Postmodernism and the Bahá'í Writings

Part One

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1. Introduction

Postmodernism is a general name given to an extraordinarily influential intellectual and artistic movement which in its philosophical form, originated in France – though its foundations are largely in the work of German philosophers such as Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger[1] – and successfully took root and flourished in North American intellectual culture. Over the last forty years, postmodernism's influence has been felt in a wide variety of subjects; however this paper will focus on its philosophic aspects and leave aside its manifestations in art, photography, theatre, architecture and creative literature. Wherever postmodernism has appeared, the depth and breadth of postmodernism's impact is astounding. Some subjects, such as literary studies, have been radically transformed by the encounter to the point where 'theory' to swamp the subject of literature itself. Philosophy has felt its very legitimacy and usefulness as a subject challenged[2] not to mention basic concepts such as knowledge, rationality and truth as well as the whole notion of metaphysics.[3] History has been touched by, among other things, the struggle over the whole notion of grand narratives versus small or local narratives,[4] the knowability of the past, as well as the uses of history.[5] Women's Studies, though not in themselves part of postmodernism, have been affected by the entire deconstructionist project, by postmodernism's analysis of power relations and, more controversially, by its antipathy to essentialism. Psychology feels the influence of postmodern thinking in its handling of gender and political science in discussions of marginalization and the workings of power.[6] Cultural Studies have opened new vistas for exploration through the study of simulations and simulacra.[7] Postmodernism has also re-shaped and revised Freudian psychoanalysis.[8]

The breadth and depth of postmodern philosophy's influence makes it necessary to examine the nature of its relationship to the Bahá'í Writings in order to assess whether or not there are points of agreement, their extent, and whether or not they are superficial or fundamental.

The movement is so important and, in many respects, so radical that thought systems and/or religions cannot avoid taking a position in regards to its ideas. Such is the project undertaken by this paper which will examine the major philosophical issues covered by postmodern philosophy in epistemology and the quest for knowledge especially in literature, philosophy, history and cultural studies; in ontology; in philosophical anthropology (theory of man) and in ethics. This paper shall compare and contrast the positions taken by major postmodern philosophers with those that are given directly or implicitly in the Bahá'í Writings.

This inevitably leads to the question 'Can a Bahá'í adhere to some form of philosophical postmodernist without losing intellectual consistency, and if so, in what way?' This paper concludes that the Bahá'í Writings and postmodernism share a variety of ideas but on fundamental issues of ontology, epistemology, philosophical anthropology (theory of man), ethics and cultural theory, they are incompatible. Generally speaking, postmodernism and the Bahá'í Writings do not share the same or even a similar "Denkweg,"[9] or way of thinking. This is not to say there are no similarities between the two but that the similarities are relatively superficial or accidental whereas the differences are deep and foundational.

The plan of this paper is simple: in Part I, we shall survey the major postmodern writers - in particular Nietzsche, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Rorty and Baudrillard who are "the major philosophical figures in the post modern turn in philosophy."[10] In Part II, we shall compare what these philosophers say with the Bahá'í Writings.

2. The Nature of Philosophical Postmodernism

In its broadest sense, philosophical postmodernism is a movement that challenges the most fundamental premises that have guided the development of Western philosophy since the time of Plato, and most particularly, the philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment. Indeed, this theme of opposition to the Enlightenment is so strong, some scholars see postmodernism as a continuation of the "Counter-

Enlightenment"[11] that began in Germany and France in the 18th Century and found its most influential voice in Nietzsche. The Counter-Enlightenment opposed the Enlightenment's proclamation of the autonomy of reason and the methods of the natural sciences based on observation as the sole reliable method of knowledge and the consequent rejection of the authority of revelation, sacred writings and their accepted interpreters tradition, prescription and every form of nonrational and transcendent sources of knowledge ...[12]

Thus we can see that the central feature of the "Counter-Enlightenment" was to question and undermine the supremacy of reason and empiricism in the quest for knowledge and to make room for intuition and instinct, which we deemed to be more natural and spiritual. This feature is clearly evident in the following characterization of postmodernism distinguished by

> an anti-(or post) epistemological standpoint; anti-essentialism; anti-foundationalism; opposition to transcendental arguments and transcendental standpoints; rejection of the picture of knowledge as accurate representation; rejection of truth as correspondence to reality; rejection of the very idea of canonical descriptions' rejection of final vocabularies, i.e. rejection of principles, distinctions, and descriptions that are thought to be unconditionally binding for all times, persons, and places; and a suspicion of grand narratives, metanarratives of the sort perhaps best illustrated by dialectical materialism.[13]

The specific meaning of this statement will become more clear as we proceed through this paper. Postmodernism also notably rejects the concept of reason, the rational subject, the idea of progress, "epistemic certainty"[14] and 'truth,' and all manner of binary oppositions such as good and evil, nature and culture, true and false and perhaps most surprisingly, writing and speech.[15] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, two of the best known scholars on postmodernism write, that in addition to rejecting representation, i.e. the belief that theories reflect reality, it also

> Rejects modern assumptions of social coherence and notions of causality in favour of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation and indeterminancy. In addition, postmodern theory; abandons the rational and unified subject postulated by modern theory in favour of a socially and linguistically decentered and fragmented

subject.[16]

Many (though not all) of these attributes can be encapsulated by saying that postmodernism rejects the 18th Century European Enlightenment and its intellectual culture of seeking certain truth and "clear and distinct comprehension"[17] that could not be doubted. This goal received its most powerful early formulation in the work of Descartes whose famous method led him to reject anything which could possibly de doubted.[18] In the last analysis, he discovers, what cannot be doubted is his own existence – to doubt it, he must exist! – and the power of reason to deliver the truth if we reason correctly.[19] Thus he established on a firm philosophical basis, the primacy of the subject in the quest for knowledge and the primacy of reason. These ideas became foundational to Enlightenment, i.e. 'modernist' thinking which built on them and applied them to the exploration of reality.

One of the most comprehensive summaries of Enlightenment thought is presented by Jane Flax. Despite its length, it is worth quoting in full.

1. The existence of a stable, coherent self. Distinctive properties of this Enlightenment Self include a form of reason capable of privileged insight into its own processes and the "laws of nature.

2. Reason and its "science" – philosophy – can provide objective, reliable, and universal foundation for knowledge.

3. The knowledge acquired from the right use of reason will be "true" – for example, such knowledge will represent something real and unchanging (universal) about our minds and the structure of the natural world.

4. Reason itself has transcendental and universal qualities. It exists independently of the self's contingent existence (e.g., bodily, historical and social experiences do not affect reason's structure or its capacity to produce atemporal knowledge).

5. There are complex connections between reason, autonomy, and freedom. All claims to truth and rightful authority are to be submitted to the tribunal of reason. Freedom consists of obedience to laws that conform to the necessary results of the right use of reason. (The rules that are right for me as a rational being will necessarily be

right for all other such rational beings.) In obeying such laws, I am obeying my own best transhistorical part (reason) and hence am exercising my own autonomy and ratifying my existence as a free being. In such acts, I escape a determined or merely contingent existence.

6. By grounding claims to authority in reason, the conflicts between truth, knowledge and power can be overcome. Truth can serve power without distortion; in turn by utilizing knowledge in the service of power, both freedom and progress will be assured. Knowledge can be both neutral (e.g. grounded in universal reason, not particular "interests") and also socially beneficial.

7. Science, as the exemplar of right use of reason, is also the paradigm of all true knowledge. Science is neutral in its methods and contents but socially beneficial in its results. Through its process of discovery we can utilize the laws of nature for the benefit of society. However, in order for science to progress, scientists must be free follow the rules of reason rather than pander to the interests arising from outside rational discourse.

8. Language is in some sense transparent . Just as the right use of reason can result in knowledge that represents the real, so, too, language is merely the medium in and through which such representation occurs. There is a correspondence between word and thing (as between a correct truth claim and the real). Objects are not linguistically (or socially) constructed; they are merely made present to consciousness by naming and the right use of language.[20]

Directly or indirectly, Flax's summary touches on almost all of the Enlightenment beliefs against which the postmodernists rebelled in their various ways, thereby revealing the "deep irrationalism at the heart of postmodernism"[21] This opposition to the Enlightenment is also why postmodern philosophy is so heavily indebted to Nietzsche and Heidegger, who were both scathing critics of Enlightenment thought.

What postmodernism primarily offers in return for these wide-ranging rejections is more room for heterogeneity, for difference and the different, for the marginalized, for the colonized, the silenced and the outcast, be they subversive ideas or interpretations hidden in a text, a social class or group, the conquered, dominated, suppressed, rejected and demeaned. It

also offers a new way to experience ourselves as subjects and a new way of relating to reality which is regarded as a man-made social construction. Finally, it offers freedom from being enslaved to metanarratives or "grand narratives"[22] which threaten the independence and freedom of our lives. Thus, we can see that postmodernism is, or sees itself, as an intellectual liberation movement working for the freedom of oppressed peoples and ideas. It is, therefore, at least to some extent involved in the politics of knowledge, which means it formulates theories with an eye to their usefulness and suitability for its liberationist goals. It is not simply trying to find truth but truth that makes free.

This oppositional attribute of postmodernism has been observed by such scholars as Lloyd Spencer whose article bears the telling title of "Postmodernism, Modernity and the Tradition of Dissent". Spencer writes, "postmodernism can be seen as an extension of the critical, sceptical, dissenting - even nihilistic - impulse of modernity."[23] This oppositional nature fits in well with postmodernism's liberationist agenda.

To the charge that this reduces it from a philosophy with a disinterested quest for truth, to an ideology which seeks truth that are useful to a particular end, the postmodern reply is that whether conscious of it or not, all philosophy is ideology and is working in the interests of someone or some group. A disinterested quest for truth is a fiction to deceive others and ourselves.

3. The Foundations of Postmodernism: Kant

Whereas Descartes may be seen as the initiator of the Enlightenment or modernism in philosophy, Kant (1724 - 1804) is generally regarded as its towering philosophical intellect. However, Kant's role is ambiguous, because he may also be understood as also having laid the basis for postmodernism. Without question, Kant gave primacy to reason in the quest for knowledge; indeed, rationality is our most important attribute as human beings.[24] At the same time, however, Kant put limitations on reason, restricting its effective scope to the phenomenal world of our daily experience. "I shall show that neither on the one path, the empirical, nor on the other, the transcendental, can reason achieve anything, and that it stretches its wings in vain, if it tries to soar beyond the world of sense by the mere power of speculation."[25] Therefore, he rejects the belief that God, Who is obviously transcendental to

this phenomenal world, can be proved cosmologically, i.e. from the contingent existence of phenomenal reality, we cannot deduce the existence of a necessary and non-contingent being.[26] The final result of Kant's view is that human reason and knowledge are confined to the phenomenal world; there is no possibility of reasoning or obtaining knowledge about whatever is transcendental.

According to Kant, the limitations of reason were also demonstrated by the antinomies, that is, the equally possible but rationally contradictory results which show "discord and confusion produced by the conflict of the laws (antinomy) of pure reason."[27] In other words, on some subjects – the limitation of the universe in space and time; the concept of a whole cosmos made of indivisible atoms; the problem of freedom and causality; the existence of a necessarily existing being – reason can come to opposite but equally rational conclusions. There is simply no way to break the deadlock. Thus, "reason makes us both believers and doubters at once"[28] leaving us with grounds to believe and disbelieve in God and in reason itself.

Kant's third contribution to the development of the postmodern outlook is the theory of categories. In Kant's view, our perceptions of the world did not arrive in the form in which we actually experience them. Rather they arrive as 'raw data' which the mind processes and shapes by means of the categories which are the conditions on which having an experience depends. "These categories therefore are also fundamental concepts by which we think objects in general for the phenomena, and have therefore *a priori* objective validity"[29] These categories, which include organizing raw data according to time, space, causality, necessity, contingency, subsistence and accidence among other things, constitute, that is, create our experience of the phenomenal world. Thus, our mind shapes the raw data of our perceptions into a coherent world which becomes the object of our experience. In Kant's view, we have no way of knowing what the raw data was like before it was shaped into the phenomenal world by the categories of the mind; that noumenal realm must remain forever beyond our grasp and there is no point in speculating about this terra incognita. It is also follows clearly from Kant's views, that to one extent or another, the perceiving subject cannot be taken as a mirror reflecting a pre-existing reality, which is to say, the subject cannot access reality and deliver accurate reports about it. Indeed, the subject is "an obstacle to cognition"[30] and cannot

be trusted.

Kant's views laid the foundations for postmodern constructivism, which asserts that our knowledge of reality, be it natural, social or personal is constructed, not discovered. Discovery is really construction as Kant's theory of the data organizing categories makes clear. We make the world or reality we experience. As we shall see later, in postmodern theory, the function of the categories is taken over by language and culture. This means that there can be no objective knowledge or representation of reality and that all we have are various constructions or stories none of which is privileged over others in terms of its truth value. (How, after all, could truth be determined if we only have constructions and nothing to compare our constructions against.?) Not only is external reality hidden beneath our constructions, so is our individual self or identity which becomes just another construction or story among the rest. This is a profoundly different way of experiencing oneself than the belief in an immortal soul forming our essence. Indeed, in this view, things such as cats, stars, species or individuals do not naturally have essences; rather these so-called essences are constructed for our convenience by selecting, more or less arbitrarily, a certain number and/or kind of traits. Postmodernism as we shall see drew the obvious lesson from Kant's view: if reality, the world, and the self can be constructed in one way, they can also be constructed in another. The world and reality may be changed by reconstructing it along new lines.

Kant also influenced postmodern thought by providing an idea to react against, namely, the sharp division between the perceiving (and organizing) subject and the object, the data being organized. (Hegel, among others, already sought to overcome this division in his philosophy) The postmodernists want to see the subject and object as one di-polar complex, as a self-in-the-world, as irrevocably embedded in a specific life-situation with its unique perspective. Self and world are like two sides of a coin, distinct but not separable from one another.

Kant's influence may also be felt in another area important to postmodern thinking, namely, its rejection of metaphysical investigation or speculation. According to Kant, it is impossible for us to gain knowledge about anything that is not part of the phenomenal world constituted by our mental categories. In other words, we cannot know anything that is not organised in accordance with the categories of time, space, causality,

necessity, subsistence and accidence among other things. The nature of the raw data or reality – the noumenon – before it is perceived and shaped by the categories is forever unknowable. Human knowledge is limited to the phenomenal realm, i.e. that which is shaped by the categories. For this reason, cosmological proofs of God are impossible: they attempt to reason from the nature of phenomena to the nature of an entity – God – Who is beyond the phenomenal. We cannot apply reason – based on our understanding of the phenomenal world shaped by the categories – to that which has not been shaped by the categories. Consequently, all metaphysical speculation about non-phenomenal reality is pointless.

Finally, Allan Megill points out another area in which Kant's philosophy, perhaps inadvertently, influenced postmodern thought, namely aesthetics. If nature, in Kant's view, was the realm of law and our actions were the realm of the good (we always try and achieve what appears as a good to us) then aesthetics may be seen as a realm of freedom from these constraints, a realm in which beauty, pleasure and satisfaction are the goals. Kant, was read as asserting that there was "an autonomous realm of the aesthetic"[31] In other words, there is a realm where man is free to construct however he chooses, where man is completely free. Moreover,

Kant's insistence on the autonomy of aesthetic judgment leads him to deny that art has 'truth value ... At the same time, however, some of his statements in the *Critique of Judgment* can be read as contradicting this view. For he does hint that while art cannot supply us with knowledge in any logical sense, it can pout us into contact with something that cannot be fully presented in experience or grasped through concepts. [32]

The lesson to be drawn from this is that only through art and through art-making or constructing can humankind ever attain its full measure of freedom and learn whatever 'truth' it is able to learn. Art, the aesthetic, has become the model and ideal of existence.

4. The Foundations of Postmodernism: Nietzsche

Frederich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) had such an enormous influence on postmodern thought that one might well consider him to be the first postmodernist. According to Best and Kellner, Nietzsche's "assault on Western rationalism profoundly influenced Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard and other postmodern theorists."[33] According to Clayton Koelb,

"Nietzsche initiated many of the basic concepts which stand behind the broad concept of postmodernism."[34]

Many, if not all, postmodern themes are taken up in his various works, from the early *The Birth of Tragedy* to his final, posthumously collected notes in *The Will to Power*. Of these, the distrust, indeed, dislike, for reason is clearly evident in one of his earliest and most widely read works, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche relentlessly criticizes modern culture and its (for him) archetypal character, Socrates.

> Our whole modern world is entangled in the net of Alexandrian culture. It proposes as its ideal the *theoretical man* equipped with the greatest forces of knowledge, and laboring in the service of science, whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates.[35]

The "theoretical man" was Socrates, the champion of reason and thought as the best means of discovering the truth about ourselves and reality. In a similar vein, he writes in *Twilight of the Idols*:

> Today, conversely, precisely insofar as the prejudice of reason forces us to posit unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood, being, we see ourselves somehow caught in error, necessitated into error[36]

Socrates, the "theoretical man" has fallen prey to a profound *illusion...* [an] unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of logic, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it. This sublime metaphysical illusion accompanies science as an instinct and leads science again and again to its limits at which it must turn into *art*: *which is really the aim of this mechanism.*[37]

Nietzsche calls Socrates a "mystagogue of science"[38] with whom originated "the spirit of science... the faith in the explicability of nature and in knowledge as a panacea."[39] Despite claims to be seeking the truth, the mission of science is really to comfort humankind by making existence appear comprehensible and thus justified; and if reasons do not suffice, *myth* had to come to their aid in the end—myth which I have just called the necessary consequence, indeed the purpose, of science[40]

Therefore, the mission of science - and the quest for knowledge in general - is to provide comforting illusions such as the notion that the universe is an orderly place and/or a place

we can understand. To do this, science has "first spread a common net of thought ["myth"] over the whole globe, actually holding out the prospect of the lawfulness of an entire solar system."[41] However, Nietzsche is not hopeful that this strategy will be successful: "But science, spurred by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly towards its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck."[42]

These passages explicitly and implicitly point to other Nietzschean themes in addition to scepticism about knowledge and science, logic and reason. For example, Nietzsche's scepticism about truth is plainly evident when he says, "Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value of life is ultimately decisive."[43] What is essential about truth is not that it is true but that it serves life: "[t]he criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power."[44] In other words, truth is not which is actually the case but that which meets our needs in the struggles of life – a view of truth that is highly subjective and which allows there to be as many truths as there are individuals with needs. When we think in existential terms, such might indeed be the case – we all have our own personal truths – but it is difficult to see how this could meaningfully apply to mathematics, medicine, science or history. Elsewhere he says that truth is "Inertia; that hypothesis which gives rise to contentment; smallest expenditure of spiritual force."[45] In a similar vein, he writes, "The biggest fable of all is the fable of knowledge,"[46] thereby expressing his doubts about the existence of knowledge, something he had already done in *The Birth of Tragedy* by calling science a myth.

Nietzsche also strikes several postmodern notes when he writes:

> Will to truth is a *making* firm, a *making* true and durable, an abolition of the false character of things, a reinterpretation of it into beings. "Truth" is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered – but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process, or rather to a will to overcome that has in itself no end – introducing truth as a processus in infinitum, and active determining – not a becoming conscious of something that is itself firm and determined. It is a word for the "will to power".[47]

Nietzsche tells us that the "will to truth" is seen in acts of will, in "making" things "true and durable;" it is an "active

determining." Thus he identifies the "will to truth" with the "will to power," which implicitly rejects the notion that truth is simply our discovery of what is the case. Indeed, he it clear that truth is something we make, or create by an act of will, and that this willing process goes on forever. Final truth is, in the last analysis, unattainable. It is also a product of human creativity:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.[48]

Truth, we might say, is an artistic human creation, a convenient fiction.

This position has at least six consequences that bore fruit among postmodern thinkers. First, if truth is man-made, then humankind has no access to reality, only its own fabrications – a theme we already saw in Kant's division between the accessible phenomenal world and the inaccessible noumenal realm. This aesthetic theory of knowledge rules out any form of the correspondence theory of truth. Second, we observe the clear identification of the "will to truth" and the "will to power." If these two are the same, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that any claim to possessing truth is also a claim to power, i.e. those who claim to have truth are really advancing power claims over others. Third, truth is subjective insofar as it reflects what we need and desire, and what we project or impose on 'reality.' It is obvious, of course, that in this situation it is difficult to speak of reality at all, since there can be no one thing to which that term refers. Fourth, since truths are artistic creations – "are illusions" – there is no objective external standard by which to judge among truth claims and we can embrace them all as equally true or reject them all as equally false. In other words, this view exemplifies a thorough-going relativism (if we accept them all as somehow true) and scepticism (if we reject them all as doubtful.) Fifth, is the aesthetizing of reality, i.e. presenting it as a work of art, an idea that will later bear fruit with postmodern thinkers treating the world like a text or, as in Baudrillard's case, quite literally as an artistic work. Sixth, the Nietzschean concept of truth as an artistic creation makes it

clear that the concept of an 'objective', disinterested quest for or contemplation of the truth is "conceptual nonsense."[49] Because the quest for knowledge is a manifestation of the will to power, all truth is 'interested' truth, i.e. truth with an agenda.[50] This is also true because all truth is perspectival: "The only seeing we have is seeing from a perspective; the only knowledge we have is knowledge from a perspective,"[51] a position sometimes referred to as perspectivism.

According to Nietzsche's perspectivism, all statements of any kind represent only one particular and limited perspective embedded in the concrete realities of a specific human existence which has no more legitimate claim to being true than any other. There is no neutral, 'Archimedean point' from which reality can be 'objectively observed.' Speaking of philosophers, Nietzsche writes,

> Every one of them pretends that he has discovered and reached his opinions through the self-development of cold, pure, divinely untroubled dialectic ... whereas at bottom a pre-conceived dogma, an "institution" or mostly a heart's desire made abstract and refined is defended by them with arguments sought after the fact. hey are all lawyers ... and for the most part quite sly defenders of their prejudices which they christen "truths"... [52]

The unbiased, objective quest for truth as such is a willow-the-wisp; every claim to know truth is an expression of personal interest, of the will-to-power. This claim has obvious logical problem with self-reference: since it applies to Nietzsche's view as well, any universal truth value of his statement dissolves itself – and we find ourselves trapped in the midst of an infinite number of competing perspectives. Postmodernist philosophers, however, have simply brushed this problem aside and adopted Nietzsche's perspectivism.

From this we can naturally draw the conclusion that what we call 'truth' is only an interpretation; indeed, Nietzsche says, "facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing."[53] Nor do things have an essential nature apart from our constructions and interpretations.[54] Perhaps the following quote may be used to sum up Nietzsche's prevailing attitude and beliefs: "There exists neither "spirit," nor reason, nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth: all are fictions that are of no use."[55]

To the suggestion that truth is more valuable than lies or fictions no matter how convenient they are, Nietzsche answers: "It is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than semblance"[56] and then asks, "Why couldn't the world *which matters to us* be a fiction?"[57] Why not, indeed, since "the will to know [is based on] the foundation of a much more forceful will, namely the will to not-know, to uncertainty, to untruth!"[58] Humankind wants - needs - its deceptions, and therefore one should not struggle too much for truth since "it stupefies, bestializes and brutalizes you."[59] The 'truth-game' is not worth the candle:

> The world with which you are concerned is false, i.e. it is not a fact but a fable and `approximation on the basis of a meagre sum of observations.; it is "in flux," as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for - there is no "truth."[60]

Obviously, therefore, no eternal or absolute truths exist, and that being the case, no so-called truths can serve as the foundations of any system of metaphysics, ethics, philosophical systems or, what postmodernism refers to as "grand narratives."[61] Nietzsche's rejection of truth is matched by his equally firm rejection of God. Zarathustra tells his listeners, "God is a conjecture; but I desire that your conjectures should not reach beyond your creative will. Could you create a god? Then do not speak to me of any gods."[62] In other words, Zarathustra-Nietzsche rejects transcendence, i.e. anything that is beyond the powers of the human will to create just as Kant rejects anything beyond the power of the human mind to know. Rather than wasting time with God, Zarathustra advises people to turn their energies into overcoming their humanity, and thus making way for the greater-than-man, the "overman" or superman" as he is sometimes called: "But you could well create the overman."[63] Later, Zarathustra says that "man is something that must be overcome - that man is a bridge and no end."[64] We should try to surpass our humanity and become something greater, or, if we cannot, at least help clear the way for something greater. In postmodernism this idea resurfaces as the theme of the 'death of man,' which plays an especially important role in the work of Michel Foucault.

5. The Foundations of Postmodernism: Heidegger

Though he is a highly controversial figure because of his one-time open support of the Nazi party, Martin Heidegger (1990 -

1976), perhaps the pre-eminent, most quoted philosopher of the 20th Century, is second only to Nietzsche in terms of influence on postmodern thought. Heidegger influenced postmodernism in six main ways. First, he rejects the metaphysics of the entire western philosophical tradition with the exception Anaximander, one of the pre-Socratics. The western tradition's metaphysics and the resulting subject/object epistemology leads to a utilitarian-scientific-technological world view that impoverishes our lives. Second, he rejects calculative, utilitarian view of reason as the sole source of legitimate knowledge and the rejection of the correspondence theory of truth. Therefore, the concept of 'truth' cannot be limited to rationalized propositions about beings but must include knowledge of the Being of beings. Third, he sees truth as *aletheia*, the disclosure of the Being of beings; truth is not discovered by us but rather discloses or reveals itself. He also recognises the fundamental ambiguity of all knowledge. Fourth, he dismisses the notion of absolute final truth. Fifth, he doubts the ability of verbal propositions to mirror or reflect reality. Sixth, he sees the task of art and especially poetry as the disclosure of the Being of beings. Finally, in Heidegger's view, language is not a transparent medium and helps constitute our being-in-the-world and our life-world.

For reasons uniquely his own, Heidegger, like Kant and Nietzsche seeks to avoid or rather, "overcome"[65] metaphysics whereby he reinforces the anti-metaphysical trend already evident in 20th Century philosophy. Postmodern philosophy as we shall see is a part of this trend. Metaphysics – defined as "the philosophical investigation of the nature, constitution and structure of reality,"[66] – has, according to Heidegger, gone askew since the time of Anaximander and continuously "misconstrues being"[67] insofar as it forgets the "question of Being"[68] and replaces it with concern for particular *beings*. Thus, Being, which is everywhere manifested in all things. and which transcends all things, is falsely described as "the most universal and the emptiest of concepts"[69] and is ignored; it ceases to be a subject of investigation in itself. No western philosopher since Plato has sought to describe the nature of Being as such. Instead, Being is replaced by interest in individual beings.

Metaphysics does indeed represent beings in their being, and so it also thinks the being of beings. *But it does not think being as such, does not think the difference between being and beings*[70].

Being and beings are confused with one another. Elsewhere, Heidegger says, Metaphysics, insofar as it always represents only beings as beings, does not recall Being itself. Philosophy does not concentrate on its ground.[71]

According to Heidegger, this failure to deal with the Being of beings, leads to metaphysics and science both of which depend on a diminished understanding of truth: " To metaphysics the nature of truth always appears only in derivative form of the truth of propositions. which formulate our knowledge."[72] In short, we know a lot about things and stuff but have forgotten Being itself.

To illustrate what he means, Heidegger compares Being to color and to the Earth in statements that recall Wordsworth's passionate assertion,

> Our meddling intellect
>
> Mishapes the beauteous forms of things;
>
> - We murder to dissect.[73]

In a similar vein, Heidegger writes,

> Color shines and wants only to shine. When we analyse it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it. it causes every merely calculating importunity to turn to a destruction ... The earth appears only cleared and as itself when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable ...."[74]

Our propositional knowledge and calculative or technological reason tell us nothing about color as it makes itself present ("presences" as a verb in Heidegger's language) to us, just as our knowledge of earth-science and technology cannot makes us aware of the Being of the Earth. Technology concerns itself not with the Being of things but "the imposition of man's will upon the world,"[75] upon individual beings. It does not care if it really knows a thing with which it co-dwells in the world but only that it achieves mastery and dominion over it To know the Being of the thing, we must open ourselves to its Being just as we need to open ourselves to the experience of color. In effect, we need what Wordsworth calls "a heart/ That watches and receives."[76]

Heidegger's analysis and the conclusions he draws from it

have deeply influenced postmodern (and ecological) philosophy. Immediately noticeable is that rational and scientific knowledge (measurement) are limited in what they can tell us and do not exhaust what can be known about a particular being. They are merely one kind of knowledge from one particular perspective, one interpretation about a thing and not knowledge per se; it is quite possible for other thinkers or cultures with different perspectives to have developed different kinds of equally valid knowledge of specific beings. Therefore it is impossible to claim that any one kind of knowledge of beings is privileged or has priority over any other. No propositional knowledge is absolute; it is all relative. As Heidegger says, "There is no absolute truth across the incommensurable understandings of being or world-disclosures."[77]

This, inevitably, brings us to the question of the meaning of 'truth'. According to Heidegger, the usual definition of truth involves the idea of something or a state of affairs being "actual,"[78] of being "the correspondence of knowledge to the matter,"[79] or the correspondence of something "with the " 'rational' concept of its essence."[80] However, he disagrees with this view: "Thus truth has by no means the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in the sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (the Object)."[81] In taking this position, Heidegger implicitly throws into question the subject/object distinction and relationship that has been the bedrock of western epistemology. If truth is not a correspondence between subject and object of perception, what could it be? In Heidegger's view, the correspondence theory of truth is also inadequate because it ignores our relationship to Being, the interpretation or understanding of which influences our self-understanding as human and thus our relationship to the specific beings we encounter. Our usual propositions about specific beings are made as though they were products of an intellect that is independent of any relation to and interpretation of Being.[82]

This, of course is false because conscious of it or not, all beings have a relationship to Being. For this reason, "the traditional assignment of truth exclusively to statements as the sole essential locus of truth falls away. Truth does not originally reside in the proposition."[83] It is important to note that truth does nor arise "*originally*" in propositions, i.e. that there is a deeper, more primordial original truth which manifests itself in specific beings. Thus Heidegger does not think propositional truth is fully adequate to reality.

Furthermore, he also has doubts about the possibility of a meaningful relation between propositions and things, which is to say, he doubts that mere verbal propositions lacking proper grounding in a relationship to Being can ever satisfactorily correspond to real specific beings. In *Being and Time*, he asks, "In what way is this relation [of correspondence] possible as a relation between *intellectus* [mind/intellect] and *res* [thing/object]?"[84] From this question,

> it becomes plain that to clarify the structure of a truth it is not enough simply to presuppose this relational totality [of complete correspondence between mind and object] but we must go back and *inquire into the context of Being which provides the support for this totality as such.*[85]

These passages also point out that our awareness of and attitude towards Being i.e. our "comportment"[86] towards Being influences our self-understanding as human beings which in turn influences our relationship to specific beings. We, may for example, ignore Being, and ourselves as a place where Being reveals itself, and see ourselves strictly as things whose existence is limited to the superficial daily aspects being – purely utilitarian considerations, getting, spending, dominating and being dominated – and, as a consequence, develop a purely calculative rational approach towards ourselves and the things of this world. We may reduce things in our surroundings to mere objects for use or domination, a fate from which artists and especially poets must rescue them.[87] Such objectifying leads to the dominance of technology in our lives and relationship to others and nature. Furthermore, Heidegger suggests that reason is not independent of other factors in our lives which is to say, is not transcendent i.e. objective or uninfluenced by our lives and therefore cannot provide a transcending and universal overview of reality that is uniform for all human viewpoints. "[A]ll truth is relative to Dasein's [man's] Being."[88]

According to Heidegger, truth is more than the mere propositions of calculative reason or a correspondence between a subject and object: truth, in the primary sense, is *aletheia*, unconcealing or "disclosedness"[89] of Being and the Being of beings, of letting Being be, of having, as Wordsworth says, "a heart/ That watches and receives." Thus, for Heidegger, existential truth is prior to propositional truth which implies that the disclosure of Being depends on our comportment or demeanour towards Being and the Being of beings including ourselves. The willingness to let Being be, to let the Being of things unconceal itself to us is man's original way of knowing

and only later does he 'fall' into forgetfulness of Being to satisfy himself with superficial, calculative, utilitarian reason and metaphysical propositions.

However, there is a fundamental ambiguity to *aletheia* for every unconcealing is also a concealing of Being and the Being of beings. "The disclosure of beings as such is simultaneously and intrinsically the concealing of being as a whole"[90] because

> [i]n the simultaneity of disclosure and concealing errancy holds sway. Errancy and the concealing of what is concealed belong to the primordial essence of truth.[91] Thus, Being is always simultaneously disclosed and undisclosed, because these two conditions, like truth and untruth are not distinct absolutes but are correlates.

Precisely because letting be always lets beings be in a particular comportment [mood,

> stance, attitude] which relates to them and thus discloses them, it conceals beings as a whole. [92]

Because truth is always the truth of a particular being with a particular comportment to Being as well as existing in a particular situation, the whole of Being can never disclose itself to us at any one time. Our availability to Being is always partial, and therefore, the unconcealing of Being is also a concealing. We are always faced with a 'hidden dimension' in our encounters with all beings. Because of this, our knowledge of the Being of things is unlimited; indeed, it is infinite, and for that reason there can be no limit to our knowledge of the Being of beings. This idea bore particular fruit in the work of Derrida, whose deconstructionism posited that no one approach to or reading of a text could possibly disclose the entirety of its meaning. There was undisclosed discord between what was revealed and what was concealed and this discord enable virtually an endless number of readings just as artists and poets could disclose endless aspects of the Being of beings. A final disclosure or reading is an impossibility.

In Heidegger's view, the arts, above all poetry and painting disclose the Being of beings; the artist "speaks ... in a nonsubjective, Being-attuned voice."[93] Art, has a deep epistemological function, it "puts us in touch ... with a truth that we cannot attain otherwise than through art."[94]

> The Greeks called the unconcealedness of beings *aletheia*. We say "truth" and think little enough in using this word.

> If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work .. Some particular entity ... comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining.[95]

Thus, the artist rather than the scientist is in a unique position to lead us to the truth of Being. S/he is the one who can "get men to think about the involvement of Being in human nature."[96]

However, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the poet has primary status for Heidegger because of the role that language plays in constituting man (Dasein): "discourse is constitutive for Dasein's existence"[97] Language is not just a clear medium for representing things or ideas. Rather,

> [l]anguage is a totality of words – a totality in which discourse has a 'worldly' Being of its own; and as an entity within-the-world, this totality thus becomes something which we may come across ready-to-hand.[98]

Because language is encountered like other beings in the world, it has a " 'worldly' Being of its own", it can act on us and shape i.e. 'constitute' our existence in a variety of ways. Fulfilling this function makes it impossible that language is merely representational of things or ideas, which in turn means that language, as a medium with a character of its own, cannot point us to any transcendental, absolute truths somehow apart from this world. Here we can already observe the first rejection of what postmodernists call "representationalism." Failure to appreciate this aspect of language leads to a "metaphysics of presence" i.e. the belief that through the clear medium of language we can attain and perceive the presence of thins as they really are.

6. Jean-Francois Lyotard

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924 – 1998), one of the premier philosophers of the postmodern movement, is best known for his book *The Postmodern Condition* which first brought the term 'postmodern' into common usage. This book, containing in seminal form most of the later developments of his thought, provides on of the most frequently quoted definitions of postmodernism: "I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives."[99] By "metanarratives," (also called "grand

narrative[s]"[100]), Lyotard means those 'stories' or intellectual frameworks by which we interpret the world and our activities and thereby provide meaning for the whole and give certain data the status of being facts, truths or real knowledge. For example, Marxism supplied revolutionaries around the world with a metanarrative encompassing the behavior of matter i.e. dialectical materialism, as well as the nature, direction and future outcome of human history, i.e. historical materialism. The Enlightenment metanarrative concerned the gradual triumph of reason over irrationality and the progress of humankind not only in scientific knowledge but also in the progress towards rational freedom and a tolerant society. The Christian metanarrative tells the story of humankind's fall from grace and its redemption by Christ Whose word must be spread throughout the world.

All of these metanarratives offer a complete or total vision by which all possible human action may be interpreted and/or judged and for this reason Lyotard describes them as a "project of totalization."[101] The connotation of 'totalitarian' is fully intended by Lyotard who even describes metanarratives as "terrorist"[102] because they can be used to "eliminate[] or threaten[] to eliminate, a player [point of view, culture] from the language game one shares with them."[103] From another perspective we might say that one of the tasks of a metanarrative is the "legitimation of knowledge,"[104] which is to say that the metanarrative provides the foundational principles by which to distinguish 'real knowledge' from error, folklore, myth or the babblings of the insane. Thus, the metanarrative becomes the gatekeeper of knowledge – and, by extension, the guardian of crucial binary oppositions necessary for a system of thought or social system to maintain itself. Examples of such binary oppositions are order / disorder; sane / insane; noumenal / phenomenal; true / untrue; competent / incompetent; knowledge / superstition; rational / irrational and primitive / civilized. By means of these oppositions, metanarratives take on a prescriptive function not only for individuals but for entire societies who must conduct themselves personally and/or collectively to its standards which are enforced not just by institutions but by all those who accept the metanarrative. Lyotard (like Foucault) of course believes this prescriptive function imprisons us and the "incredulity toward metanarratives"[105] is a means of freeing ourselves from their rule. For Lyotard, this means freeing ourselves from modernity which "is identified with modern reason, Enlightenment, totalizing thought and philosophies of history."[106] Lyotard

"rejects notions of universalist and foundational theory as well as claims that one method or set of concepts has privileged status."[107]

In *The Post Modern Condition* Lyotard also explains his views in terms of "language games"[108] i.e. systems of discourse or utterance working on the basis of certain rules that "are the objects of a contract, explicit or not, between the players."[109] Without these rules (which may have been inherited) there is no game. In the language game every utterance is a "move."[110] Each metanarrative, each culture and subculture plays its own language game; indeed, "language games are the minimum relation required for society to exist"[111] – a statement indicating that societies and language games are absolute correlatives. Concepts and statements only have meaning within the context of a particular game and each game must "privilege certain classes of statements ... whose predominance characterizes the discourse of the particular institution."[112] The postmodern "incredulity towards metanarrative" in favour of the "little narrative [petit recit]"[113] i.e. the limited narrative without universal claims or implications, leads inevitably to the fragmentation of language games and the elimination of metanarratives. In the words of critic and philosopher Terry Eagleton, "Postmodernism, then, is wary of History but enthusiastic on the whole about history."[114]

Lyotard takes particular aim at the metanarrative of science which he portrays as one language game among others without any special or privileged status in the quest for knowledge: "[t]he game of science is ... put on par with the others."[115] In his view, both science and "non-scientific (narrative) knowledge"[116] i.e. rationality and narrative operate on the basis of different rules, and what is a good "move" in one game is not necessarily "good" in the other. Consequently

> [i]t is therefore impossible to judge the existence or validity of narrative knowledge. On the basis of scientific knowledge and vice versa: the relevant criteria are different. All we can do is gaze in wonderment at the diversity of discursive species ... [117]

Elsewhere he says, "science plays its own game; it is incapable of legitimating other language games"[118]; indeed, it cannot even legitimate itself since like any other language game it cannot demonstrate the truth of its own ground rules which are simply "the object of consensus."[119] The rules are accepted not because they are true but because we happen to agree on them. Very

clearly, Lyotard does not privilege rationality in the quest for knowledge.

7. Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004) is the originator of deconstructionism, perhaps the most influential version of postmodernist philosophy developed so far. According to Jonathan Culler, one of deconstruction's foremost expositors

> To deconstruct a discourse [text] is to show how it *undermines the philosophy it asserts,* or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise.[120]

In other words, in some way, every text undermines or subverts itself and thus destabilises any attempt to find in it a final, fixed, permanent meaning It is important to note that this subversion occurs from within. As Derrida says,

> The movements of deconstruction *do not destroy structures from the outside*. They are not possible and effective nor can they take accurate aim except by inhabiting those structures ... Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure ... [121]

The text subverts or works against itself through its choice of words and phrases, the ambiguity of some words and phrases, rhetorical devices and/or imagery. Perhaps the best known example of this procedure is "*Plato's Pharmacy*," in which Derrida explores Plato's ""*Phaedrus*":

> The word pharmakon [remedy] is caught in a chain of significations. The play of that chain seems systematic. But the system here is not, simply, that of the intentions of an author who goes by the name of Plato.[122]

However, as Derrida points out, *pharmakon* means not only 'remedy' but also 'poison' not to mention 'spell' or 'drug' (as in hallucinogen) and this "chain of significations" serves to destabilise any simplistic interpretation of the text. Writing, which Thoth had introduced as a remedy for humankind's poor memory, is also a 'poison' that weakens memory, and may cast a 'spell' over us by making us think we have understood an idea when we have not.

> If the pharmakon is "ambivalent," it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (body/soul, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc)... The pharmakon is the movement, the locus and the play: (the production of) difference.[123]

Each reading of 'pharmacy' evokes another, often contrary meaning; we recognize the difference between 'remedy' and 'poison' and in choosing one, even if only for a moment, we 'defer' the other meanings which, despite being deferred, help complete our understanding of the text. These other meanings are referred to as 'supplements,' (Derrida who is very inventive in coining new terms for his concepts and often has several terms for identical concepts.) This process of recognizing difference and deferring Derrida calls "*difference*" (note the spelling) and in his view every text is an endless play of '*differance'* as we defer, or temporarily push into the background, the meanings of various words. Each of these deferred meanings helps complete the full meaning of a word and for that reason, "The play of the supplement is indefinite."[124] Derrida makes the same point by stating that "writing structurally carries within itself (counts-discounts) the process of its own erasure and annulation..."[125] By "erasure" Derrida does not mean that one meaning of a word is absolutely excluded but rather that we read a word with awareness of all its other potential meanings instead of privileging one, usually conventional, meaning over all the others. We read the word with all of its meanings, aware of the ambiguity this causes in our understanding of the text itself.

To the objection that such supplementation is simply an arbitrary and extraneous addition to what is clearly the author's intention, Derrida replies

> Certain forces of association unite – at diverse distances, with different strengths and according to disparate paths – the words "actually present" in a discourse with all the other words in the lexical system whether or not they appears as "words ...[126]

This claim is based on Derrida's belief – derived from Saussure – that meanings of words are not given by "transcendental", i.e. extra-linguistic reference to the outside world but only by their relationship to other words. The

signifier does not receive its meaning from the external or 'transcendental' signified; there is no longer a direct relationship between them and we can no longer claim that signifier = the signified. Instead of referring to an external, 'transcendental' signified, the signifier refers us – endlessly as it turns out – to other words in the linguistic system. Thus, language, statements, propositions are not reflections of an external or transcendental reality but only reflect the various "plays" of meaning within a linguistic system. After all, each word is, ultimately related to every other word and its meaning depends on the "play of differences within that system."[127] The meaning of each word is "inter-textualized"[128] with all the others so that each bears a "trace" of all other words. For that reason there is no inside our outside of a text: "We do not believe that there exists, in all rigor, a Platonic text closed upon itself complete with its inside and its outside."[129] Simply using words that are part of a language system ensures that the text is in some way influenced by all these other meanings and that these other meanings may play some role in the understanding of the text. This presence yet simultaneous absence of these other meanings is called the "trace". The scope of these traces is endless, for which reason Derrida says, "There is nothing outside of the text"[130]

> beyond and behind what one believes can be circumscribed as [a] text, there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations, which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the "real" supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from the trace and from an invocation of the supplement etc. And thus to infinity."[131]

Derrida also approaches the subject of endless supplementation from the perspective of "play" by which he means a word's 'give' or tolerance for variation of meanings and suggestions: "Play is always the play of absence and presence"[132] of all possible traces (of other meanings) which he also describes as a "field of infinite substitutions."[133] In addition, Derrida defines play as "the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say, as the destruction of ontotheology and the metaphysics of presence."[134] This simply means that there is no pre-existing essential meaning in a text i.e. no "transcendental signified", that waits us to perceive and understand it, that exists before us and even without us, and that becomes 'present' to us when we think 'correctly.' This pre-existing, unconstructed

"transcendental signified" can also be referred to as "an invariable presence – eidos, arche, telos, energia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia* [disclosure, revelation of truth], transcendentality, consciousness, God, man and so forth."[135] The "metaphysics of presence" and "ontotheology" are the product of thinking in terms of such pre-existent, invariable and self-sufficient essences. Such thinking is deceptive because it fails to take into account the ambiguities of meaning revealed by the "play" of substitutions, supplements and traces which makes the existence of such independent and self-sufficient meanings (and entities) a chimera. It leads to the dangerous delusion that some of us actually know the complete and final truth about something, have privileged knowledge, are privileged knowers or have privileged methods of accessing certain knowledge. This, in turn, leads us to marginalise, disregard or even oppress other kinds of knowledge and other ways of knowing. Such is already the case with western philosophy vis-à-vis non-western philosophy.[136] Finally, it should be noted that in this view, a text has no meaning before anyone has interpreted it.[137] There is no truth outside of or transcendental to, the interpretation and telling.

Another important aspect of Derrida's deconstructionism is what he calls "logocentrism,"[138] a complex word rooted in the Greek '*logos*' which means not only 'word' but also 'truth' or 'reason.' According to Derrida, all philosophy since the time of Plato has been the "epoch of the logos"[139] and one project of deconstruction is to undermine the domination of logocentrism in western thought. In its simplest terms, logocentrism assumes that at the centre of any concept is a meaning or essence that exists before the construction of its meaning and is undeconstructible in itself. This unconstructed and undeconstructible essence, is 'transcendent' to its embodiment in language, i.e. is not dependent on its linguistic embodiment for its meaning, i.e. is self-sufficient and complete in what it means. Our understanding of a concept is true insofar as it corresponds to this "transcendental signified" which "in and of itself, in its essence, would refer to no signifier [word in the linguistic system], would exceed the chain of signs and would no longer as itself function as a signifier."[140] This "transcendental signified" also serves as a guarantee for the fixed meanings of the words we employ. Derrida states that he has "identified logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence as the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a signified."[141] The "metaphysics presence" is that philosophical thinking which is interested in defining the

ultimate self-sufficient meanings of terms such as God, Reality, Truth, Matter, Mind, Consciousness, Time and Self and resists the conclusion that these, like all other words, are undecidable. These, like the Biblical "Logos"[142] precede any human perception of their meaning, and the aim of the metaphysics of presence is to make their true meaning present to us through language. However, for deconstructionism this is a hopeless quest because the meaning of these words is undecidable: "meaning cannot be held in any individual sign since it is always deferred due to the fact that every sign is a signifier whose signified is another signifier."[143] As Derrida puts it, "The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment or in any sense that a simple element [meaning] be present in and of itself, referring only to itself."[144]

Derrida also rejects logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence for their dependence on oppositional binaries which privilege one side over the other. Examples of such oppositional binaries are God/creation; Truth/untruth; Good/evil; Justice/injustice; rational/irrational; Being/nothingness; Mind/matter and Self/not-self.[145] Since the meanings of these binaries are, in the last analysis, undecidable, there is no justification for privileging one of the pair and marginalising the other.

Derrida maintains that logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence have an enormously negative impact on culture and human behavior. Nowhere is this made more clear than in his essay "*Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas.*"

Although ostensibly about Levinas' philosophy, the essay also serves to outline Derrida's views about problems with phenomenology[146] and ontology[147] both of which are largely concerned with the essences of things, that is, those necessary qualities which a thing must have to be the kind of thing it is. Thus, they focus on kinds more than on individuals, for which reason Derrida says, Incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other, phenomenology and ontology would be philosophies of violence. Through them, the entire philosophical tradition, in its meaning and at bottom, would make common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same.[148]

In short, metaphysics does not respect the other as other but seeks to incorporate or appropriate it in some way, forgetting that "[t]he infinitely-other cannot be bound by a concept."[149]

The other can never be reduced to common denominators or subsumed by a general concept of 'essence': "the other is the other only if his alterity is absolutely irreducible."[150] Reducing the other to a common essence is a form of violence that inevitably breeds a violent frame of mind and violent discourse and finally physical violence.

8. Michel Foucault

Like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has been enormously influential in fields outside of his specialities of philosophy and social history. His writings cover such diverse topics as the social construction of madness[151] and sexuality[152], methods in historiography[153], penology[154], the nature of power and discourse. He has had an incalculable effect on cultural studies, political theory, feminism and sociology.[155] It should be noted that there is a certain amount of debate over whether or not Foucault is a postmodernist but it is our view that he shares so many relevant fundamental characteristics with Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Lyotard and Derrida, that his own refusal of the label notwithstanding, he is a part of this movement.[156]

Like Lyotard, Foucault rejects the concept of "grand narratives", i.e. he does not believe that it is possible to write generalized histories that covers all aspects of a particular civilization. He spells this out clearly in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

> the theme and possibility of a total history begins to disappear ... The project of a total history is one that seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle - material or spiritual - of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion ...[157]

Rather, he proposes what he calls "the new history"[158] which pays more attention to "discontinuity"[159], to the "series, divisions, limits, differences of level, shifts, chronological specificities, particular forms of rehandling, possible types of relation."[160] Just as Derrida proclaims the necessity of subverting any authoritative reading of a text, Foucault believes that "the tranquility with which they [the usual historical narratives driven by grand themes] are received *must be disturbed*"[161] by renounc[ing] all those themes whose function is to ensure infinite continuity of discourse."[162] Historical discourse must be broken up into what Lyotard calls "little narratives" or *petits recits* because only when previously glossed

over differences become apparent will new fields of research be visible and available for investigation. We will become aware of discrepancies and differences that have been covered up by large sweeping unifying concepts and no longer lose sight of subtle but important shifts in meaning and usage. Each concept, person and event must be understood in terms of its exact specificity in time, place and culture.

Thus, Foucault's historiography not only stresses breaks and discontinuities rather than grand similarities, changes in ideas and practices rather than extended homogeneities, but also what he calls the "epistemes" in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms grounds its positivity , and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions *of possibility* ... such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of the word, as an 'archaeology.'[163]

In other words, the episteme is the 'soil' from which 'vegetation' of ideas, behaviors, experiences, customs and beliefs grows; it makes all these things possible and, at the same time, establishes their character and limitations. Epistemes are "the fundamental codes of a culture."[164] According to Foucault, an episteme

> in a given period delimits in the totality of the experience a field of knowledge, defines the mode of being of the objects that appear in the field, provides man's everyday perception with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognised to be true.[165]

Thus, an episteme determines truth, meaning, identity, value and reality at a specific time and place. People need not even be consciously aware of the episteme or its power in their lives even though it creates the environment or context in which individuals think, feel, evaluate, behave and speak; it controls what can be said and understood as meaningful. Great social, cultural and intellectual changes are the result of changes in the underlying episteme. Archaeologies study these epistemes strictly for themselves but cannot draw any universal conclusions about 'humankind' or other epistemes from such examinations. This limitation is necessary because there is a sharp break or caesura between epistemes, i.e. "caeseuralism." [166] That is why, according to Foucault, archaeologies are more accurate accounts of studying the past: they are not "not

seduced by the mythology of a prevailing narrative"[167] or "grand narrative" that purports to provide a single overview of developments across several epistemes. Nor do archaeologies assume there are bridges of influence between epistemes, which is why, according to Foucault, "Archaeology does not seek to rediscover the continuous, insensible transition that relates discourses [epistemes]."[168] This view also makes any notion of progress impossible because there is no universal standard by which to measure such 'progress.' If epistemes and their products are not comparable, we can only say that one episteme is different from another, but not more advanced. Foucault makes this rejection of progress clear when he writes, "The history of sciences is not the history of the true, of its slow epiphany; it cannot hope to recount the gradual discovery of a truth."[169]

Changes in an episteme or changes from one episteme to another result in a revolution in perception and understanding: " 'things simply cease, all of a sudden, to be 'perceived, described, expressed, characterised, classified and known in the same way as before.' "[170] It is as if we were transplanted into a wholly new world which bears no significant comparison to the old. This why there are no bridges between epistemes.[171] To highlight the revolutionary and world-altering changes between epistemes, Foucault often makes such startling statements as "man is only a recent invention"[172] and

> [b]efore the end of the eighteenth century, man did not exist ... He is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago: but he has grown so quickly that it has been only too easy to imagine that he has been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment in which he would be known.[173]

What he means is that the way 'man' or humankind is conceived of in the modern episteme is not the same as the conception of man in the ancient Greek or Renaissance or Classical (Enlightenment) episteme. Each of these epistemes constituted 'man' in its own way. In Foucault's view, 'man' appears only at the beginning of the nineteenth century (at the end of the Classical age) with the full realization of human finitude in its physical and contingent existence, as well as the realization that 'man' is part of an episteme in which the primary category is dynamic history and development rather than static order.[174] Modernity discovers "man' in his finitude,"[175] which is to say,

> Modernity begins when the human being begins to exist within his organism, inside the shell of his head, the armature of his limbs,, and the whole structure of his physiology; when he begins to exist at the centre of a labour by whose principles he is governed ...[176]

What is obvious here is that the transcendent dimension has been stripped from life in modernity and this throws an ominous light on man's discovery of his "finitude." He finds himself "dominated by life, history and language"[177] instead of by transcendents like God, spirit, immortality and eternity, as was the case with Renaissance humanism and Classical rationalism. Enclosed in worldly existence, and more forcefully than ever before, man becomes aware of "the threatening rumble of his non-existence"[178] and discovers both within and outside himself "an element of darkness,"[179] as a kind of Other, the "unthought"[180] that is an inescapable twin to his being.

> To know man boiled down to grasping the determinations of concrete human existence in the facts of life, labour and language, all of which mould man even before his birth as an individual.[181]

Furthermore, this immersion in the empirical and material had a problem, namely that it was impossible to have empirical knowledge without recognising that reason is, at least to a certain degree, transcendent to the empirical facts. If it were not, how could it serve as a standard to supply and apply criteria of judgment, distinguish truth from error and the rational from the irrational? Thus, modern man appears divided between the empirical and the transcendent i.e. is an "empirico-transcendent doublet."[182] This is why man in the modern episteme is subject to deep self-misunderstanding, always torn between two poles of his being.

In addition to the archaeology of knowledge which concerned itself with systems of discourse, Foucault also developed a method called "genealogy" whose purpose was to explain how changes occurred within an episteme and how one episteme changed into another. However, while archaeology focussed on the ruling or dominant episteme, the genealogy also looked to marginalised knowledge or knowledge about marginalised subjects that were often in conflict with the ruling episteme. Genealogies up-set (or as Derrida says, "subvert") the established hierarchies and show how this marginalised or subjugated knowledge interacts with and influences the ruling episteme. It also pays special attention to the accidents,

coincidences, tricks, mistakes, unforeseen "eruptions" and arbitrary actions that have effected the history of an idea or episteme in order to show that development is never simply a smooth, orderly development:

> The forces operating in history do not obey destiny or regulative mechanism, but the luck of the battle. [Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, II, 12] They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attention is not always that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events ... the world of effective history knows only one kingdom, without providence or final cause where there is only "the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance" ... Effective history, on the other hand shortens its vision to those things nearest to it – the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies; it unearths decadence ... [history] should become a differential knowledge of energies, failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes.... The final trait of effective history is its affirmation of perspectival knowledge ...[183]

This quotation makes four things clear. First, Foucault does not believe that there is any dominant pattern, intentionality (divine or otherwise), plan, "final cause," order or logic to history. Second, chance and the "randomness of events" are the 'reasons' various historical developments take place. This makes the whole notion of progress problematical.[184] Indeed, as already indicated, Foucault does not believe in progress from one episteme to another but only in their succession. Third, Foucault sees history as influenced by seemingly insignificant or even 'shameful' actions and events, by our physiological attributes which is to say by the 'marginal', shunted aside as unworthy. Fourth, our knowledge of history is perspectival, i.e. always based on our own position in our own native episteme; this means that an 'objective' view is unattainable.

A fundamental question about Foucault's epistemes is whether or not they can admit the actual existence of 'things' prior to discourse in an episteme? In terms we have already used for Derrida, can things be external to or transcendental to the episteme in which they are constituted?

Is there a 'God', or a 'soul' that exists prior to and independently of a word/concept with a place in an episteme or are all these things human constructions? In Kantian terms,

which readily spring to mind here, are there noumena which our epistemes (or transcendental egos) constitute as phenomenal reality? According to Darren Hynes, "For Foucault, any word-referent has no concreteness, nor is there a reality which precedes discourse and reveals itself to discursive perception."[185] Here, too, Foucault agrees with Derrida. Indeed, how could Foucault concern himself with anything which exists prior to its place in the discursive structure of an episteme? How would one be able to speak about it? Furthermore, if such transcendent entities existed, they would threaten one of the fundamental principles of archaeological and genealogical analysis, namely, that no episteme, no viewpoint is privileged over any other. If there is a transcendent reference – be it God, or an a-historical essence which is endures through successive epistemes – then it follows that the signifiers of some epistemes will correspond more accurately in some way than others to the original, transcendent signified. Not only would this violate his goal of providing a non-hierarchical view of different epistemes, but it would also violate the principle that comparisons across epistemes are not possible. As well, it means that there exists, even if only in principle, an 'Archimedean standpoint' – for example God's viewpoint as revealed through His Manifestations - outside of the various epistemes from which we can obtain objective knowledge, i.e. knowledge free of all epistemes. In a word, the existence of things before their 'naming' in an episteme would be a revival of essentialism – a belief in independently existing (transcendental) entities with unchanging, historically unconditioned essences – a concept impossible for Foucault's archaeologies and genealogies to accommodate.

> Any attempt to write or speak about the nature [essence] of things is made from within a rule-governed linguistic framework, an 'episteme' that pre-determines what kinds of statements are true or meaningful ... There is no absolute, unconditioned, transcendental stance from which to grasp what is good, right or true. Foucault refuses to specify what is true because there are no objective grounds for knowledge ... [186]

Foucault's suspicion of the concept of an inherent nature or essence is also evident when he says history teaches us that "behind things [there is] not a timeless essential secret but the secret that they have no essence."[187] This is emphasised by his statement that he is "suspicious of the notion of liberation"[188] because "it runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there

exists a human nature"[189] which somehow exists 'apart' from us and which we can rediscover and regain. He rejects the existence of any such essence or nature. For Foucault, it makes no sense to talk of anything outside of or 'underneath' or transcendent to an episteme, which is to say that until a thing is constituted by human beings, it makes no sense to talk of it as 'existing.' Indeed, his goal is

> [t]o define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form objects of discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance."[190]

Elsewhere he says that the object "does not pre-exist itself,"[191] which is to say, it does not exist before discourse. This even applies to the human subject who does not transcend the episteme in which s/he dwells; s/he is a product of the episteme as much as anything else.

The radical nature of this rejection of natures or essences prior to being constituted becomes apparent when applied to gender, race, health, sanity or even human life.[192] All essentialist definitions of these terms are pure historical constructs valid for a particular episteme but have no universal validity. In the field of gender this means that there is no universal definition of what constitutes a woman or man and all such definitions should be resisted as unjustly imprisoning us. This rejection of a 'human nature' or essence extends to the 'self.' According to Foucault's philosophy, what we mean by 'self' or 'subject' varies from one episteme to another, which is to say that the 'self' is historically contingent product and no one analysis of the self can lead to universal conclusions. In other words, all concepts of self are context-bound and there simply is no stable, universal 'core' or essence constituting the self. Like everything else, the self is merely "a passing historical invention"[193] and is no more stable than concepts of male and female, justice, race, rationality or beauty. In the words of Danaher, Schirato and Webb,

Rather than being the free and active organisers of society, we are the products of discourses and power relations, and take on different characteristics according to the range of subject positions that are possible in our socio-historical context.[194]

We are products of the "games of truth"[195] that constitute any given episteme also compose the self and from this it

follows that the self cannot pre-exist the episteme or society of which it is a part. For this reason, the self "is not a substance. It is a form and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself."[196] This statement makes two noteworthy points. First, that the self is not a substance means that there is no persisting essence to which the concept refers and which it can reflect. Second, even within itself, the self constantly changes in regards to itself as it engages in different activities and relationships. As a "political subject"[197] at a meeting or in the voting booth we relate to ourselves in a different form than we do as a caring spouse or parent. One might well describe this self as 'de-centered' because there does not seem to be anything – no essence, no substance, no transcendent soul – to focus the various relationships and holding them together other than the contingencies of time and place. At most it is "a form" but what such a form that is not even "identical to itself" is supposed to be is not at all clear.

From this it is clear that Foucault's concept of the self is not the single, unitary self that we find in the philosophy of Descartes or in Kant's transcendental subject of unity of apperception which is the basis of our personal consciousness, that which allows us to say 'I'. One might also say that Foucault rejects the "idea of the self-governing subject"[198] since the self is constituted and controlled by the varying discourses and "games of truth" making up the episteme it inhabits. "We are the products of discourses and power relations, and take on different characteristics according to the range of subject positions that are possible in our socio-historical context."[199] Obviously there is no special need for consistency in such a concept of self. Best and Kellner sum up this aspect of Foucault's thought by saying that "Foucault rejects the active subject and welcomes the emerging postmodern era as a positive event where the denuding of agency occurs and new forms of thought can emerge."[200]

Another consequence of Foucault's archaeology and genealogy is epistemological relativism which follows from his belief that epistemes are compartmentalized and that we cannot make evaluations and judgments across differing epistemes. Their discourse is too different; appearances of similarity notwithstanding, there are inevitably important breaks and dislocations of meaning that cannot simply be glossed over. We have no way of asserting the universal validity of any so-called truth because there is no universal standard by which to make any judgments about the truth or untruth of propositions

found in various epistemes. How could such a standard exist when all such standards are themselves bound to some particular episteme? All we can do instead of making judgments is to note differences and changes, and express our own preferences or even try to enforce them. In this situation, there cannot, as already noted, be any notion of progress through a succession of epistemes. Nor can there be any question of a universally valid hierarchy of ethical actions with some being preferable to others since there can be no universal standard by which to make such decisions.

Foucault's epistemological relativism is reinforced by his suspicion of the Enlightenment and reason. According to Foucault, his ethos "implies, first, the refusal of what I like to call the 'blackmail' of the Enlightenment."[201] As Best and Kellner inform us, "Foucault draws upon an anti-Enlightenment tradition that rejects the equation of reason, emancipation, and progress."[202] Reason cannot be taken as a guide to universal knowledge because reason itself is simply one particular kind of discourse with a particular – western – episteme; it is an invention like all the others and no more or less reliable than any other.

> I do not believe in a kind of founding act whereby reason, in its essence, was discovered or established ... I think, in fact, that reason is self-created, which is why I have tried to analyse forms of rationality: different foundations, different creations, different modifications in which rationalities engender one another, oppose and pursue one another[203]

In short, reason is thoroughly historical:

> What reason perceives as its necessity or, rather, what different forms of rationality offer as necessary being can perfectly well be shown to have a history; and the network of contingencies from which it emerges can be traced.[204]

That is why "no given form of rationality is actually reason."[205] From this view it follows that reason cannot provide universally valid knowledge. One might argue that it is difficult even to know what the words 'reason' or 'knowledge' can mean in Foucault's philosophy since both refer only to what the episteme has constituted or constructed, and thus, could conceivably mean anything at all. Foucault mitigates this argument somewhat by stating that their meaning is based on human practice throughout history – but he does admit "that since these things have been made, they can be unmade as long

as we know how it was they were made."[206] In other words, in the last analysis, there are few limits on the future development of the concept of reason showing that the original critique has some force.

For Foucault, the analysis of reason is closely tied to the subjects of truth or knowledge and power. Truth may differ from one episteme to another, but within each episteme each truth is part of a system of power:

> [T]ruth isn't outside power or lacking power ... truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude ... Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint ... Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.[207]

This quotation, which encapsulates much of Foucault's thought on this subject, shows that truth is closely linked to the power to control the discourse of a particular episteme by distinguishing true from false, acceptable from unacceptable evidence, high status from low status and legitimate from illegitimate methods of gathering truth. This makes it clear that all concepts of truth are exclusionary and marginalising, and violent by nature because they can dominate other versions of truth under a particular "regime of truth." In other words, truth is a matter of cultural and epistemological politics not merely a matter of objective discovery and rational evaluation. Moreover, because the social status of those who determine truth is high, truth tends to become the property of a particular class and can be manipulated to serve its interests.

Another important aspect of truth or knowledge is that they are linked to the will-to-power, i.e. and the will-to-truth and the will-to-power are closely correlated which is why Foucault says that we cannot liberate truth from systems of power: "truth is already power."[208] As J.G. Merquior writes, for Foucault, "all will to truth is already a will-to-power."[209] This is because for a claim to be recognised as 'true' means that it has already triumphed over its rivals and excluded them or marginalised them as 'untrue' or 'mythology' or 'superstition'. Foucault himself states the matter even more sharply:

> The historical analysis of this rancorous will to knowledge [*vouleur-savior*] reveals that all knowledge [connaissance] rests upon injustice (that there is no right, not even in the act of knowing truth, to truth or a foundation for truth.), and the instinct for knowledge malicious (something murderous, opposed to the happiness of mankind).[210]

Elsewhere he even claims that knowledge "creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence."[211] Foucault's beliefs lead to the conclusion that the claim to know the truth is also, in effect, a claim to power, i.e. a claim to domination over others and competing truth claims. Best and Kellner summarise Foucault's beliefs by writing,

> Against modern theories that see knowledge as neutral and objective (positivism) or emancipatory (Marxism), Foucault emphasizes that knowledge is in dissociable from from regimes of power. His concept of 'power/knowledge' is symptomatic of the postmodern suspicion of reason and the emancipatory schemes advanced in its name.[212]

Foucault believes that knowledge "has the power to make itself true"[213] insofar as it constrains and regulates our thoughts, feelings, actions and even laws. What is certainly clear is that for Foucault the notion of a disinterested, objective, neutral and pure truth is at best a naïve fiction but more likely a ruse to trick one's rivals into quitting the contest for power.

9. Richard Rorty (1931 - 2007)

Although he prefers to call himself a pragmatist,[214] the American philosopher (or 'anti-philosopher' as he is sometimes called) Richard Rorty is generally regarded as having developed an American version of postmodernist philosophy.[215] Reading his work leaves little doubt that he shares many of postmodernism's principles and beliefs: the rejection of representationalism, of realism, of "grand narratives," and of 'truth, rationality, essentialism, objectivity, foundationalism and metaphysics. He would replace what is usually called 'philosophy' with an edifying[216] conversation and an exchange of descriptions of the world among those whose only goal is to keep the conversation going.[217] The purpose of the edifying conversation is certainly not to find truth or rational justification of truth since Rorty's goal is to "radically undermine the very basis of the dominant rationalist approach."[218]

Rorty's undermining of the rationalist tradition based on Socrates and Plato begins with his rejection of the principle that the human mind and language are mirrors whose task is to accurately reflect or represent a pre-existent reality. The goal of rational inquirers is to make their representations as objective as possible, i.e. to make them correspond to reality. In this way, we would find or discover the truth about the real world. Rorty unambiguously rejects this referential thinking as well as its consequences. For example, he writes,

> My suggestion that the desire for objectivity is in part a disguised form of the fear of death echoes Nietzsche's charge that the philosophical tradition which stems from Plato is an attempt to avoid facing up to contingency, to escape from time and chance.[219]

He sees no value in objectivity which he dismisses as wanting a "sky-hook provided by some contemporary yet-to-be-developed science"[220] to free us from the biases of being culture-bound because he does not think we can ever escape being imprisoned in our cultures. Therefore,

> [t]hose who wish to reduce objectivity to solidarity – call them "pragmatists" – do not require either a metaphysics or an epistemology. They view truths as, in William James' phrase, what is good for *us* to believe. So they do not need an account of a relation between beliefs and objects called 'correspondence' nor an account of human cognitive abilities which ensures that our species is capable of entering into that relation ...For pragmatists, the desire for objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one's community but simply the desire to for as much intersubjective agreement as possible [221]

In other words, Rorty has given up the quest for scientific objectivity which he regards as an impossible effort to transcend our cultural boundaries and settles for a 'political' goal, i.e. solidarity, i.e. he lets epistemology go for the politics of knowledge. That is why he can say we do not "require either a metaphysics or an epistemology." Elsewhere he claims that the positivists were right in seeking to "extirpate metaphysics when 'metaphysics' means the attempt to give knowledge of what science cannot know,"[222] i.e. knowledge that transcends particular scientific facts – although these latter are also thrown into question by Rorty's views about the incommensurability of different vocabularies or "truth games" and the need for solidarity. The latter is also why he gives up on the

correspondence theory of knowledge which leads to arguments because it maintains that some knowledge is natural "and not merely local"[223] and that some methods of justification are natural and not merely social or cultural. Thus, it is impossible for him to say that some knowledge is truer or reflects reality better than other. "We must get the visual and in particular the mirroring metaphors out of our speech altogether."[224] Making this rejection of correspondence even more clear, he insists that we admit that sentences are only "connected with other sentences rather than with the world."[225] That being the case, it follows that his pragmatism "views knowledge not as a relation between mind and object but, roughly, as the ability to get agreement by using persuasion rather than force."[226] If we cannot appeal to the facts of reality for support, and if, as we shall see, reason is only another "platitude," then, unless we wish to use force, we have only persuasion left.

Rorty describes himself as an "ironist"[227] which is to say, he doubts that his own particular language or vocabulary can adequately attain truth and objectivity; he recognises that his current philosophical language cannot resolve these doubts. He does not think his language is closer to the truth or reality than anyone else's. For this reason, ironists repudiate the whole concept of representationalism, i.e. the concept that our verbal or mathematical descriptions of reality really represent what is 'out there.' Furthermore, because they realise that their descriptions of reality are limited in descriptive capacity, contingent and subject to constant change and or more in touch with reality than others, ironists are "never quite able to take themselves seriously."[228] Ironists are also people who "do not hope to have their doubts about their final vocabularies settled by something larger than themselves."[229] They do not look to God or revelation nor to a supposedly universal reason or logic nor a grand narrative to resolve their doubts. Instead, they possess a great deal of what the poet John Keats called "negative capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."[230] As well, ironists are nominalists, they think "nothing has an intrinsic nature, a real essence,"[231] that is what it is independently of human observation and attribution.[232] All alleged attributes are human constructions, the products of our cultural and historical positioning and the discourse we employ and for that reason there are no universal characteristics of anything including human nature.[233] There is simply no way to transcend our language and culture and compare it with 'reality' from some 'Archimedean point' to

obtain a 'God's eye view' on the world. We should simply recognise that we cannot "come up with a single set of criteria which everybody in all times and places can accept, invent a single language game which can somehow take over all jobs previously done by all the language-games ever played."[234] Rather, our particular culture and language construct what we appear to perceive and we are locked into these constructions, a view which was already pre-figured by Kant. Hence any attempts to use so-called essential attributes as the basis of universal statements are doomed; knowing this, ironists do

> not take the point of discursive thought to be knowing, in any sense that can be explicated by notions like "reality," "real essence," "objective point of view," and the "correspondence of language of [*sic*] reality." They do not think its point is to find a vocabulary which accurately represents something, a transparent meaning.[235]

At this point it comes as no surprise that Rorty describes reason as a faculty that "can now be dispensed with – and should be dispensed with"[236] because for ironists criteria of reason, like other criteria used for judging among descriptions of the world "are never more than platitudes which contextually define the terms of the final vocabulary in use."[237] These criteria are valid, if at all, only within the language or language game in which they are being used. Indeed, philosophy is so language and culture dependent that according to Rorty there is no legitimate use of the distinction "between logic and rhetoric, or between philosophy and literature, or between rational and nonrational methods of changing other people's minds."[238] In this vein, Rorty writes, On a pragmatist view, rationality is not the exercise of a faculty called 'reason' – a faculty which stands in some determinate relationship to reality, Nor is the use of a method. It is simply a matter of being open and curious and relying on persuasion rather than force.[239]

In short, 'rational' only means 'persuasive.' It is time to realize that the Enlightenment has been "discredited."[240] There are no necessary 'logical' or reasonable connections between sentences or propositions that can require us to admit anything we prefer not to.

On Rorty's view, philosophy cannot be a quest for 'truth' or 'true understanding' since the most we can do is redescribe things to our individual and/or collective liking and discuss our various descriptions. In other words, the purpose of philosophy is to be edifying: "I shall is 'edification' to stand for this project

of finding new, better, more interesting more fruitful ways of speaking."[241] Edifying philosophy "takes its point of departure from suspicion about the pretensions of epistemology,"[242] which is to say that edifying philosophy is not longer interested in attaining truth.[243] Thus, rather than take part in an inquiry for the 'knowledge,' "we just might be *saying something*"[244] simply in order to "keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth."[245] This, for Rorty is "a sufficient aim of philosophy."[246] At most we can strive for solidarity for in the post-Auschwitz age: "What can there be except human solidarity, our recognition of one another's common humanity."?[247] (It is, of course highly ironic that Rorty appeals to our "common humanity" after having repudiated 'essences' and the possibility of cross-cultural universal statements.) Given Rorty's views, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that philosophy is just pleasant talk, in itself of no great consequence and remember that we can always change the subject with no great harm done.[248]

Rorty emphatically rejects the notion of a "core self,"[249] i.e. the rejection of the claim that there is a human essence either for the individual or for the species. In his view, "there is no self distinct from this self-reweaving web"[250] of muscles, movements, beliefs and states of mind. In reflecting on these weaving and reweaving patterns, we must

> avoid taking common speech as committing one to the view that there is, after all, such a thing as a "True Self," the inner core of one's being which remains what it is independent of changes in one's beliefs and desires. There is no more a center to the self than there is to the brain.[251]

We must not let our ordinary usage of pronouns such as 'I' or 'me' fool us into thinking there is any substantive entity that actually corresponds to these words. All thoughts about a 'True Self' or soul are delusional. We should "avoid the self-deception of thinking that we possess a deep, hidden, metaphysically significant nature which makes us 'irreducibly' different from inkwells or atoms."[252]

10. Baudrillard (1929 – 2007)

Jean Baudrillard, who has attained "guru status throughout the English-speaking world "as a high priest of the new epoch,"[253] is in some respects the most controversial of the five contemporary postmodernists we shall examine. Baudrillard embodied his postmodern philosophy in socio-cultural,

economic and political analyses that were distinguished not only by his challenging insights but also by his flair for startling turns of phrase and outrageous assertions. For example, in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* he claims that the 2001 Gulf War was more a matter of events on TV and radar screens than a real war in the traditional sense, that it was more a virtual war than anything else. Elsewhere he writes, "Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America, which *is* Disneyland."[254] When we look into or beneath Baudrillard's multifarious analyses, we find that he shares many if not all of the same themes and views as the postmodernists we have examined previously.

The keys to Baudrillard's thought are the twin concepts of simulations and simulacra. In *Simulations*, Baudrillard briefly retells a Borges story of a map that is so detailed in every respect that it covers the entire territory it is supposed to represent and is indistinguishable from it. The map and the territory have become one, the distinction between 'real' and 'unreal' has been blurred as has the distinction between original and copy, natural and artificial and signifier and signified. What, if anything, we may ask, does the map *represent*? And which is the map and which is the territory when "[s]imulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance."?[255] Obviously, the whole notion of representation is no longer tenable. We must also recognise that "simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false', between 'real' and 'imaginary'."[256] How could one distinguish between them? Other threatened binaries are cause/effect, active/passive, subject/object and ends/means.[257] The essential natures of these categories no longer exist because they have all been melded into one another. They have, to use Derrida's term, been deconstructed, i.e. it has been shown that the old notion of distinct and stable essences making up the binary oppositions of signifier/signified, map/territory, real/imaginary, true/false, original/copy, appearance/reality, the ideal/real and essential/nonessential are no longer functional with each part of the pair blending into the other. Furthermore, if all these essential differences no longer exist, it is impossible to be rational since rationality depends on clear and distinct oppositional binaries or categories of thought that allow us to attain clear and decisive answers.

Metaphysics is also impossible according to Baudrillard. In the first place, "truth, reference and objective causes have ceased to exist."[258] If these three are not clearly identifiable,

metaphysics, which requires clearly identified causal relationships in its study of the structure and nature of reality, become impossible. Secondly, if our propositions are no longer referential and do not refer to reality, we cannot discuss reality at all let alone decide which propositions are true; as Baudrillard puts it: "All the referentials intermingle their discourses in a circular Moebian compulsion[259] and thus deprive reason of the "clear and distinct ideas"[260] it needs. Consequently, we can no longer distinguish real from unreal, or appearance from reality and with this situation

> goes all of metaphysics. No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept ... It [the real] no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary [ideal], it is no longer real at all. It is hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory in a hyperspace without atmosphere.[261]

Finally, without reason or logic metaphysics is also impossible because reason provides the rules by means of which our propositions about reality lead to conclusions. Eventually, Baudrillard replaced metaphysics with the satirical 'pataphysics,' a term borrowed from the surrealist movement, to illustrate what happens to thought when distinctions among categories disappear. This is why "for pataphysics all phenomena are absolutely gaseous."[262]

According to Baudrillard, the "blurring of distinctions between the real and the unreal"[263] is the "hyperreal," which is "a condition whereby the models replace the real, as exemplified in such phenomena as the ideal home in women's or lifestyle magazines, ideal sex ... ideal fashion."[264] In each of these, the model, the simulation determines what is regarded as real and thus, ultimately, the simulations constitute reality. For that reason, the power relationship between the real and unreal simulation has been reversed, with the unreal now so much in control that we can say that real understood in the traditional, i.e. pre-postmodern sense no longer exists: "there is no real."[265] Because we live in such a hyperreality where the simulation constitutes reality, Baudrillard is able to say that Disneyland is the real America and that the 2001 Gulf War never happened except as a television event. To our usual way of thinking this makes no sense because the original 'real thing' always has ontological priority over the any simulation but as Baudrillard tells us, "The contradictory process of true and false, of real

and the imaginary is abolished in this hyperreal logic of montage."[266] By the "logic of montage" he means the 'logic' of concepts or realities which overlap and impinge on and melt into one another, losing thereby their distinct boundaries and with that loss, their usual rules of combination or exclusion. Oppositional binaries such as original/copy, prior/secondary and this/that no longer hold. "The hyperreal represents a much more advanced phase [than modernist realism] in the sense that even this contradiction between the real world and the imaginary is effaced."[267] Baudrillard calls this development "the collapse of reality into hyperrealism."[268] This development changes our relationship to reality because "it is reality itself that disappears utterly in the game of reality."[269] Reality disappears in its simulations because similitude is ultimately equivalent to the murder of the original, a nullification of original's unique ontological status as prior in the order of time and logic.[270]

The dominance of the hyperreal has the effect of collapsing the difference between art and reality and thus mingling the two so that reality itself becomes a work of art:

> And so art is everywhere, since artifice is at the very heart of reality. And so art is dead, not only because its critical transcendence [difference from reality] is gone but because reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which is inseparable from its own structure, has been confused with its own image.[271]

From this it follows that the binary opposition of work/play has also been dissolved. Indeed, because of the collapse of all binary differences, the postmodern condition "is for Baudrillard a play with all forms of sexuality, art, and politics, combining and recombining forms and possibilities, moving into the 'the time of transvestism.' "[272] This "combining and recombining" of concepts, categories, styles and content liberates things from their former limits and hyperbolizes existence, for which reason he also refers to the "post-orgy state of things."[273]

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[1] Alan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*; Steven Best and Douglas Keller, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations.*

[2] Rorty

[3] Derrida *Of Grammatology*.

[4] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition.*

[5] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization;*

[6] Foucault

[7] Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacra.*

[8] Lacan; Deleuze and Guattrari

[9] Heidegger's term.

[10] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "*The Postmodern Turn in Philosophy: Theoretical Provocations and Normative Devices.*"

[11] Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason*, p. 1.

[12] *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 2, p. 100.

[13] Robert Audi, editor, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy.*

[14] "Postmodernism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/ ; See also, *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

[15] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology.*

[16] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interpretations*, p. 4-5.

[17] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation V. See also *Regulae* by Descartes.

[18] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, *Meditation* 1, para.2.

[19] Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, *Meditation* IV.

[20] Jane Flax, "*Postmodernism and Gender Relations*" in Linda J Nicholson, ed.*, Feminism /Postmodernism,* p. 41-42.

[21] Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, p.11

[22] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition.*

[23] Lloyd Spencer, "*Postmodernism, Modernity and the Tradition of Dissent*" in Stuart Sim ed. *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought,* p. 161.

[24] See Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason* which is entirely based on the premise of humankind's rational nature: "we have no knowledge of any other rational beings beside man." (Preface). It is interesting to note that the Bahá'í Writings posit man's "rational soul" (*Some Answered Questions*, 208.)

[25] Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Book I, Chp. 3, Section III.

[26] Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Book I, Chp. 3, Section V.

[27] Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Book I, Chp. 2.

[28] Ammittai F. Aviram, "A*sking the Question: Kant and Postmodernism*?"

[29] Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Book I, Chp. 2, Section II, Subsection IV.

[30] Stephen R.C. Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism*, p. 37.

[31] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, p.12.

[32] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, p. 12

[33] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "*The Postmodern Turn in Philosophy: Theoretical Provocations and Normative Devices.*"

[34] Clayton Koelb (ed.), *Nietzsche as Postmodernists, Essays Pro and Contra*, p.5.

[35] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Section 18.

[36] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "*Reason in Philosophy*", # 6.

[37] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Section 15.

[38] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* Section 15.

[39] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Section 17.

[40] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* Section 15.

[41] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* Section 15.

[42] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* Section 15.

[43] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, #493.

[44] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, #534.

[45] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, #537.

[46] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, #555.

[47] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 552; emphasis added.

[48] Nietzsche, *Of Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense.*

[49] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, paragraph 12; also *The Will to Power*, # 481.

[50] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 480: "knowledge works as a tool of power."

[51] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, paragraph 12.

[52] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, #5.

[53] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 481.

[54] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* # 560; see also # 583.

[55] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 480.

[56] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* #34.

[57] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* #34.

[58] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* #24.

[59] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* #24.

[60] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, #616.

[61] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*

[62] Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, "Upon the Happy Isles", p. 85.

[63] Ibid. 85.

[64] Ibid. 196.

[65] Martin Heidegger, "*Existence and Being.*" www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/heideg2.htm

[66] Robert Audi, editor, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,* p. 563.

[67] Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, p. 26.

[68] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.2.; in other works, Heidegger spells

it 'being' without the capital.

[69] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.2.

[70] Heidegger, "*Letter on Humanism*" in Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, p. 26; italics added.

[71] Heidegger, "*Existence and Being.*"

[72] Heidegger, "*Existence and Being*"

[73] William Wordsworth, "*The Tables Turned.*" Heidegger would fully agree with this poem.

[74] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 47.

[75] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, p. 178.

[76] Wordsworth, "*The Tables Turned.*"

[77] Cristine Lafont, "Precis of '*Heidegger, Language and World-Disclosure*"

[78] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth*". evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/heidegger6a.htm

[79] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth*".

[80] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth*".

[81] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 261.

[82] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth.*"

[83] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth.*"

[84] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.259.

[85] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.259; italics added.

[86] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth.*"

[87] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.130.

[88] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 270.

[89] Heidegger, "*Existence and Being.*"

[90] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth.*"

[91] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth.*"

[92] Heidegger, "*On the Essence of Truth.*"

[93] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, p.161.

[94] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, p.161.

[95] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.36.

[96] Heidegger, "*Existence and Being.*"

[97] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.204.

[98] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.204.

[99] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.xxiv.

[100] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.xxiii.

[101] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.34.

[102] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.63.

[103] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.63.

[104] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.31.

[105] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.xxiv.

[106] Best and Kellner, "*The Postmodern Turn in Philosophy: Theoretical Provocations and Normative Deficits*"

[107] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.146.

[108] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.9.

[109] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.10.

[110] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.10.

[111] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.15,

[112] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.17.

[113] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.60.

[114] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, p.32.

[115] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.40.

[116] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.26.

[117] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.26.

[118] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.40.

[119] ibid. 43; Rorty develops this concept of consensus further.

[120] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.86; italics added.

[121] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 24; italics added.

[122] Jacques Derrida, "*Plato's Pharmacy*" in *Disseminations*, p. 95.

[123] Jacques Derrida, "*Plato's Pharmacy*" in *Disseminations*, p. 127.

[124] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.298; also p.281.

[125] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p.58.

[126] Jacques Derrida, "*Plato's Pharmacy*" in *Disseminations*, p.129-130.

[127] Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary*, p.144.

[128] Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary*, p.144.

[129] Jacques Derrida, "*Plato's Pharmacy*" in *Disseminations*, p.130.

[130] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.158; also p.163..

[131] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.158.

[132] Jacques Derrida, "*Structure, Sign and Play*" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 292.

[133] Jacques Derrida, "*Structure, Sign and Play*" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 291.

[134] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 50.

[135] Jacques Derrida, "*Structure, Sign and Play*" in *Writing and Difference*, p.280.

[136] Jacques Derrida, "*White Mythology*" in *Margins of Philosophy*, p.207.

[137] Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary*, p.71.

[138] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.12.

[139] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* p.12.

[140] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p.19.

[141] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 49.

[142] *John*, 1: 1-2.

[143] Sorcha Fogarty, "*Logocentrism*," in *The Literary Encyclopedia*.

[144] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, 23.

[145] Of special concern to Derrida is the binary Speech/writing which he tries to overturn by showing how writing, i.e. arche-writing as the play of differences and supplements, precedes speech which itself depends on that play of differences.

[146] Phenomenology studies our experience of an object and seeks to extract the essential features of what we experience.

[147] Ontology is a branch of metaphysics focusing on the study of being and beings.

[148] Jacques Derrida, "*Violence and Metaphysics*" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 91.

[149] Ibid. 95.

[150] Ibid. p. 104.

[151] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*.

[152] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.

[153] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

[154] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

[155] Andrew Thacker, "*Michel Foucault*", *The Literary Encyclopedia*.

[156] Scott H. More, "*Christian History, Providence and Foucault*", *Fides et Historia*, XXIX:1 (Winter/Spring 1997): 5-14.

[157] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.10.

[158] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.11.

[159] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.23.

[160] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.11.

[161] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.28; emphasis added.

[162] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.28.

[163] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.xxii; emphasis added.

[164] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theories: Critical Interrogations*, p.41.

[165] Michel Foucault, interview in *La Quinzaine Literature*, quoted in J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, p.36.

[166] J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, p.61.

[167] Charles Sherpherdson, "*History and the Real: Foucault with Lacan*" www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.195/shepherd.195

[168] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 155.

[169] Michel Foucault, "*Life, Experience and Science*," in *The Essential Foucault*, p.11.

[170] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, in J.G.Merquior, *Foucault*, p.61.

[171] J.G Merquior, *Foucault*, p.50.

[172] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.xxiii

[173] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.308.

[174] J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, p.52.

[175] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.319.

[176] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.318.

[177] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.335.

[178] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.308.

[179] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.326..

[180] Foucault's term, J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, p. 55.

[181] J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, p.53.

[182] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.322.

[183] Michel Foucault, "*Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.361.

[184] J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, p. 60-61.

[185] Darren Hynes, "*Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge.*" www.mun.ca/phil/codgito/vol4/v4doc1.html

[186] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "*The Postmodern Turn in Philosophy: Theoretical Provocations and Normative Devices.*"

[187] Michel Foucault, "*Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.353.

[188] Michel Foucault, "*The Ethics of Concern for the Self*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.76.

[189] Michel Foucault, "*The Ethics of Concern for the Self*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.76.

[190] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.53.

[191] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.49.

[192] James Williams, *Understanding Poststructuralism*, p.122.

[193] Jorge Garcia, "*Are Categories Invented or Discovered? A Response to Foucault."Review of Metaphysics, 55.1: 3-20.*

[194] Danaher, Schirato, Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, p.118.

[195] Danaher, Schirato, Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, p.40.

[196] Michel Foucault, "*The Ethics of the Concern of the Self*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.33.

[197] ibid.33.

[198] Danaher, Schirato, Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, p.31.

[199] Danaher, Schirato, Webb, *Understanding Foucault*, p.118.

[200] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.51.

[201] Michel Foucault, "*What is Enlightenment?"* in *The Essential Foucault*, p.51.

[202] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.34.

[203] Michel Foucault, "*Structuralism and Post-Structuralism*," in *The Essential Foucault*, p.89.

[204] ibid. 94.

[205] Ibid..93.

[206] ibid.94.

[207] Michel Foucault, "*Truth and Power*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.316.

[208] Michel Foucault, "*Truth and Power*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.317.

[209] J.G.Merquior, *Foucault*, p. 108.

[210] Michel Foucault, "*Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*" in *The Essential Foucault*, p.366.

[211] Michel Foucault, "*Homage to Jean Hippolyte*" in Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, p.120.

[212] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p. 50.

[213] Moya K Mason, "*Foucault*." www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/Foucault.html

[214] Dean Guerras, "*Richard Rorty and the Postmodern Rejection of Absolute Truth*."

[215] On the other hand, his understanding of pragmatist philosophy has been scathingly called into question by no less an authority than Susan Haack in "Vulgar Rortyism." newcriterion.com:81/archive/16/nov97/menand.htm

[216] Rorty's term; see Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.360.

[217] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.378.

[218] Chantal Mouffe editor, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, p.1.

[219] Richard Rorty, "*Solidarity or Objectivity*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p. 32.

[220] Ibid. 13.

[221] Ibid. 22 - 23.

[222] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.384.

[223] Richard Rorty, "*Solidarity or Objectivity*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p. 22.

[224] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.371.

[225] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.372.

[226] Richard Rorty, "*Texts and Lumps*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p.98.

[227] Richard Rorty, "*Private Irony and Liberal Hope*," in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.73.

[228] ibid.73; also 89.

[229] Richard Rorty, "*Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger*," in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.97.

[230] John Keats, *Letter*, Sunday [21 Dec. 1817] academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/keatsltr.html

[231] Richard Rorty, "*Private Irony and Liberal Hope*," in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.74.

[232] Richard Rorty, "*Inquiry as Recontextualization*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p.99.

[233] Richard Rorty, "*Solidarity*" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.192.

[234] Richard Rorty, "*Cosmopolitanism without Emancipation*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p.218.

[235] Richard Rorty, "*Private Irony and Liberal Hope*," in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.75.

[236] Richard Rorty, "*Solidarity*" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.194.

[237] Richard Rorty, "*Private Irony and Liberal Hope*" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.75.

[238] ibid. 75.

[239] Richard Rorty, "*Is Natural Science a Natural Kind?*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p.62.

[240] ibid.176.

[241] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.360.

[242] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.366.

[243] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.370.

[244] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.371.

[245] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.377.

[246] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.378.

[247] Richard Rorty, "*Solidarity*" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.189.

[248] Richard Rorty, "*The Contingency of Community*" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.44.

[249] Richard Rorty, "*Solidarity*" in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p.189.

[250] Richard Rorty, "*Inquiry as Recontextualization*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p.93

[251] Richard Rorty, "*Non-reductive Physicalism*" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p.123.

[252] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p.373.

[253] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.111.

[254] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.25.

[255] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.2.

[256] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.5.

[257] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.55.

[258] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.6.

[259] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.35.

[260] Rene Descartes, *Sixth Meditation.*

[261] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Precession of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.3.

[262] Jean Baudrillard, "*Pataphysics*," trans. by Drew Burk.

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[263] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.119.

[264] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.119.

[265] Jean Baudrillard, "*Holograms*," trans. by Sheila Glaser. www.egs.edu/faculty/baudrillard/baudrillard-simulacra-and-simulation-11-holograms.html

[266] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Orders of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.122.

[267] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Orders of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.142.

[268] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Orders of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.141.

[269] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Orders of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.148.

[270] Jean Baudrillard, "*Holograms*," trans. by Sheila Glaser.

[271] Jean Baudrillard, "*The Orders of Simulacra*" in *Simulations*, p.151 – 152.

[272] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.137.

[273] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, p.137.