes the alphabet of the Greeks themselves), it is now recognised, were ways of accounting (Ifrah 1985). They were used to calculate and order the transportation of stored goods (corn, sheep, slaves and so on) from one market to another so as to ensure that the goods sent were, as far as possible, a destination notwithstanding, identical with the goods that arrived (Schmandt-Besserat 1980; 1981; 1982; 1986). That is, the technology of writing itself is, from the beginning, a series of *renvois*, pointing to (*Ver-weisen*) a standing-reserve of "natural" energy stored in granaries, herds and colonies, *inter alia*. Then, insofar as technology is a revealing, it is never not an "impure" or "contaminated" revealing. If there are never not *renvois*, then there is never

“pure” *techné, poiésis* that is not “technological” in this sense. The essence of technology, in whatever age, is this referrability.

For all of this, throughout his work, Heidegger also offers a different but related account of “science” (as in natural science) and a slightly different (but also related) reason for its “metaphysical” error: science falls away from the true path of thinking insofar as it makes a particular cut or de-cision.¹⁶ In reading the whole of *physis* as limited to “physical nature” and annexing this domain to itself, scientific thinking confines itself to the merely ontic-factual aspect of *physis* as a whole. Its decision here (albeit unthought and unthinkable by science) is to put the genuinely ontological side of the ontic-ontological difference *to one side*.¹⁷ In this respect, today, there can be no such thing as a “science of being”, only sciences of particular beings such as atoms, stars and bacteria.

By extension of this account — since, as we have seen, technologies today are held to rely on the same kind of revealing as science — modern technologies, as the *ordering* of nature as standing-reserve, arise and come to presence in the same way as scientific *calculation*. They exist, then, as a further step away from the thinking path towards being. In short, all modern forms of technology are instances of merely ontic thinking. They attest to an inauthenticity of all modern beings towards the truth of their being and, in this sense, they could not be further removed from technology “in its essence” as the realm where truth (as unconcealment or “true” revealing) happens.

Note then that the problem of technology can be seen to arise from a decision of Heidegger’s about how to treat a decision of science’s. The first decision cuts modern (inauthentic) technology away from something else, presumably its more authentic pre-

¹⁶. See section 23 of the Nihilism lectures on the ontological difference (1991/4, 150-8).

¹⁷. In the third *Nietzsche* volume (1991/3), Heidegger argues as follows. “Every science rests upon propositions about the area of beings within which its every investigation abides and operates. These propositions about beings — about what they are — propositions that posit and delimit the area, are metaphysical propositions. Not only can they not be demonstrated by the concepts and proofs of the respective sciences, they cannot even be thought appropriately in this way at all”. Heidegger, I think tellingly, calls these “*field propositions*”. The sciences *use* such things. Metaphysics, by contrast, reflects upon and questions them. The field propositions of the sciences, that is, are among (but do not exhaust) the “objects” of the “discipline” of philosophy. Can the scientist carry out such a reflection at all, ever? “To be able to carry out metaphysical reflection concerning his field, the scientific researcher must therefore transpose himself into a fundamentally different kind of thinking; he must become familiar with the insight that this reflection on his field is *something essentially different* from a mere broadening of the kind of thinking otherwise practiced in research, whether that broadening be in degree or scope, in generalization, or even in what he sees as a degeneration” (Heidegger 1991/3, 41-3).

scientific form. (Homeric poetic making might be one such pre-scientific form.) But — because, as we have seen, it may be impossible to separate ancient from modern technologies on the grounds that only the latter are instances of enframing — this assumes that a *moral* (normative / evaluative) decision must come either in advance of, or simultaneously with, a metaphysical decision: a decision about the moral inauthenticity of the merely ontic in thinking comes with, that is, a decision in the natural sciences and in modern technological thinking to *confine* themselves to the merely ontic. And what this cuts away, in advance, is the possibility of thinking a general condition of *all* technology (whether “in its essence” or in its modern manifestations) as the sheer equipmentality or having ready-to-hand of Da-sein that we have encountered in Levinas’s reading of *Being and Time*.

In that earlier work, as we saw, the investigation of the understanding of being leads inevitably to a picture of Da-sein’s understanding as essential equipmentality or handlability which, in its turn, always refers back to referral (*renvoi*, *Verweisung*) as its structural condition. Moving back to that thought, then, we might begin to see how technology (and, therefore, culture as such) is the “making” we encounter in that domain of *physis* in which beings arise and come to presence through human *making* (rather than on their own account). And as support for this possibility we might refer, again, to “The Age of the World Picture” where Heidegger, himself thinking back to *Being and Time*, states:

The concept of world [*der Weltbegriff*] as it is developed in *Being and Time* is to be understood only from within the horizon of the question concerning “openness for Being” [*Da-sein*], a question that, for its part, remains closely conjoined with the fundamental question concerning the meaning of Being (not with the meaning of that which is). (1977a, 141 / 100)

All of this, then, *mutatis mutandis*, could be equally true for culture — with a single exception. That is, while technological thinking emerges in a very direct relation to scientific thinking (at least in a certain sense), this cannot be the case for cultural thinking. On the contrary, we have already seen how, in “Science and Reflection” the mistake is to

count science as *part of* culture.¹⁸ In order for this particular trope of modern anthropologism to occur, cultural thinking would have to have its origin completely outside scientific thinking as such. In this case, we might say that just as scientific thinking begins by thinking only of natural objects (physical nature) as the whole of *physis*, so cultural thinking makes the parallel mistake of thinking only of synthetic or man-made objects (“technical” nature) as all there can possibly be. These mistakes are similar but have vastly different consequences for the two fields in question. Whereas scientism, for example, might reduce all human activity to its biological or physiological bases as a consequence of its mistaken cutting of *physis*, culturalism (as per the opening of “Science and Reflection”) tends in the opposite direction by trying to argue that, when the scientist sees only a biological or physiological organism when he considers a man, what he is actually seeing is an effect of the specific cultural conventions of science. In this way, such thinking as the relativistic philosophy of science can emerge, as well as talk of the “social construction” of scientific worldviews, paradigms and so on. If this is what Heidegger means by “culture” — a reduction of everything to “the spiritual and creative activity of man” — then he is surely right to criticise culturalist forms of thinking.

On the other hand, just as technology can ultimately be rethought as a matter of *techné onta* (things which arise and come to presence in man’s care and *nurturing*), culture most immediately can be re-thought as *cultura* which had, for the Romans, the sense of caring for and *nurturing* initially plants (*cultura agri*) and, eventually, the mind and the intelligence (*cultura animi*) (Wilson and van der Dussen 1995, 62). The term translates the Greek *paideía* (παιδεία). This stems from *paîs* (παῖς): a child (in the family sense, a son or a daughter); a child (in relation to age or stage of life); the legal issue (of animals); a slave or servant (man *or* maid). The *Oxford* has an entry for the anglicised version of this term, “pædeia”:

In ancient Greek society: education or upbringing; more gen., a society’s culture; the sum of physical and intellectual achievement to which the human body and mind can aspire.

[Then in a particular cited use of the term:] “The sum total of all ideal perfections of mind and body”.

¹⁸ This distinction is made even clearer in the Nihilism lectures where Heidegger writes of “cultural activities — politics, science, art, society” (1991/4, 195).

Now while it would be easy enough to set upon the use of the word “culture” in this definition, this would block any deeper thinking. For if we turn to Liddel and Scott (1940), we find that *paideía* refers, for the Greeks, primarily to *rearing*, bringing up, nurturing. It means, certainly, the rearing of a child and so training and teaching, what we would now call education out of the Latin *educare*, “I lead out”. But whereas the Latin and the English contain the sense that something lies “within”, already, that must subsequently be led out, the Greek has more the sense of caring for and nurturing the being. Yet that nurturing is by no means “indulgent” (what we would now, perhaps, call “child-centred”), for *paideía* also means chastisement (in the service of good breeding and proper conduct). This “in the service of” is so critical that *paideía* is also the *result* of rearing and training: mental “culture”, learning. It is anything taught or learned: art, science, medicine. There is no split here between “means” and “ends”; so, in this sense, Heidegger’s view that causality in the modern sense by no means applies to Greek thinking, is correct. Hence *paideía* can also be *what it is* that is nurtured: youth, childhood and (in the collective sense) a body of youths. We must think *paideía*, then, as nurturing in a primary sense: as *both* a sending of a being on its way *and* as the way that it is sent upon; as well as what it is (the being) that is so sent. And we must say “a being”, meaning “any being” (not just a human child), because, even in Greek times, the word *paideía* refers also to the cultivation and care of trees as well as, perhaps more rarely and obscurely, ropes of papyrus, “the twisted handiwork of Egypt” (Liddel and Scott 1940).

Paideía, then, as the sending forth towards (adulthood, fruition or whatever “destination”), is extremely close to the senses of *envoi* and *renvoi*. *Renvoi* (Levinas, Derrida) is a continual re-sending and translates the German *Verweisung* (Heidegger).

Thought as *paideía*, however, *Ver-weisung* sits within every action related to *weisen*, to point, to impart instruction by showing.¹⁹ *Verweisen* is primarily to refer but also to relegate (say, to second place) and, in terms of the *paideía* not working, it is also to send out, to expel (for example, from school); and this sense of the verb is most clearly captured by the family member *ausweisen*. *Verweisen* is also to direct or refer a person to someone as

¹⁹ Thanks to Horst Ruthrof for this understanding of the several related German verbs — also to the incomparable work of the Australian German scholar, R.B. Farrell whose *Dictionary* (1977) is a treasure for English-speaking readers of that language.

an authority, and, as well, to direct or refer someone's *attention* to something. One related verb is *wegweisen*, to point the way; hence *Wegweiser* (signpost). The family obviously has a sense of directing *elsewhere* (either towards growth and fruition or else towards banishment and lostness — the result cannot be decided in advance). This is most aptly captured by *hinweisen*, to direct (someone) there, to show the way there, to indicate, to draw (someone's) attention to, to point there (as of a signpost). And, assuming the arrival is successful, we get *nachweisen*, to prove, to establish and hence the noun *Nachweisung*, reference, information. Then, once again approaching *paideía* itself, we find *anweisen*, to give directions, instructions, orders; to assign, allocate, allot. Then, perhaps, reaching *paideía* itself, we find *unterweisen*, to instruct and *die Unterweisung*, instruction.

Cultural thinking, then, might be re-configured as "paedetics", the understanding of the field of Da-sein's equipmentality (its manner, ways and techniques) insofar as this field has to do with the particular task of bringing beings out — through a pointing out, a sending of them along their way, towards a destination that may or may not be reached.

I, for one, do not know if such a re-thinking of culture is possible. But it does seem clear that, in its absence, we are left, in today's cultural disciplines, cultural "sciences" and (weakest of all, perhaps) cultural studies, with little more than idle chatter about world pictures and their currently fashionable theoretical equivalents which, if Heidegger is right, are no more than forms of testimony to an event through which we happen, still, to be living: namely, modernity, the age of the world-as-picture. In this case, all the cultural disciplines could do would be to repeat the condition of their own event: ceaselessly picturing pictures. For example, cultural studies continues to investigate the veracity or otherwise of the "representation" of one sector or another of society in one cultural medium or another. Semiotics and critical linguistics continue to debate the adequacy of particular signs in terms of their signficatory and social effects as representations. Media studies, too, tells us that the age of the word is over and that the age of the image is coming to replace it: but this supposed change itself only bears witness to the continuation of modernity. Meanwhile anthropologists continue to do "fieldwork" on what they imagine to be, by virtue of their involvement in the event of modernity, "cultures"; that what they investigate may not even be such cannot occur to them, for such a reflection is

itself, essentially, un-anthropological. Historical research, too, goes on into the world pictures of all sorts of ancient civilisations — again regardless of the fact that only a fundamental anachronism allows them to be pictured this way; which is to say, pictured at all. No doubt countless other instances could be brought to bear from everywhere within the range and breadth of the humanities and social sciences.

And, though by now it may be too late (for this book and for those of us still with an interest in culture and its meaning), this returns us to the fundamental importance for our times of Heidegger's opening remarks which I shall repeat here:

In metaphysics reflection [*die Besinnung*] is accomplished concerning the essence [*das Wesen*] of what is [*des Seienden*] and a decision [*eine Entscheidung*] takes place regarding the essence of truth [*das Wesen der Wahrheit*]. Metaphysics grounds an age [*ein Zeitalter*], in that through a specific interpretation of what is [*eine bestimmte Auslegung des Seienden*] and through a specific comprehension of truth [*eine bestimmte Auffassung der Wahrheit*] it gives to that age the basis [*Grund*] upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds complete dominion over all the phenomena [*Erscheinungen*] that distinguish the age. Conversely, in order that there may be an adequate reflection upon these phenomena themselves, the metaphysical basis for them must let itself be apprehended in them. Reflection is the courage [*der Mut*] to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into the things that most deserve to be called in question. (1977a: 115/75)

It is perhaps at this point that we can see the critical relevance of this passage for us today. What it tells us, among other things, is that, firstly, the basis upon which our age, the age of modernity, is essentially formed is the metaphysics of representation — and nor are we out of it. A reflection has been accomplished and a decision (a cut) has taken place such that the essence of truth, today, as for several centuries before, is that what is (what we call “objects” and “things”) is always an effect of, and that which is made to stand before, man as *the* representing being (what we call a “subject” or a “consciousness”). This, above all, effects the way we think about (for sure, who we are, but also, and by extension, about) what can be. And this is the announcement of our limits.

All of this overtakes and has precedence over any version or vision of the world that we might want to picture within those limits. But at the same time, we owe it to ourselves

that, at least from time to time, we should stop — not for a moment, but *seriously* stop — and reflect on these limits and wonder whether we can begin to think outside them. That reflection (*die Besinnung*) — and here the buck stops — would itself be an instance of metaphysics, though not necessarily of the dominant metaphysics of our age. The word that describes our ability to stop and reflect (in the sense of the passage just re-quoted) and, thereby, to engage (in) metaphysics, is “courage” [*der Mut*]. The question now is whether we (and only those still immersed in a certain kind of representational thinking would ask “What do you mean by ‘we’?”) have that courage. If that courage is there then we might end by beginning with the following questions:

What need of “postmodernity”, let alone “postmodernism”, when clearly there has not yet been a counter-modernity and no signs of it on the horizon?

What need of moves “against metaphysics” when clearly it is a metaphysical investigation that we need, precisely as reflection?

Why the currently fashionable trend against “realism” and “essentialism” when it is precisely the question of the real — or, more correctly, of being — and its essence (*Wesen*) that the cultural disciplines need to confront and simply cannot do so in their current configurations, for all their cheap talk of “theory”?

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