

**BETWEEN EMPIRICISM AND INTELLECTUALISM:  
CHARLES TAYLOR'S ANSWER TO THE 'MEDIA WARS'**

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## **Declaration**

I declare this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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## Abstract

When the Media Wars broke out in Australian universities in the mid-1990s, journalism educator Keith Windschuttle accused cultural studies of teaching theory that contradicted the realist and empirical worldview of journalism practice. He labeled cultural studies as a form of linguistic *idealism*. His own worldview is decidedly *empiricist*.

The thesis brings to Windschuttle's *empiricist-idealist* dualism a type of transcendental argument that uses Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's understanding of modernity as a paradox between the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions. Taylor was an instrumental member of the New Left movement (beginning in 1956) while he was a student at Oxford. Together with Stuart Hall, he edited a journal that became a precursor to *New Left Review*. While at Oxford, Taylor went to Paris to study with Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Upon his return he brought back a copy of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, which he translated into English for his colleagues. Taylor was instrumental in introducing Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology there. Hall mentions in recent interviews his debt to Taylor for their discussions on Marx and Hegel.

Taylor's approach to *post-Marxism* and his critique of positivist social science derives significantly from his reading of Merleau-Ponty, whose *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) rejects both *empiricism* and *intellectualism* (idealism) for their sharing a Cartesian model of subjectivity. British Cultural Studies began (Hall says in 1956) with a rejection of the economism of classical Marxism, and sought a more plausible theory of agency than what Marxism offered at that time. The correspondence between the debates in early cultural studies and Taylor's extensive writing on this matter, together with his overall critique of modernity, appear too close to be coincidental. Furthermore, these debates were driven by an attempt to steer between the Enlightenment and Romantic traditions, thus embracing in their own intellectual practices Marx's (and Hegel's) dialectical method.

Drawing upon the correspondences between Taylor's and cultural studies' attempts to resolve the paradoxes of modernity, it becomes clear that Windschuttle's dualism can be absorbed within the problematic of cultural studies. Furthermore, drawing on Taylor's use of the humanist Marx, Hegel and Merleau-Ponty, Windschuttle's empiricist paradigm can be shown to fail to provide a plausible (and therefore ethical) model of agency. A study of Taylor's philosophical anthropology provides the basis by which this failure can be addressed. Taylor's philosophy is equally useful in addressing this lacuna in postmodern cultural studies.

# Introduction

When Australian historian Keith Windschuttle<sup>1</sup> (1997a; 1998a; 1998b) accused cultural studies scholars in journalism education of misrepresenting the subject and corrupting aspirant student journalists, those same scholars responded that their critic had misrepresented their field (see Hartley 1999; Bacon 1999; Turner 2000). Windschuttle first put his case in a paper, *Poverty of Media Theory*, delivered at the Journalism Education Association's annual conference held in Auckland, New Zealand, in December 1995. The paper was republished in various forms (Windschuttle 1997a; 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; 1998d; 1999; 2000), and as the content of these articles is very similar, reading any one of them provides the gist of them all. Each version argues that a journalism education programme should uphold three principles: (1) a realist outlook and an empirical methodology committed to reporting the truth; (2) an ethical attitude towards one's audiences; and (3) good writing in the plain style. Each paper holds that 'media theory' (in cultural studies) has no place in professional education on grounds that it contradicts each of these principles and is intellectually incoherent.

When describing the events 'down under', one is easily given to hyperbole and satire. Mandy Oakham (2002) sets the scene, in "the dark galaxy of Australian education," where at the dawn of a new era symbolized by the 'modern, corporate university' there was an "evil Empire run by government intent on slashing university funding," causing a ripple effect of interdisciplinary struggles and "Vive Chancellors fighting for funding, student load, research points and ultimately for survival" (Oakham 2002: 265). In the corporate university students became customers wanting certificates that could be 'cashed in' on the job market. Education had to become vocationally relevant. Graduates had to be able to *do something with their degrees*.

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<sup>1</sup> David Row (2004), who teaches journalism and media studies at the University of Newcastle, Australia, introduces Windschuttle thus: "erstwhile left-wing university lecturer in Media Studies and Social History turned private media educator and, later, right-wing provocateur" (Rowe 2004: 43).

Journalism education and cultural studies made the vocational versus the liberal arts distinction palpably concrete. It was not long before there was trouble.

The opening shots of the Media Wars, as they were dubbed in Australia, were fired in 1995. As always in every great battle there were the conscripts forced into confrontation by virtue of their location within the perceived journalistic ranks. Some conscripts found themselves in “no-mans land” and this was a battle fought out in mostly masculine territory with the loudest wails coming from pierced egos.

The great battle down under was fought out between the forces of the Republic, the Jedi Knights of Journalism flashing their lasers of factual empiricism against the massing dark forces of the Federation, some disguised as media studies exponents, but most were wearing their eclectic uniforms of cultural studies flashing their own light [sabers] of radical contextualism and other sinister linguistic devices. These dark forces were led by the biggest Darth Vader of them all ... John Hartley (Oakham 2002: 266).

Evidently, Hartley (1995) fired the first shot that ‘rang around the world’ of journalism education. But he should have ‘checked his facts’, as Windschuttle points out (2000: 152-153).<sup>2</sup> “It should have been enough to point out the inaccuracies and move on,” says Oakham, but “Windschuttle, who owns and operates his own journalism training centre, Macleay College in Sydney, declared all-out war” (Oakham 2002: 267). At the Auckland conference that same year, Windschuttle “thundered that there should be ‘no more theory’ in the teaching of journalism” (Oakham 2002: 267). The matter did not stop there, and Hartley (1999) and others (Tomaselli and Shepperson 1999) committed further fuel to the flames. From Hartley’s description of “young [newsroom] cadets [who] have the crap kicked out of them by overbearing and unsympathetic supervisors whose job is to prepare them for the factory system of new production,” Oakham adds:

It is alleged that Hartley in an earlier, pre-academic life, spent a short time as a cadet on a newspaper. Clearly he did not find it a pleasurable experience (Oakham 2002: 269).

A conference was held by cultural studies scholars in 1998, to which they invited Windschuttle and a representative number of journalism educators were

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<sup>2</sup> Windschuttle (2000) calls into question Hartley’s (1995: 26) description of journalists as “petty-bourgeois, self-employed white collar workers.” The description, Windschuttle shows, derives directly from Nicos Poulantzas’s repeating Louis Althusser’s earlier “claim that the press, radio and television are ideological apparatuses of the capitalist state and that those who work for the media are therefore members of the class that supports this state.... Of course, this was all theorized nonsense when Poulantzas wrote it in the 1970s and, in the hands of Hartley in the 1990s, it has not improved with age” (Windschuttle 2000: 154).

invited in a bed to settle the matter.<sup>3</sup> Windschuttle, they complained, had reduced cultural studies to the linguistic idealism that characterized postmodern literary criticism, and not taken into account the materialist and more overtly Marxist aspects of scholarship that defined the field. But the debate congealed into stagnant and immovable positions of *theory* (cultural studies) and *practice* (journalism training). And from the proceedings, to paraphrase Emmanuel Kant's oft quoted dictum, it is hard for an observer not to conclude that practice without theory is blind, and theory without practice is empty.

### **Dead-ends, false starts, and some luck**

This thesis began as an attempt to make sense of the apparently irresolvable differences between the two sides in the debate. Some abortive theoretical ventures – not worthy of mentioning – were attempted, but each fell successively on one or the other side of the debate. A more illuminating discourse analysis was then undertaken, studying propositions in a sample of papers delivered at two conferences in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on the matter of journalism and press freedom. One conference was a training symposium of Commonwealth editors hosted by the Commonwealth Press Union in 1999,<sup>4</sup> and the other was an academic conference on similar matters hosted at the former University of Natal in 2000.

Using insights drawn from Barbie Zelizer's essay, *Journalists as Interpretive Communities* (1993), and starting with tools of discourse analysis drawn from previous research,<sup>5</sup> it became clear that the qualitative differences in talk at the two conferences – both *talking about journalism* – could be accounted for by virtue of the different *communities of practice* to which the participants of each conference belonged (see Wenger 2000). With a Foucaultian theory of discourse drawn from

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<sup>3</sup> A special issue of *Media International Australia*, incorporating *Culture and Policy* (No. 90, February, 1999) collects a range of responses to Windschuttle's position from the conference itself and includes contributions from cultural studies writers such as John Hartley and Catharine Lumby.

<sup>4</sup> I reported the event in the *Daily News* (15 September 1999). Delegates generally agreed that democracy was a sham where governments remained hostile to a free press. The message these editors took to the Commonwealth heads of state summit being held at the time reiterated the stance, in line with the Windhoek Declaration, that journalism had to act as a bridle against the abuse of political and economic power by providing for the public record an account of public life and government performance. To this end, they asserted, journalism's proper stance towards government and big business was an adversarial one.

<sup>5</sup> I had completed a Masters dissertation on a discourse analysis of a left-wing newspaper, *The International*, which had been published by the International Socialist League in South Africa from 1915 to 1919.



Norman Fairclough's (1995) poststructuralist discourse analysis, among other sources (Billig 1999; Hammersley 1997; 2003; Tannen 2002) there seemed to be little or no way to contemplate a bridge between these two camps; and by extension, between the camps in the Media Wars.

A successive pilot project, conducting an ethnomethodological conversation analysis (Schegloff 1992; 1997; 1999) on conversations between senior journalists,<sup>6</sup> brought me no closer to a solution.<sup>7</sup> Zelizer's (1997) views on the unhappy adoption of journalism in cultural studies, reinforced by Larry Grossberg's (1993: 89) not dissimilar thoughts about "the discipline of communication," made the prospect of finding that 'common ground' between journalism and cultural studies even more remote. But giving more thought to the constitutive function of conversation did open up a promising space.

Putting aside agendas of institutional politics, at issue in Media Wars was not insignificantly the discursive condition of what Zelizer (2004a) describes as the "God-terms" of journalism's methodology and self-description – facts, truth and reality – at odds with cultural theory's terms of "construction, subjectivity, and relativity" (Zelizer 2004a: 112). But the fact that the "uneven interest in journalism among cultural studies scholars seems to have ... derived from a *critique of enlightenment* and a lack of confidence in the emancipatory power of reason" (Zelizer 2004a: 110. Emphasis added) caused me to step back and view the event against a bigger

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<sup>6</sup> After my first attempts at finding a way forward in the 'media wars' debate died out, I started an ethnomethodological study of what journalists accomplish when they engage in mundane conversations with each other about their experiences in journalism. The study was motivated by a comment Mylse Breen (1998) makes:

In Australia there are still some within the journalistic culture who decry any notion that there is a 'theory of journalism' even though they might theorise interminably over the bar about the vagaries of their profession. When they indulge in 'shop talk', they enter the domain of theory. In fact, by merely saying there is no theory, they are propounding a theoretical stance. Journalism teachers, however, cannot afford to waste time on that argument. They typically carry large loads and need to demonstrate to their administrative superiors that there is, indeed, a body of theory behind what they teach. If not, then what are they teaching? (Breen 1998: 3).

The pilot study – as it unintentionally became – involved detailed conversation analyses of nine thirty-minute conversations between pairs of senior reporters with more than fifteen years experience in the field, and who all worked in the same newsroom. The intention was to study how they made sense of their practice, understanding talk-at-work to be constitutive of practice (Drew and Heritage 1992), and their (journalism) practices to be "doings and sayings" (Schatzki 2002: 73). *Conversation* is understood as a form of *social action* (see Holtgraves 2001), and as an integral component of *practice*.

<sup>7</sup> Without having spent the more than a year it took to complete the initial conversation analysis, it is doubtful that I would have come to see the 'bigger picture' I am referring to. The ethnomethodological paradigm introduced me to a literature on practice that eventually led me first to Alasdair MacIntyre's virtue ethics, and then to Charles Taylor's critique of modernity. The rest is history.

philosophical picture of the debate; which Zelizer implies in the second half of the following quote (but the first part is also important):

For much of cultural studies ... mainstream journalism was examined through the near-sighted eyes of the academy. In many of its forms, journalism became codified as an extension of the sciences and the scientific model of knowledge production, oppositionally positioned to cultural studies' dominant stance of criticism and sometimes parody. Cultural studies reduced the impact of positivistic knowledge about journalism to a whisper (Zelizer 2004a: 112).

In short, it was the politics of the academy that made journalism – that “sense-making practice of modernity,” as John Hartley (1995: 20) calls it, and therefore “the most important textual system in the world” (see also Montgomery *et al.* 2002: 228) – a research problem because, within the academy, it was a problem of *epistemology*. But if journalism was *represented* as a practice embedded in positivist and empiricist logics, Windschuttle's description of the practice's methodology only confirmed that impression. He clearly positioned journalism as a binary opposite to cultural studies, and made good his efforts by reducing that field to “linguistic idealism” (Windschuttle 1998c: 6, 22). But the question of whether the ‘problem of journalism’ started with the subject's adoption by cultural studies, or whether Windschuttle himself adopted journalism as an unwitting ally in his prior campaign against postmodern historiography – a campaign pursued in his book, *The Killing of History* (1997b) – is probably irrelevant. The epistemological challenges that journalism education experiences in the academy are nothing new, but began when it ventured into the academy more than a century ago.

Those challenges comprise a multifaceted thing that hinges around the signifier of modernity. That journalism education is seen (quite correctly) to belong to ‘vocational training’ – not too differently to law, medicine, management studies, education, accountancy, architecture, and a range of other curricula that clearly point to a profession – its own *practice* orientation has remained suspect perhaps for lack of any suitable professional accreditation body (which law, education, medicine and so on have). But the modern aspects of *instrumental reason* – and the equally instrumental relations between *theory* and *practice* those aspects entail – are not the facet of modernity that concerns me. Instead, and without dismissing the theory-practice moniker (I shall return to a detailed discussion of the articulation of these terms, in Chapter Two), when one compares the “God-terms” of journalism with those of cultural theory (Zelizer 2004a: 112), and consider them as indexed in two

competing *sources* of modernity – what are conventionally understood as *modernity* and *postmodernity* – one begins to see that journalism’s modern common sense suffers from a *dislocation* – a crucial point of *difference* – between what Raymond Williams (1977: 122, 125-126) defines as the *residual* and the *emergent*. My claim is that journalism’s ‘God-terms’ belong to a residual ‘culture’ of modernity, whereas the oppositional concepts are (or were) decidedly emergent.

To illustrate the ‘creative’ dislocation between residual and emergent sources of modernity, and to see where (British) cultural studies becomes an agent in that dislocation, there is probably no clearer description than Stuart Hall’s essay, *The rediscovery of ‘ideology’: return of the repressed in media studies* (1982). Hall pulls together a number of threads that define the field, showing how the Birmingham Centre critiqued the definitive sociological assumptions of communication *science* in the 1950s and 1960s. But it is easy to overlook the philosophical significance of those first few pages of the essay. In those pages Hall describes the combined positivist, empiricist and behaviourist paradigm of ‘mainstream’ mass communications research. *Empiricism* was the paradigmatic common sense of sociology, psychology, political science and other fields in the social sciences at that time; though having adopted these paradigms probably did more to save mass communication research from academic extinction than the record seems prepared to admit.

Nonetheless, cultural studies emerged (falteringly, of course) as a *critical* reaction to that common sense. The field emerged also as a rejection of the mechanistic economism of classical Marxism (Hall 1982: 83-84). Hall’s essay indirectly portrays an antinomy between Enlightenment (modernity) and its Romantic ‘other’ articulated in the figure of Marx; or what Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor identifies as “multiple modernities” (Taylor 2000b).<sup>8</sup> Taylor’s conceptualization of “modern social imaginaries” expands the descriptor of ‘a modernity’ to the potency of a “hermeneutic of legitimation,” by which “our contemporaries imagine the societies they inhabit and sustain” (Taylor 2002a: 6, 7). The paradigms of *empiricism* and *constructivism* that animated the Media Wars (as an extension of the broader Science Wars) remain no less contending hermeneutic clues to understanding modernity, and the real.

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford in the late 1950s a founding member of the New Left, and a founding editor of the *Universities & Left Review* – the forerunner of the *New Left Review*. Taylor shares these distinctions with Stuart Hall.

If one recasts Windschuttle's localized *realist-relativist* binary into the broader Enlightenment-Romantic (roughly coterminous with differences between analytic and continental philosophy) contentions of Western modern philosophy, and then situate the recast problematic into the combined anti-positivist, anti-behaviourist and anti-empiricist picture that Hall (1982) presents as the stimulus of British Cultural Studies, we are presented both with a way to render the 'media wars' debate as occurring beyond the limitations of contending 'disciplinary' interests, but as occurring as a regional skirmish within a much wider field of contentions that began with the advent of modernity itself. That advent was the seventeenth century scientific revolution that exploded the holistic Aristotelian corpus, and thrust into the historical stream the paradigmatic logics that made mechanistic science possible. Empiricism was one viable effect: shaped by Rene Descartes's rational 'inward turn' that informed his philosophy of mind, followed by John Locke's empiricist subject, and Immanuel Kant's attempt to restore a compromise between Cartesian doubt and the experience-centric epistemology of empiricism. A term that encapsulates the modern force of the Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian moment is "Enlightenment fundamentalism" – a term Nicholas Smith (1997) adopts from Ernest Gellner (1992) and refines – which "maintains that the becoming modern of a society and its characteristic ways of understanding the world involves an irreversible process of disenchantment" (Smith 1997: 10).

From the Weberian perspective, the transition to modernity appears as an evolution from traditional modes of thought and action like religion, revelation and myth, to rational enlightened modes like science and technology. Enlightenment fundamentalism then imports *philosophical* significance to the phenomenon of disenchantment by construing it as definitive of the maturation of human rational capacities. According to the Enlightenment fundamentalist, science and technology are not merely the *prevailing* form of reason in modern times; they do not just chronologically succeed religious and mythic ways of seeing the world. Rather, they give the lie to those orders of significance which, as supposedly revealed through myth, dogmatic metaphysics and religion, ground human identity in its pre-mature phases of cognitive development. In other words, Enlightenment fundamentalism construes disenchantment as conceptually as well as historically compelling. Denuded of natural and traditional orders of meaning by genuine cognition, says the Enlightenment fundamentalist, we are bound by reason, and not just by historical circumstance, to acknowledge the truth of the contingent basis of human existence. Though the yearning for ontological significance lingers, human beings are doomed *de facto* and *de jure*, in Gellner's words, 'to suffer a tension between cognition and identity' (Smith 1997: 10-11).

Identity for Taylor is not a historical *constant* in human experience, but a specifically modern notion that would have been anachronistic in pre-modern

cultures. This does not mean that identity was absent before modernity, but that the *problem* of identity was not related to the individual as it is for modern subjects (Taylor 1989a: 65). The point is made more strongly at the start of Alain de Benoist's (2004) paper, *On Identity*, where he quotes Zygmunt Bauman's contention that "[i]dentity never 'became' a problem, it has always been a *problem*, it started as a problem" (de Benoist 2004: 9). Taylor would add that this problem is a *moral* one.

Given Zelizer's (2004a: 110) understanding of cultural studies as framed in a *critique of enlightenment*, it is understandable that its force should centre upon questions of modern *identity*. Following Jennifer Slack and Laurie Whitt (1992), David Scott's (2005) and Mark Freed's (2001) work on the ethical dimension of cultural studies' and Stuart Hall's conjoined responses to the alienation of modern subjects, we can add to a critique of Enlightenment a political and ethical urgency that has in its sights a truly emancipatory purpose. Windschuttle's objections to cultural studies miss the point of the field in so far as he appears to expect it to serve (media) industrial ends. But, as John Hartley (1995; 1999) makes clear, journalism is a specifically *modern* textual system, and is thus implicated in the constitution and reproduction of modern identity.

Journalism was founded as a modern project – it cannot be explained without reference to modernity, including the growth of democratic politics, popular sovereignty, mass citizenship, market economies, corporate and consumer culture. For most of its 200 to 400-year history, journalism has been partisan in these developments, not just in the sense of being for or against a specific modernizing party or idea, but a partisan for modernity as such. It has been committed to the principles of the Enlightenment, preferring observation over authority, reason over obedience, the eyewitness over the catechism, and campaigning actively for science, technology, truth and progress as commanding powers. Journalism represents (may is) the turn away from divine and royal 'warrants' for legitimacy towards rational and popular ones (Hartley 1999: 25).

For that reason at least, journalism ought to be taken seriously. Cultural studies does so, not to serve the industry, but to serve journalism's publics (or consumers) in ways rather more emancipatory than the industry might desire. Windschuttle's criticism of cultural studies, however, ought not to be dismissed, even if his reductionist image of cultural studies as "linguistic idealism" neglects the side that appears above. His objections concern postmodernism, which "[f]or cultural studies," in the view of Slack and Whitt (1992), "it is the recent engagement with postmodernism that has brought questions of ethics to the surface and prompted

debates over the *constitution of the subject* and the problems and possibilities of a politics” (Slack and Whitt 1992: 571. Emphasis added).

The impression I am attempting to make both problematizes Windschuttle’s understanding of cultural studies, and situates the *realist-idealist* binary by which he counterpoises journalism practice to (postmodern) cultural theory along a series of corresponding indices that situate the localized Media Wars debate in the wider Science Wars; and further still, in the constitutive condition of modernity whose most radical effect (apart from enabling mechanistic science) has been the impoverishment of the human subject. Far from residing within an ‘idealist-relativist-postmodern’ problematic, cultural studies embraces the tensions that constitute modernity itself (as the diagram below illustrates). The field is, therefore, a site of contestations given to problems of social, political and personal implications and effects of contemporary culture(s) imbricated with “multiple modernities” (Taylor 2000b).

This thesis brings Taylor’s philosophy to an analysis of the dualism between *empiricism* and *relativism* upon which the Media Wars debate rests. The argument contends that the foundation of Taylor’s philosophy in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) offers a way of both dissolving the dualism and offering a way forward. The thesis argues that Taylor’s rejection of the *empiricist* logic behind contemporary Cartesian models of the human person – which he first explored in attacks on behavioural psychology in the late 1950s and early 1960s – stems from the same post-Marxist debates to which he contributed, and which fostered the founding principles and practice of cultural studies. Taylor’s rejection of empiricist conceptions of subjectivities and identities during that period continues to inform his anti-epistemological philosophical anthropology (Dreyfus 2004; Taylor 1971a; 1987a) – a term generally defined as comprising irreducible categories we believe apply definitively to human reality (Buber 1945; Honneth and Joas 1988; Schacht 1990; Zaner 1966), and which “raises and provides answers to questions concerning the kind of being human beings are” (Smith 1997: 36). Taylor’s philosophical anthropology provides the hermeneutic rationale for his diverse writings on the structure of the human and social sciences (Smith 1997, 2002, 2004).

## The thesis

The thesis statement is thus: Charles Taylor's transcendental<sup>9</sup> critique of empiricist social science rests upon a rejection of the Cartesian picture of the self, and aims to restore a plausible conception of human agency. From Taylor's use of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment and perception, both *empiricism* (realism) and *intellectualism* (idealism) rest on Cartesian assumptions, and thus generate a representationalist model of the self that affirms objects in the world as absolutely external to mind. Empiricism and intellectualism are therefore not true opposites,<sup>10</sup> and Keith Windschuttle's empiricist assumptions therefore fail to secure the very thing he accuses intellectualist (postmodern) cultural studies of erasing: an adequate account of human agency.

Taylor aims his argument at modernity's disengaged conception of reason, both theoretical and practical, and seeks to rule them out as impossible points of departure – for example, positivistic theoretical reasoning as well as Kantian and utilitarian practical reasoning. What these projects share is an effacement of the good and proper ontological understanding of the subject's relation to institutions of meaning (Steele 2005: 77).

Modernity for Taylor is not a uniform condition of instrumental reason and other 'malaises' (Taylor 1991a) brought down from Enlightenment, but is instead found as a tension between contending strains and sources which include those from Romanticism. *Sources of the Self* (Taylor 1989a) is a historical account of transitions, gains and losses that have a bearing on modern subjectivity and self-understanding. In the preface of the book, Taylor describes it as "an attempt to articulate and write a history of the modern identity" and to "show how the ideals and interdicts of this identity ... shape our philosophical thought, our epistemology and our philosophy of

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<sup>9</sup> Like Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1989a) begins with a transcendental argument against an atomistic conception of the subject tantamount to the modern liberal view, and then moves to reconstruct a historical background to this transcendental argument. A transcendental argument "starts from some feature of our experience which we claim to be indubitable and beyond cavil. They then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject or the subject's position in the world. They make this move by regressive arguments, to the effect that the stronger conclusion must be so if the indubitable fact about experience is possible" (Taylor 1995a: 20). Taylor's transcendental argumentation depends on the historical vindication, and affirms the position that transcendental conditions are not formal but descriptive and historical. Otherwise, we would need to affirm a 'view from nowhere', and that we can think without evaluative frameworks, which Taylor clearly rejects (Taylor 1989a: 27, 40).

<sup>10</sup> The empiricist-realist paradigm takes the world to exist of itself, and imagines perception to mediate our contact with the world. The intellectualist-idealist alternative takes the world to exist by virtue of thought, and depicts perception as merely retrieving what has already been put there by the intellect. Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception holds, instead, that the world that is primordially presupposed is the perceived world. Empiricism and intellectualism "dissolve the perceived world into a universe which is nothing but this very world cut off from its constitutive origins" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 41).

language without our awareness” (Taylor 1989a: ix). Without seeing the richness and complexity of our (modern) identities, Taylor warns that we become susceptible to impoverished life as individuals and liable to see a fragmentation of the social and political sphere. As “self-interpreting animals” necessarily positioned in “webs of interlocution,” or “horizons of significance,” our being is coterminous with the interpretations of our being (Taylor 1989a: 39, 48). It is possible, particularly on Taylor’s (1989a; 2002b) account of modernity, to group these (moral) sources under Enlightenment (‘reason’) and Romantic (‘imagination’) traditions. Keith Negus and Michael Pickering (2004) provide an apt description of this condition:

It is commonly recognized that the twin traditions of the Enlightenment and Romanticism have guided us in quite contrary directions. What is not so commonly recognized is that their profound influence over the past two centuries lies also in attempts somehow to reconcile them, to draw on the powers of *both* disengaged reason and the creative imagination. So much of modern culture swings back and forth between them, but moving towards ways of resolving the tensions between them is also characteristically modern, even if the impetus towards such reconciliation comes originally from Romanticism (Negus and Pickering 2004: 8).

Similarly, it is plausible enough to describe the formation of British Cultural Studies as a reaction to empiricism in both social science and classical Marxism, and to see their own responses and debates as making use of existing critiques of Enlightenment. But without opting for one side of the tension, cultural studies sought to emulate Marx’s (and Hegel’s) dialectical approach to these tensions. “Marx’s ideal of the all-round person embodied the central values of Romantic humanism .... It certainly informed Adorno’s critique of the negative consequences of Enlightenment thought” (Negus and Pickering 2004: 8). Cultural studies follows in this tradition, but attempts to embrace the tension itself; thus providing the first (modern) condition by which the field became ideally a site of tensions – a veritable ‘hothouse’ of modernity – embracing the tensions found between Windschuttle’s *empiricist-idealist* dualism.<sup>11</sup>

From the above I want to submit that cultural studies actually embraces Windschuttle’s entire dualism. Cultural studies is not about empirical practices or about idealist constructions; though it certainly pays attention to these. It is principally *about* modern culture(s) *at base*; though it starts with popular experiences of its ill-

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<sup>11</sup> The entire empiricist-idealist index may be taken as an indicator of the modern condition, corresponding to a more extensive binary between the competing frames of Enlightenment and Romanticism that constitutes modernity. In this way I draw away from views, evident in John Hartley’s (1999) description of journalism as modern, that modernity is characterized by Enlightenment, empiricism, rationalism and any of the family of paradigms that belong there.



effects on class, race and other social fractions and their resultant manifold resistances. Therefore, this thesis can be said to focus entirely upon the *empiricist* basis of Keith Windschuttle's allegations that cultural studies is a form of linguistic idealism, that it espouses moral relativism, and that it contradicts journalism's realist and empirical worldview. In other words, the thesis *extracts* Windschuttle's model of the two fields occupying opposite ends of an *empiricist-idealist* index, and studies the significance of that model.

The thesis takes no *direct* interest in matters to do with journalism education, though it does pay closer attention to the *theory-practice* dichotomy that is a part of that field, as well as to Windschuttle's reduction of cultural studies to the idealist end of his model. At the same time the thesis attempts as far as possible to steer clear of discussion of particular themes or sets of concepts at large in cultural studies. The attempt is to extract discussion of the historical constitution of (British) cultural studies from the diverse range of discourses that make up its scholarship and activism. This type of separation is very difficult indeed, and no less so than treating Windschuttle's empiricism separately from his intentions. To rephrase what I am attempting, in a structuralist register, I am focusing on the underlying *signified* of Windschuttle's assumptions; and the underlying signified of the problematic that spurred cultural studies into existence.

I shall argue that Taylor's anti-Cartesian rejection of epistemology shows that Windschuttle, in his *empiricist* objections to the alleged moral relativism of cultural studies, falls on his own Enlightenment sword by allowing an implausible Cartesian model of human subjectivity and agency that belies much of what an effective journalist has to be in order to function not only in a human world, but also in a world that journalism partly constitutes as a sphere of meaning. As Taylor writes in *Hegel* (1979c):

[T]he Enlightenment analytic science of man was not only a travesty of human self-understanding, but one of the most grievous modes of self-distortion. To see a human being as in some way compounded of different elements: faculties of reason and sensibility, or soul and body, or reason and feeling, was to lose sight of the living, expressive unity; and in so far as men tried to live according to these dichotomies, they must suppress, mutilate or severely distort that unified expression which they have it in them to realize (Taylor 1979c: 2).

At the same time, the thesis questions whether models of identity and subjectivity in much of cultural studies scholarship would be better served by engaging with key tenets of Taylor's philosophical anthropology. The thesis provides reasons pertinent to the genealogy of cultural studies to take this option seriously. Considering arguments that Taylor had first developed from humanist Marxism, French existentialism, and analytic philosophy since the late 1950s, one can see this opposition between *empiricism* and *idealism* as a dualism representing abstractions from the Aristotelian corpus. That is, drawing on Taylor's philosophical anthropology, this thesis argues that both the *Enlightenment fundamentalism* (and empiricism) that Windschuttle argues is journalism's methodology, and the *relativistic idealism* he sees cultural studies to espouse, are epistemological reductions that promote implausibly naturalistic (Cartesian) conceptions of human subjectivity. Taylor draws this insight from Merleau-Ponty, but employs it in an approach that indexes both analytic philosophy and sources in the continental tradition.

While the issue around which criticisms of cultural studies are made concerns journalism education, this is subordinated to the central argument of this thesis -the relevance of Taylor's philosophical anthropology to questions of subjectivity in cultural studies - and is returned to in a more substantive way in the concluding chapter. To this end, I argue that the particular *ethical* inflection of Taylor's *post-Marxist* scholarship, imbedded in his anti-Cartesian and anti-empiricist critique of naturalism in social science, draws very close to the ethical imperatives of Stuart Hall's own project. Both aspire to a model of the human subject emancipated from the negative effects of modernity. While emancipation-in-modernity can be considered a portmanteau of cultural studies, it is no less that of Taylor's philosophical anthropology. The historical proximities of Taylor's and Hall's intellectual activism suggest their connections far more than their differences. Both were at Oxford together; both were in the New Left; both partook in debates that fashioned the initial debates of cultural studies. Scholars in its service would do well, therefore, to consider Taylor more seriously.

## **Outline of chapters**

This section provides a schematic outline of the transcendental argument of the thesis: bringing Taylor to the 'media wars' envisaged as a contention between

*empiricism* and *intellectualism*. These terms refer to a method, used by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, that Taylor adopts in order to critique empiricist and neo-Kantian doctrines of perception that retain in common a disengaged and mentalistic Cartesian subject, and so to build a phenomenological description of embodied subjectivity. His philosophical anthropology thus critiques modernity and at the same time seeks to recover an adequate account of the subjectivity that is true to experience. The argument builds on a version of transcendental argumentation that Taylor uses.<sup>12</sup>

**Proposal 1:** Windschuttle contends that the linguistic idealism he sees as central to postmodern cultural studies contradicts the realist and empiricist self-understanding that journalism education should adopt to accurately represent the profession and practice. Windschuttle thereby places journalism and cultural studies at opposite ends of an *empiricist-intellectualist* continuum.

**Proposal 2:** Cultural studies was founded as a *post-Marxist* (Marxist humanist) critique of (empiricist) classical Marxism mainly on grounds that it did not offer an adequate account of human experience. Taylor was an integral part of the debates that informed that critique.

**Proposal 3:** The ethical import of Taylor's philosophical anthropology derives significantly from his post-Marxist scholarship, and his rejection of empiricism in social science derived from that scholarship. Their combined import is the recovery of an adequate model of human subjectivity.

In so far as **Proposal 1** is true – Windschuttle does not deny that his assumptions are *empiricist*, but provides convincing evidence that they are – he purports journalism practice (and theory) to be appropriately pursued on those

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<sup>12</sup> The literature on transcendental argumentation is complex and riddled with contestation (Cassam 1987; Gram 1971; 1975; Rosenberg 1975; Sacks 2005). The method stems from Kant (who does not take it far enough), and is developed by Hegel, whom Taylor criticises as having taken it too far (Taylor 1995a: 20ff; Smith 2002: 249, n.7). Nicholas Smith (2002: 59-64) makes no secret of the complexity of debate to do with transcendental argumentation, even in connection with Taylor's usage. A structure of transcendental argument (I am using Smith faithfully here) follows the form of opening with an experience or truism; something that is beyond dispute. The second move is to state the truth of *p* as a conceptually necessary condition of the possibility of that truism. The third move is to conclude 'therefore *p*'. Applied to this thesis, the opening move is to state what Windschuttle says as an accurate statement of belief. There are no good reasons to believe that he misrepresented his beliefs – after all, he published and republished them. The second move states the truth of Windschuttle's empiricism *in relation to subjectivity*, and claims this to be an integral part of debate from which cultural studies formed. Taylor is instrumental in those debates. The third move extends those claims and opens the way for rendering Windschuttle's empiricist arguments for journalism education and practice untenable – at least in so far as human subjectivity is concerned.

grounds. Accepting Taylor's view (**Proposal 2**) that *empiricism* and *intellectualism* (including Windschuttle's category of 'linguistic idealism') provides a Cartesian model of the self, those same criticisms must apply to Windschuttle's model of how journalists pursue their practice. Furthermore, if Taylor was party to debates in the New Left, and was instrumental in debates that led to the formation of cultural studies, its own avowed anti-empiricism and anti-positivism must at least tacitly acknowledge Taylor's (material) contribution. If Taylor's scholarship can be accepted as materially part of early debates that constituted cultural studies, then **Proposal 3** applies. That being so, Taylor's philosophical anthropology offers the field a firmer basis upon which to reject Windschuttle's claim that cultural studies is fundamentally unethical – accepting that the field cannot be reduced to its poststructuralist and postmodern components that have done all that is possible to make ethics an impossibility (see Slack and Whitt 1992).<sup>13</sup>

In general, Taylor's philosophical anthropology rejects the epistemological construal at the centre of Cartesianism that has wrought an implausibly intellectualist model of human agency. Taylor provides an Aristotelian argument that seeks to articulate these movements in a way that critiques representationalism, resists foundationalism, and opposes the epistemological construal of the human subject. While he has rejected behaviourist and empiricist conceptions of human action since the late 1950s, he has also sought to promote an embodied and engaged understanding of the self developed mainly from Merleau-Ponty.

**Chapter One** discusses the problem of the gap between theory and practice in relation to the "media wars" debate. The chapter focuses on the *empiricist* assumptions of Windschuttle's claims for journalism, as well as his accusations of cultural studies being idealist and relativist. Windschuttle, who has much to say about "French philosophy", finds his philosophical basis in Australian empiricist philosopher of science David Stove. The chapter concludes with an introduction of

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<sup>13</sup> Debate in the 1990s over the suitability of cultural studies for journalism education and training occurred at a time when cultural studies was in the throes of its deepest crisis since its inception in the 1960s. But by revisiting Taylor's critique of epistemology published during that inception period, and by using it as a principal basis for a critique of that debate, offers both a way to collapse the Cartesian-inspired dualisms upon which the debate rests, and to restore to cultural studies a rationale by which it may be seen to remain relevant to an enquiry of journalism in so far as it is imagined as a social and cultural practice.

Taylor's rejection of the Cartesian epistemology behind empiricism, behaviourism and positivistic thought that supports naturalistic social science.

**Chapter Two** introduces the three propositions given in this introduction. The first is explored in terms of the Science Wars, which I argue was (or is) the background to the debate and provided its fundamental backing. The second proposition is discussed in terms of post-Marxism; explaining some of the issues and contentions that led to and sustain that concept. The third proposition is discussed in terms of two concepts by which Taylor is better known: *communitarianism* and *authenticity*. The first concept links Taylor to debates around civic and public journalism (see Christians et al 1993), whereas authenticity appears to express his anthropology more powerfully than any other concept.

**Chapter Three** forms a bridge leading to the body of the thesis, and provides an overview of Taylor's philosophical anthropology, setting it in the context of its critique of Cartesian conceptions of the 'naturalistic self and the 'reification of mind' found in current scholarship that Taylor critiques.

**Chapter Four** discusses the question of Taylor's *post-Marxism* and his involvement in the beginning of British Cultural Studies. As a survey of Taylor's activism in the New Left movement from 1956 to about 1961, the chapter explores how he came to discover in French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty his 'big idea' that I am using in this thesis to critique the basis upon which Windschuttle opposes constructivist thought from an empiricist perspective. But the chapter also aims to impress upon the reader the importance of Taylor to Stuart Hall's *post-Marxism*, leading to the question of a return to Hegel as a *post-Marxist* outlook, thus calling for a consideration of Taylor's thought in current cultural studies scholarship.

**Chapter Five** builds on the thrust of the previous chapter by exploring more deeply Taylor's subscription of Merleau-Ponty. The main purpose of this chapter is to consider how Taylor's Merleau-Pontian outlook may have influenced the structuralist turn in British Cultural Studies. This aspect of the argument remains speculative, but is used nonetheless to explore the humanist Marxist - and specifically *post-Marxist* - basis by which Taylor developed his critique of the Enlightenment subject. These roots are principally in Hegel and Feuerbach.

**Chapter Six** reaches the question of Taylor's rejection of epistemology and the Cartesian philosophy of mind. The argument examines the beginnings of this rejection from his first book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (Taylor 1964), which came out of his studies with Merleau-Ponty together with his reading of analytical philosophy at Oxford. One historical significance of this work is that it emerged out of his New Left period and, as I argue in preceding chapters, should be considered in relation to his *post-Marxist* thinking which, on the surface, seems to be extraneous to the book. The chapter leads into Taylor's more recent work, where arguments begun in *Explanation* and extended into a thorough rejection of epistemology grounded in a Hegelian philosophy of mind through which he provides a conception of practice that both collapses the Cartesian bifurcation of theory and practice, and promotes a more plausible model of subjectivity than the mechanistic and rationalist conceptions currently promoted by empiricist factions not only in the Science Wars, but in the related Media Wars also.

The **Conclusion** begins with a discussion on cultural studies and philosophy, where I suggest that the field should observe its 'natural' boundaries, not because of what it *cannot* do well, but because of *what it ought to do*. There are implications here for the study of journalism. This leads to a discussion of Taylor's and Stuart Hall's ethics. I discuss, among other papers, the only one I am aware of that actually applies Taylor to the context of (postmodern) cultural studies (Freed 2001), but, I show where the author - applying Taylor ahistorically and ignoring his post-Marxist scholarship - misses the *significance* of Taylor to cultural studies.

## Chapter One

# Journalism and the Media Wars

The study of journalism faces a peculiar set of challenges in the academy where, from the day it was included in any university calendar,<sup>1</sup> it has had to contend with the contradictory imperatives of *theory* and *practice*. On the one hand, journalism is obviously a practical occupation, and that identity powerfully steers notions that to study journalism means to come to grips with its industrial practice. Theory becomes the tail of a very practical dog, and any theory that fails to illuminate practice, or to describe it plausibly, becomes difficult to justify in a journalism programme. For example, normative media theory ‘makes sense’ more readily than critical theory, even where it usefully explores the culpability of news media in manipulative ideological practices. It is normative theory and the ‘how to’ material that gets included in journalism manuals long before critical theory gets considered. Even *journalism ethics* is generally considered an afterthought; an oxymoron to bear in mind if you get the time – a final ‘why’ once you’ve already learnt ‘how to’ (see Mirando 1998).<sup>2</sup>

To speak of ‘journalism ethics’ outside the safety of academic ‘laboratory conditions’ generally gets the reception of an invective uttered in polite company. Otherwise, as veteran journalist David Randall (2001: 132) writes: “Even to put the two words in the same sentence is to risk reducing the listener to helpless laughter.” British moral philosopher Matthew Kieran (1997) elaborates on this phenomenon:

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<sup>1</sup> Journalism was first included in a university calendar in the United States of America immediately after the civil war there. Defeated Confederate General Robert E. Lee proposed the programme in 1868 (Sloan 1990: 3).

<sup>2</sup> A recent study (Mirando 1998) of more than 300 journalism text books published between 1967 and 1997 found that substantial discussion of ethics did not appear until about the mid-1920s. Surprisingly, the topic virtually disappeared from journalism books for the next 40 years, only to return in the 1970s (Mirando 1998: 26). One would also expect that by this time an overwhelming number of journalism schools had included ethics into their curricula by this time. But another survey (Christians *et al.* 1993) found that out of 237 schools surveyed, only about 25 percent actually taught the subject. By the 1990s this figure had risen to 85 percent.

The point is that the very notion of media ethics appears paradoxical: the very phrase itself seems to constitute an oxymoron. Many professional journalists in Britain, for example, often greet the suggestion that they ought to be ethically sensitive with sneers of disdain (Kieran 1997: 1).

Newsroom veteran-turned-scholar Richard Keeble (1994: 24) explains that journalists, despite their low rank in the corporate hierarchy, are too easily blamed for lapses of ethical sensitivity. Their practice is nested in an institutional structure that for the most part embodies values and a concomitant pursuit of goods that differ from those that journalism pursues.

[T]he dominant attitude prioritises “getting the story” and the demands of the deadline above all else. Ethical and political concerns are secondary, if they are ever considered at all (Keeble 1994: 24).

Journalists are traditionally prone to shifting during the course of their careers from healthy skepticism to outright cynicism (Ettema and Glasser 1998: 64, 88-89), but they also often seem to wear that attitude proudly to indicate their senior status. But cynicism is also an option of the powerless; of lapsed believers rendered so by frustrated effort of having tried to make a difference. Like priests who have lost their faith but kept their jobs, they endure only for so long as the reward of goods external to the practice makes being there bearable.

One of the problems with media ethics is that while readers and critics expect the news production process to be carried out with all the standardization of a mechanised production line, they remain unaware of the pressures under which journalists usually work. As former newspaper editor-turned-academic Jim Willis writes: “[w]hat sincere journalist has not wanted to take some time and research *why* things work as they do in the media and what impact the media really has on the public” (Willis and Willis 1990: 6). Otherwise, in an occupation dogged by deadlines, time spent on esoteric musings is truly time wasted.

As a *Newsweek* correspondent once said on a special edition of ABC-TV’s “Nightline”: “You just don’t have time to consider why you do something as a journalist. You just do it.” Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* echoed that thought in a Columbia University program on journalistic ethics, when he stated, “We can sit here all day and debate the ethics of how we get information, but the point is we must get it. Every working journalist knows how hard it is to get at the truth out there” (Willis and Willis 1990: 6)

These are the ‘helter skelter’ conditions under which journalists work, “but many would like to have the luxury of stopping awhile and thinking about what they are doing” (Willis and Willis 1990: 6). And after the weariness sets in from years



working at that pace, answering to those demands, and receiving the same meager returns for their efforts, “some journalists begin daydreaming about the more laid-back life of those journalism professors in their ivy-covered building, passing on the benefits of their experience to future journalists” (Willis and Willis 1990: 6).

### **The platypus among the purebreds**

Disciplinarity, understood as a tradition of thinking, writing and research to do with questions of a particular field, poses a related challenge to journalism. “By disciplinarity we mean an essentialist tendency in the production of academic knowledge that produces a set of theoretical and methodological axioms, and then formalizes them as dogma” (Kavoori and Gurevitch 1993: 174). But such conditions, suggest Anandam Kavoori and Michael Gurevitch (1993), sets journalism like a “platypus” among the “purebreds.” This condition, however, is not unique to journalism. Robert Craig (1999) argues that communication is similarly of mixed parentage, and having to continually refer to these ‘diverse’ disciplines for its tenuous identity. But diversity, as Arjun Appadurai (1996: 26-36) argues, is not a quality that disciplinarity fosters, particularly as “many colleges and universities have increasingly become factories for specialized research, applied interests, and professional credentializing” (Appadurai 1996: 27). The humanities remain “the critical site for the idea that the University is also about thought and reflection, cultivation and conscience, disinterest and abstraction, literacy and cosmopolitanism” (Appadurai 1996: 27). Journalism in the academy would appear to hover between the poles of theory and practice.

The ongoing ferment over the past, the present, and the future of mass communication research is tied to an ongoing urge for the imposition of order – a tendency that we have labeled *disciplinarity* (Kavoori and Gurevitch 1993: 173-174).

Journalism remained a practical occupation and enterprise. It was integrally wedded to media institutions. But for all its vocational and ‘trade school’ status, journalism is no less practical than law, education, medicine, accountancy and many others fields that claim disciplinary stature. Notions of trans-disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, post-disciplinarity and even ‘anti-disciplinarity’ provides little comfort, if any at all, for journalism which appears barely to have found a voice of its own. Historians construct its memory; accountants and political economists deliberate on which economic, structural and ownership patterns should be its ideal form;

political scientists (and politicians themselves) determine the parameters of its (democratic) role in society (see Carey 1993).

Barbie Zelizer (2004b) depicts journalism, under these conditions, as a “territory at war with itself,” where different aspects of inquiry proceed without reference to each other; and “with each new visitor to the territory encountering a prompt and definitive attempt at colonization by those already there” (Zelizer 2004: 3). Journalism’s natural home was never in a university; and whatever purported to be its subject matter there was always far more an epiphenomenon of academic pretensions than a reflection of the self-knowledge of journalists in industry. Yet, there it stayed, where its aspirants would earn credentials alongside trainee lawyers (reading law), trainee teachers (reading education), trainee doctors, dentists, pharmacists, agriculturalists (farmers), accountants, managers, marketers and all who would measure their *theory* learned there against whatever yardstick the *practice* in the working world presented to them.

The bifurcation between *theory* and *practice* has been a feature of journalism education and training since its inception, and the recent debate (referred to in the previous chapter) between journalism educators and cultural studies scholars in Australian universities drew particular attention to that relationship. The empiricist historian Keith Windschuttle – who is better known for his passionate defense of history as a true science rather than as a branch of literary theory – emerged to champion the cause of journalism educators against their cultural studies colleagues. His name quickly became emblematic of what became, for cultural studies, a brief and unwanted crisis added to its own ‘identity crisis’ (see Ferguson and Golding 1997).

The Media Wars debate, as it was coined, has been largely forgotten, but the issues at its centre remain as relevant now as they were a decade ago. From the side of cultural studies, its scholars responded mainly with defences of their field, and critiques of the limited scope of the instrumentalist perspective of journalism education and training. Quite rightly, the counter charge, that cultural studies scholars do not ‘understand’ journalism, is probably largely correct given Windschuttle’s own description of its empirical basis. But it is the *empiricist* assumptions behind his claims that have received little, if any, sustained attention. Similarly, the connections of the debate to the ‘science wars’ have not been given sufficient attention.

The chapter ends with an introduction of philosopher Charles Taylor's rejection of the Cartesian epistemology behind empiricism, behaviourism and positivistic thought that remains in perspectives that retain natural scientific models as a basis for social science. Taylor finds the foundation of his philosophy in French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Windschuttle, who has much to say about "French philosophy", finds his philosophical basis in Australian philosopher of science David Stove. I am not setting up a 'wizard's dual' between Taylor and Stove; for Taylor has no objection to scientific ontologies so long as they remain in the domain of science. It is when these ontologies are extended to anthropology that they become problematic, as they do in *naturalistic* social science. And as journalism is principally a practice about human significance and the social world, the methods of natural science do seem strangely out of place. That ought to be the basis upon which to challenge Windschuttle. This chapter sets the basis for that critique.

### **The problem of journalism in the academy**

The elevation of journalism studies from its inception in newsroom training manuals to a discourse intent on academic respectability is an ugly duckling story driven in part by crises in the established disciplines implicated in the wider changes that have reconfigured the fit between the academy and the industrial and social world beyond its immediate domain. In academia, journalism could call itself 'journalism studies', and find a space in the library. But whether journalism should be a discipline in its own right, or remain a disputed territory of history, politics, languages, sociology and any others that lay claim to it, remains an issue that is not easily settled on grounds of interdisciplinarity.

Until quite recently, journalism's subject matter was not considered 'academic enough' for degree purposes unless it was addressed within a more robust discipline like English, philosophy, politics (Carey 2000: 16); and latterly, cultural studies (Windschuttle 1997b: 5-6; 1998a: 72-73). Even so, within these frameworks journalism has not always been treated "as a textual system in its own right," but as a "*terra nullius* of epistemology, deemed by anyone who wanders by to be an uninhabited territory of knowledge, fit to be colonized by anyone who's interested" (Hartley 1996: 39).

A cursory review of the literature on journalism education (Dickson 2000; Sloan 1990) shows that this condition is not so much an outcome of emergent tensions in the field, but is a condition instilled from the moment journalism entered into the academy. William Sloan (1990) finds that any differences in those tensions, between then and now, may be grouped in three overlapping phases. The first phase, beginning in 1968, immediately after the American Civil War, was motivated by a concern for the prospects of democratic public life, and it can be characterized as a bid to ‘save democracy’. The second phase, beginning at around 1920, was motivated out of concern for the professional standing of journalism itself (‘saving journalism’). The third phase appears to be connected with the declining prospects of the human and social sciences (‘saving the humanities’).

The first phase, in Sloan’s (1990) schema, began when defeated Confederate General Robert E. Lee, having “received a number of job offers at the end of the Civil War, accepted one to become president of Washington College” (Sloan 1990: 3). Frederick Rudolph (1962) points out that “Lee’s experiment” formed part of a general drive “to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life” (Rudolph 1962: 249). The general, “[b]elieving an intelligent press played an instrumental role in contributing to an informed, responsible citizenry,” proposed in 1868 that a scholarship be set up for students wanting to make a career in journalism (Sloan 1990: 3). The programme lasted for a decade, but was discontinued on the grounds that it was unpopular with both students and industry leaders.<sup>3</sup> Newspaper editors thought the course was “inherently absurd ... [for] practical journalists, who had worked their own way upward by diligent application, knew the impossibility of learning the lessons of journalism within the walls of a collegiate institution” (Sloan 1990: 3).

This phase ended with the 1947 *Hutchinson Commission on Freedom of the Press*, coinciding with the second phase which began in about 1920. Up until this interval it was commonly believed that reporters needed no special *education*. In the absence of raw talent, a basic liberal arts degree was enough.<sup>4</sup> Anything more

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<sup>3</sup> Lee died on 12 October 1870.

<sup>4</sup> The first systematic study of American journalists in 1936 found that only half had undergraduate degrees. By 1961 this figure had risen to 81 per cent in the upper echelons of the journalistic fraternity, and crept up to 95 per cent by 1992. Those with majors in journalism and mass communication made up at half of all reporters with degrees in 1982, and rose to only 60 per cent a decade later (Weaver 1999).

specialised was strictly imagined as the preserve of the ‘trade school’, but the Commission thought this view to be short-sighted. The Commission is usually identified with having instituted the social responsibility theory of the press (Siebert *et al.* 1956),<sup>5</sup> but less attention is given to one of its recommendations to implement the idea through journalism education. It found that most journalism schools

devote themselves to vocational training, and even here they are not so effective as they should be. The kind of training a journalist needs most today is not training in the tricks and machinery of the trade. If he is to be a competent judge of public affairs, he needs the broadest and most liberal education. The schools of journalism as a whole have not yet successfully worked out the method by which their students may acquire this education.<sup>6</sup>

This is not to say that until this time there were no initiatives in journalism education. Immediately after World War One – signaling the second phase – basic journalism courses were becoming established in a number of North American tertiary colleges. The added push in the 1920s was for recovery, to restore the *professionalism* of journalism, “to regain some of the lost prestige suffered during the era of yellow journalism” (Steiner 1994: 56). In this respect the Commission’s advice came as a confirmation of a growing trend.

The first 4-year programs in the early years of the 20th century emphasized journalism education in conjunction with the liberal arts, particularly the social sciences, a curriculum intended to prepare students to help journalism achieve its full potential in serving society and democracy. By the 1920s, and with increasing force in the 1930s, training in occupational skills had become the heart of the program. In most schools, it still occupies that spot. Beginning in the 1940s, theoretical research was added to the traditional research in such areas as law and history. It took on growing importance in graduate study, even though it still accounts for only a small part of the undergraduate curriculum. Each stage in journalism education brought new approaches and combined them with what had gone before. Today, virtually all journalism curricula emphasize professional training, and many combine them with the concepts of liberal arts, social sciences, and theory (Sloan 1990: 4).

These initiatives faltered, and did so in no small part due to a lack of support and skepticism emanating from both industry and education reformers. One reformer

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Hallin (1994) points out several factors that sparked the commission and the social responsibility theory: “By the end of the Second World War the inadequacies of the libertarian model were evident. It was clear, first of all, that the owners of the news media were not representative of the public at large, and that democracy and, more narrowly, the credibility and morale of news organizations themselves – was at risk if the owners had the power to use the media at will as instruments of class or personal interests. Second, it was clear that what worked to sell cultural commodities didn’t necessarily coincide with the interest of society in substantial and accurate reporting on public affairs. And third, it had become clear that propaganda – in Habermas’ terms, the use of communication as an instrument of power and profit rather than as a medium of dialogue – had become pervasive in the private sphere as well as in political life, and also threatened to undermine the market-place in ideas” (Hallin 1994: 3-4).

<sup>6</sup> Commission on Freedom of the Press (1974). *A Free and Responsible Press*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.78

in American education, Abraham Flexner, said journalism education as he found it was “on a par with university faculties of cookery and clothing” (Dressel 1960: 21-22).<sup>7</sup> Edd Applegate (1996) quotes criticisms of journalism education and training from various other sources too, qualifying these as “fortunate” on the grounds that the enterprise “needs criticism, whether positive or negative, in order to change” (Applegate 1996: 94). One critic, the writer and historian of publishing, John Tebbel, in articles published in 1963 and 1964 “caused practitioners to applaud and educators to squirm” (Applegate 1996: 94). Applegate lists among Tebbel’s objections to journalism training in universities that

1. Certain professors have stopped reading newspapers.
2. Certain professors have forgotten their purpose: to train individuals to interpret thoughtfully today’s complicated information and to communicate information effectively.
3. Research has replaced teaching in graduate programs in the largest schools.
4. Emphasis on research has caused a de-emphasis of the professional curriculum. Indeed, certain research faculty do not have any professional media experience

Criticism of journalism education is a publishing industry on its own.

Nevertheless, one can detect that by around the time of the Hutchinson Commission the objectives of journalism education and training had probably shifted from ‘saving journalism’ from the stigma it had earned in the 1910s, to one of saving the news media *industry* itself, given a perceived disconnect between it and democratic public life (Picard 1985). Signs of this phase are evident in both North America and Western Europe before World War Two, but take off during and immediately after the war.

Carleton University in Ottawa, which was founded in 1942 as a nondenominational liberal arts, science, commerce and engineering college, started the first journalism program in Canada in September of 1945 and granted its first degrees in journalism a year later. The University of Western Ontario in London followed suit in 1945-46 and awarded its first degrees in 1948. Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto also began to offer courses shortly thereafter and, thanks to extensive equipment for the teaching of typography, printing, engraving, radio and television, soon achieved large enrollments (Gaunt 1992: 35).

In the Netherlands, at this time, journalism education was introduced at both the university of Amsterdam and the Catholic University of Nijmegen, where they “were strongly supported by the newspaper industry and provided a mix of professional

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<sup>7</sup> Abraham Flexner was the same reformer who in *The American College: A Criticism* (1908) criticized the American university lecture method of instruction on the grounds that it enabled colleges to “handle cheaply by wholesale a large body of students that would be otherwise unmanageable and thus give the lecturer time for research” (Flexner 1908: ).

training and communication studies” (Gaunt 1992: 67). Formal journalism education in Belgium started in 1922, but as an offering in university in 1945 – first at the Free University of Brussels, then in 1946 at the Catholic University of Louvain (Gaunt 1992: 72-73). Ireland, with its flourishing media industry and “one of the highest reading rates in Europe,” saw its first university-level journalism course as late as 1982, at Dublin City University (Gaunt 1992: 73).

The first full-time journalism course, established at the Rathmines College of Commerce in 1969, was adapted from training schemes run by the National Council for the Training of Journalists in the United Kingdom. The one-year course, which emphasized reporting and sub-editing, was extended to two years in 1974 and leads to a Certificate of Journalism. The College, now part of the Dublin Institute of Technology, takes 25 to 30 students each year (Gaunt 1992: 73).

No digest of journalism education history is complete without mentioning Joseph Pulitzer, who ironically was a major player in the yellow journalism era. During this time, however, it was in 1892 that he first set his sights on Columbia University to make good the need to improve the qualifications of journalists. But the school only opened in 1912, despite the university having accepted Pulitzer’s two million dollar endowment some years before that. As James Carey (1978: 848) puts it: “Journalism education begins, for all practical purposes, when Joseph Pulitzer pressed many dollars into the somewhat reluctant hands of Columbia University.” Money talks but it seldom buys respect. Carey describes the field’s standing in Columbia in 1957 as an illegitimate waif clutching a thin and impoverished subject matter, and living a cap-in-hand existence of one not having been properly introduced.

Such a program of study was held, self-righteously and without much justification, in low regard on the campus. Those rare occasions when one gathered with colleagues from the rest of the campus, particularly with those from English and other humanities, were encounters of withering, palpable contempt (Carey 2000: 13).

What was taught until about the mid-1960s was an unsystematic transmission of the accumulated folk wisdom of a rough-hewn craft clinging to Siebert *et al.* (1956) and a humble clutch of other literature – barely more than news writing manuals – to give the subject a presence in the library. Journalism’s literary paucity may have contributed to the field’s discomfort “in the overstuffed chairs of the faculty commons upholstered for professors of the liberal arts and the traditional disciplines of theology, law and medicine” (Carey 2000: 16). It may be comforting to note from Edward Shils’s (1961) review of C. Wright Mills’s book, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), that journalism’s begrudging reception into the academy was not

unique. Sociology's entrance was similarly harrowed, and its right to exist there remained suspect until it became respectable in the 1930s. In his review Shils writes:

When American sociology, unregarded and undemanding, was pleased to be allowed an academic existence, it suffered from lack of self-confidence. The other academic disciplines thought little of it and it was unknown to the outside world. Its rustic naïveté and its simple enthusiasm aroused no antipathies within its own parochial confines (Shils 1961: 600).

It is perhaps not surprising that journalism was nourished by humanities disciplines to which it may have appealed for succour; although it is almost inconceivable that any of these might have given in to any maternal instincts they might have felt towards journalism. The fact that journalism recognized its home in the liberal arts may have been motivated by its practitioners having had a dominantly liberal arts education. Journalism thus entered the academy as a throwback of the arts. Had the journalistic collective been composed predominantly of commerce or science graduates (which is hard to imagine), the subject may have sought a home in commerce or science. Nonetheless, the collective contribution journalists made to their profession was made with tools derived from English, history, politics, sociology, and other undergraduate fare that each generation of journalists had been exposed to – all committed to the process of moulding the craft as it was learned 'on the job'. Journalism is therefore a hybrid of the multidisciplinary heritage of its collective practitioners. Carey implies as much when he says that journalism

naturally belongs with *political theory* which nurtures an understanding of democratic life and institutions; with *literature* from which it derives a heightened awareness of language and expression and an understanding of narrative form; with *philosophy* from which it can clarify its own moral foundations; from *history* which forms the underlying stratum of its consciousness; and from *art* which enriches its capacity to imagine the unity of the visual and verbal world (Adam 1993: v. Emphasis added).

Canadian journalism scholar Stuart Adam shares this view, with the added complaint that journalism training in North America has been dominated by the social sciences, and should find its 'true home' in the humanities. Agreeing with Carey, he says that

[journalism] professors should teach something called reporting, that students should receive an education in something called the liberal arts, and that it is in the interests of students to study a field, which is taught in the schools by scholars rather than practitioners, called mass communication or media studies (Adam 1993: 6).

Even if the inaugural literature of journalism studies consisted of a rough-hewn folklore of editors' memoirs and training manuals, as Carey (2000: 13) describes journalism's entry into Columbia University, journalism practice itself was, by virtue



of its practitioners, not innocent of theory. Journalists have always brought to the newsroom the intellectual resources of language studies, history, politics – together with streetwise grit – and committed these to the ‘melting pot’ of a self-reflexive field fashioned as mundane procedures chasing self-evident facts. If later generations of journalists are found adding cultural studies to that mix, they are doing only as their forebears had done. But all the same, the material conditions of news production moulds these latest resources to its own ends. Anything does not go.

Perhaps in that respect, the validation of journalism studies would always be the centripetal pull from the industrial centre, moderating any offering tempted by the centrifugal pull of becoming a purely theoretical enterprise, as critical media theory tends towards. Instituted at each extreme of the centrifugal-centripetal axis appear two incommensurable practices, one academic, the other industrial (or ‘practical’). From each vantage point the other appears as lacking. As media historian Mitchell Stephens points out,

Academics have long whispered that journalism programmes are too professional: just trade school. Journalists have long grumbled that some of them are too academic – filled with useless ‘theory’ (Stephens 2000: 63).

The thought often goes that if theory and practice are estranged, then simply introduce them properly and the rest will follow. But the results are usually unsatisfactory. David Skinner *et al.* (2001) argue that journalism “programmes which compromise between vocational training and a broader programme of study based in the liberal arts remain unsatisfactory because they put too much onus on students themselves to *bridge the gap between theory and practice*” (Skinner *et al.* 2001: 341; emphasis added). One difficulty that bedevils discourse on theory and practice is the metaphor of *head and hand*. As a working template, it is easy to translate this binary into others such as doing/thinking, vocational/academic, and industry/academy. One translation that is offered as a solution to this dichotomy is Skinner’s *et al* (2001: 344-45) distinction between *why* and *how*. Not far behind the distinction between *why* and *how* lies another: between the *vocational* and the *academic*; together with an assumption that each belongs to a different educational domain.

In Australian arts faculties, as Wendy Bacon (1999) points out, the trend has been an upsurge in “communication studies students who want more production courses, and production students who expect their universities to deliver on the

promise of future jobs” (Bacon 1999: 80).<sup>8</sup> This pattern coincided with the emergence of cultural studies – of a more literary bent than of the original field – as a dominant paradigm in the human sciences. The extent to which this transmogrified field has attained hegemony in the humanities is evident in the impression that ‘everyone is now doing cultural studies’. Some seasoned cultural studies scholars have noted, not without alarm, that even in “previously conceptually conservative communication departments” in South African, cultural studies has taken root and spread (Tomaselli and Shepperson 1998: 89-90; Tomaselli and Shepperson 2000: 237). By the mid-1990s cultural studies had become the premier paradigm in the human sciences, where *communication* had risen to (albeit temporary) saviour status at a time when students wanted more ‘vocational’ subjects. During this apparent *fin de siecle* of the ‘old humanities’, *journalism* (as an extension of media studies) acquired unprecedented appeal. In the introduction to a book on cultural studies’ own current bout of soul-searching, Marjorie Ferguson and Peter Golding (1997: xx) note this phenomenon in British universities:

The recent expansion of cultural studies in the UK has been part of the deliberate force-fed increase in the number of full-time university students from 563 000 to 930 000 between 1988 and 1994. At the same time the atrophy of some traditional disciplines in the humanities and social sciences has left a space for newer, and superficially glamorous fields to mop up student demand. The expansion of these popular areas of study has not been without its opponents, and the subject continues to struggle for legitimacy in a political culture which is now almost obsessively utilitarian in its approach to education. One Minister for Education proclaimed ‘I have ordered an inquiry ... to try to find out why some young people are turned off by the laboratory, yet flock to the seminar room for a fix of one of those contemporary pseudo-religions like media studies ... For the weaker minded, going into a cultural Disneyland has an obvious appeal’ (Patten 1993: 14). In 1995 and 1996 a flurry of articles in the national press attacked media and cultural studies when it was revealed that university applications to study in these areas continued to rise (Ferguson and Golding 1997: xx).

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<sup>8</sup> The Australian case is evident in South Africa where, under a market-driven dispensation, universities have had to ‘examine themselves’ against criteria set by government White Papers which, since 1996, have ordered universities to offer more industry- and career-focused programmes, produce more science, technology and business-oriented graduates, and to downplay knowledge that has no obvious capacity to make money (Dowling 1998: 2-5). Supporting this drive is an assumption that such graduates would slot into ‘socially useful jobs’ measured against an instrumentalist index that commits education to the purpose of fulfilling quotas in the service of national economic ends. And if the ‘old’ humanities “do not lead to hard material market gains, they must be ‘down-sized’ or closed down” (Dowling 1998: 3). Arts faculties responded by bringing on board ‘technical’ and career outcomes such as journalism, public relations, advertising, Internet skills – anything to do with communication – in a bid to stave off redundancy.

## Of theory and practice: ‘Media Wars’

The gap between journalism’s theory and practice seems a lot narrower in theory than it does in practice. This sense is illustrated by two examples where theory and practice were seen to collide. The first concerns a passage in Barbie Zelizer’s book, *Taking Journalism Seriously* (2004), where she recounted in its opening pages her experience of studying journalism after having been in the practice.

When I arrived at the university – “freshly expert” from the world of journalism – I felt like I’d entered a parallel universe. Nothing I read as a graduate student reflected the working world I had just left ... these views failed to capture the life I knew (Zelizer 2004: 2).

However, if one considers that Zelizer’s experience in the academy was ‘as a journalist’, with a newly hybridized identity resembling something like Homi Bhabha’s concept of “double time” (Bhabha 1990: 297, in Zelizer 1993: 224), then her experience was more likely to have seen theory and practice as incommensurable. Theorists might find cause to think, perhaps, that Zelizer had entered the academy a little naïvely, having been even uncritical of journalism practice. But this appears not to be the case. As in the biographical preface to her book on the J.F. Kennedy assassination, Zelizer (1992) writes:

As a reporter, I had often wondered about the ways in which half-jumbled wisps of conversation became full-blown news stories that were told with a knowing and certain voice. As I made my way out of journalism and into academic, I carried that curiosity with me, making it the topic of my doctoral dissertation and, in turn, the focus of this book (Zelizer 1992: vii).

Zelizer goes on to depict journalism scholarship as a “territory at war with itself” where different aspects of inquiry proceed without reference to each other; and “with each new visitor to the territory encountering a prompt and definitive attempt at colonization by those already there” (Zelizer 2004b: 3). Stuart Adam notes similarly that “the academic and professional elements of journalism curriculum are like ‘two nations warring within the bosom of a single state’” (Adam 1988: 9).

The differences between ‘know that’ (‘theory’) and ‘know how’ (‘practice’) took a particularly hostile turn in Australian universities in the late 1990s. The complaint was that a disproportionate number of senior academic posts in journalism training went to cultural studies scholars despite few having any actual journalism experience (Windschuttle 1997a: 3-4; 1998a: 9-10; 1998b: 72-73). John Hartley is not unsympathetic. He notes earlier that “(m)edia production itself is still downplayed as

it always has been, on the wrong side of the ... divide between 'academic' and 'practical' subjects, suited to vocational students and unpublished tutors" (Hartley 1992: 24). But therein lay the gist of the matter. Most who were specifically journalism educators had migrated from industrial practice to academic practice, where they competed against staff that had 'stayed at school'. Accordingly, these scholars were more senior, amply published, and being about the same age, effectively established a glass ceiling for the migrants beneath them. Resentment grew, and when it found a champion in Australian journalism scholar Keith Windschuttle, it boiled up to a point when, in November 1998, a conference was called to allow each side to hear the other out.<sup>9</sup>

The daylong 'Media Wars' event was prompted largely by a charge from Windschuttle that, in his view, the idealist ontology and relativist epistemology of cultural studies made it an inappropriate foundation for the study of journalism. He claimed that the empirical methods and realist values of journalism "are undermined, contradicted and frequently regarded as naive by the proponents of media theory ... the body of theory that accompanies the academic domain called 'cultural studies'" (Windschuttle 1997a: 5).

It is important to understand that the popularity of media studies<sup>10</sup> with students owes nothing to cultural studies.... a largely incomprehensible and odious gauntlet they must run in order to be allowed to do what they really came to the institution for, to study media practice (Windschuttle 1997a: 15-16).

Windschuttle reiterated his claim that journalism training should be severed from cultural studies, and to "return to what is believed to be the 'Holy Trinity' of journalism education: an empirical method and 'realist' worldview; an ethical orientation to audiences and the 'public interest'; and a commitment to clear writing" (Flew and Sternberg 1999: 9). He describes the fundamental differences between the two fields this way:

(i) [J]ournalism has an empirical methodology and has a realist view of the world, whereas cultural studies is a form of linguistic idealism whose principal methodology is textual analysis; (ii) journalists respect their audiences, whereas cultural studies is contemptuous of media audiences; and (iii) journalism is committed to clear writing and concrete prose style, whereas cultural studies is notable for its arcane abstractions and willful obscurantism (Windschuttle 1999: 12).

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<sup>9</sup> Organised by the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, and held at the Queensland University of Technology on 27 November 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Windschuttle seems here to be referring to the study of journalism, public relations, advertising and the like, and not to 'media studies' as it is articulated within cultural studies.

While Windschuttle's main broadside is against the influence *British* cultural studies of the Birmingham tradition has had on journalism education in Australia since the mid-1970s, he casts his net wider to include all shades of neo-Marxist thought, postmodernism, poststructuralism, theories of ideology and the 'fictional audience' – in other words, the entire dialogue between contending paradigms within cultural studies. And if Australian cultural studies has, as an interdisciplinary project, "developed primarily from the dialogues between European, American and Australian scholars" (Strelitz and Steenveld 1998: 101), Windschuttle's invective points mainly at the influences of postmodern literary criticism emanating from North America than it does to the earlier neo-Marxist Birmingham tradition that has been largely displaced.<sup>11</sup>

Windschuttle excludes from journalism's 'Other' in media theory those earlier "political and sociological studies of journalists" (Windschuttle 1997a: 5) that embodied behaviourist, positivist, liberal-pluralist and structural-functionalist epistemologies typical of post-war North American social science. Therefore he appears only to reject *critical* media studies, and to find the "fairly wide range of empirical studies that have long been done on the economics and ownership of the media" quite acceptable (Windschuttle 1997a: 5). He leaves uncertain if he rejects those Marxist strains in political economy that have usefully engaged the field of cultural studies. In view of his general antipathy towards Marxism (Windschuttle 1997a: 6, 10), it is fair to assume that he would separate from political economy the same Marxist strains he finds at fault in cultural studies. A pillar of Windschuttle's argument is his claim that journalism is committed to a *realist* worldview by "reporting the truth about what occurs in the world" (Windschuttle 1997a: 4; 1998a: 61).

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<sup>11</sup> With a tradition of being influenced by British intellectual movements since the mid-1970s, Australian universities were quick to absorb this intellectual movement – particularly into faculties of film and media, the critical and literary humanities, and the developing multidisciplinary fields of Australian studies and postcolonialist critique. It centres chiefly around concepts of identity, nationhood and the external and internal other, and has focused among other things on the film renaissance, impacts of American popular culture. Without a longstanding leftist intellectual tradition, American cultural studies quickly became divorced from its Marxist roots. This has been further compounded by the influence of postmodernist literary critiques that dismiss the grand narratives central to modernist approaches, and for whom reality is seen as little more than a social construction. It appears, however, that if relativist positions Windschuttle objects to in cultural studies are postmodern literary theorists quite different from realists in the field, and in dialogue with them; there may also be more agreement between himself and many researchers in the field of cultural studies than he admits – a likelihood that Tomaselli & Shepperson propose (1999).

Journalists go out into society, make observations about what is done and what is said, and report them as accurately as they can. They have to provide evidence to verify and corroborate their claims and they have to attribute their sources. Journalism, in other words, upholds a realist view of the world and an empirical methodology” (Windschuttle 1997a: 5; 1998a: 61).

By *realism*, Windschuttle means the ontological grounding for the empirical methods by which journalism depicts reality as objectively as possible, leaving the least possible trace of the journalist’s ‘fingerprints’, though not necessarily evidence of the news production process. Interviewed for the *Media Report* radio programme (10 December 1998),<sup>12</sup> he explained:

[T]here’s an external world, you have to find out what’s going on, and you have to do empirical investigation and then try and report that as truthfully and objectively as you can, that’s all laughed at by cultural studies theorists, who say that anything we talk about in the real world is going to be a construction of our own, it’s our own culture looking back at us.

Windschuttle argued that journalism’s empirical methodology contradicted what he claimed to be the ‘linguistic idealism’ of Althusserian structuralism, which contends, he says, “that we cannot have access to an objective understanding of any real world” (Windschuttle 1997a: 7). That is, the legacy of the linguistic turn in the human sciences is such that the realist ontology of journalism practice is negated, and all we are said to have access to are other texts (Windschuttle 1997a: 7).

We create the world we inhabit by employing our own linguistic and cultural categories that structuralists insist cannot, by their own nature, refer to any real world, only to their relations with other signs and categories. We thus cannot know things in themselves because we are locked within a closed circuit of ‘signs’ or ‘texts’ (Windschuttle 1997a: 7).

Windschuttle also objects to structuralism’s negation of human agency (Windschuttle 1999: 14). “Media students were then taught that capitalist ideology was generated in the form of a system of linguistic rules by the agents of the ruling class who worked for the media” (Windschuttle 1997a: 8). The news media were mere ‘ideological state apparatuses’ to reproduce capitalism’s ideological ‘deep structures’ (Windschuttle 1997a: 7). But then, structuralism all but vanished from the cultural studies curriculum, leaving one wondering whether the relativism it espoused said something about its own worth.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/mediarpt/mstories/mr981210.htm> [accessed 20/3/05].

<sup>13</sup> For a time, Althusserian structuralism was useful in explaining how capitalism was reproduced. But the closed circle of ideologically-induced audience passivity in Althusser also left resistance to cultural and political domination untheorised. A way out of this loop was found in Stuart Hall’s (1980) encoding/decoding theory, derived from a Gramscian correction to the deterministic traps in

Who, for instance, now talks about Althusser's 'ideological state apparatuses'? Who now uses the 'encoding/decoding' thesis of Hall and the Birmingham School? Who now thinks it important to spend time in lectures distinguishing between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' or between 'denotation' and 'connotation' or 'dialogic', 'diachronic' and 'synchronic'? All these concepts are now museum pieces (Windschuttle 1997a: 16).

The seminar resolved nothing. In an interview on Australia's ABC National Radio's *The Media Report* (10 December 1998),<sup>14</sup> Cratis Hippocratis of Queensland University of Technology said: "Towards the end of the day we had people declaring themselves with passion, Windschuttlians; others calling themselves Hartitlians, and putting their hands on their chests and advocating each side." Nothing of significance changed in the years that followed; and, by and large, the emotions that the event stirred up and the 'crises' it seemed to signify have dissipated. Even so, the wider issues remain in place. I shall distil those that are pertinent for my purposes.

One place where Windschuttle errs is where his polemic is predicated on a naive opposition between *theory* and *practice*. This bifurcation would cause difficulties under normal circumstances. Skinner *et al* (2001: 341; italics added) argue that journalism "programmes which compromise between vocational training and a broader programme of study based in the liberal arts remain unsatisfactory because they put too much onus on students themselves to *bridge the gap between theory and practice*." Where the 'theory' bears little or no resemblance to the practice, Windschuttle contends, journalism programmes taught under the aegis of cultural studies (or more specifically, media studies) would lead to "a form of intellectual schizophrenia among staff and students alike" (Windschuttle: 1997a: 5; 1998a: 61).

It is postmodernism's fixation on the relativity of truth that he finds anathema to journalism (Windschuttle 1998a: 14). Windschuttle similarly links postmodernism and obfuscation in his book, *The Killing of History* (1997b). He devotes a chapter to Michel Foucault who, evidently like students of media studies, he claims, cannot

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Althusserian structuralism. But while the turn to Gramsci in cultural studies effected a turn away from the shadow of economism in Marxist theory, it also radically displaced the entire Marxist problematic (Hall 1996: 281). From then on, Althusser's theory was abandoned, but not linguistic idealism. The optimism in cultural studies following this 'turn from theory' is also evident in Graeme Turner's (1990) view of the progress made since the replacement of Althusser's more rigid and deterministic problematic with Gramsci's more flexible and subtle one. But he is also mildly critical of the way this "pendulum swing from containment to resistance" of the creative power of the popular in postmodern thinking has led "to a retreat from the category and effectivity of ideology altogether" (1990: 224).

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/mediarpt/mstories/mr981210.htm> [accessed 20/3/05].

write.<sup>15</sup> Foucault “makes it difficult for the reader to understand what is going on ... by insisting on his own ‘private’ version of words in ways that are often at variance with their ‘public’ uses” (Windschuttle 1997b: 125). But Foucault and other French theorists are quite peripheral to the discipline of history, as they are to mainstream cultural studies, particularly of the Birmingham tradition (Strelitz and Steenveld 1998: 102). The more conventional object of cultural studies is not a discrete practice or text, but a network of practices and texts produced as an event in context (Tomaselli and Shepperson 2000). Wendy Bacon agrees that in cultural studies “there are few absolute cultural relativists among those involved in media research and scholarship” (Bacon 1998: 79).

I agree with him that a position of absolute relativism which says that it is not possible to distinguish some texts and views as being closer to what is actually happening in the world than others, is inconsistent with critical journalism which sets out to tell stories about what is happening in the world (Bacon 1998: 79).

Windschuttle has received a modicum of sympathy from some quarters he would least have expected it. Martin Hirst (1998) sympathetically acknowledges that some media theory is good for journalism students, but questions “the usefulness and validity of much that the postmodernists believe in” (Hirst 1998: 84). Keyan Tomaselli and Arnold Shepperson (1998a) hold a similar view, finding some common ground with Windschuttle that certain approaches in cultural studies “have indeed relativised the issue of ethics right out of the discourse of journalism” (Tomaselli and Shepperson 1998a: 90). Furthermore, even media studies – a post-Hoggart and post-Hall phenomenon – is a recent development in cultural studies (Tomaselli and Shepperson 1998a: 91). Within cultural studies

there are schools of cultural studies which similarly take exception to certain postmodernist approaches on the basis that postmodernist theories (whether literary-criticism or media studies) exclude the need to hear people as people and not merely as ‘texts’” (Tomaselli and Shepperson 1998a: 90).

While there is little reason to assume that Windschuttle wishes to isolate journalism studies from other disciplines, journalism educators do also indicate a “deep-seated resentment of, and anxiety over, the shifting boundaries of knowledge and practice” (Lumby 1999: 37. See also Meadows 1999: 43). His response, “echoing a number of journalism educators, suggests an attempt to limit discussion rather than

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<sup>15</sup> Barring a view *mea culpas*, reaction has been mute to Windschuttle’s charge that in cultural studies incomprehensibility is a sign of intellectual greatness (1997a: 16-17; 1999: 15). This silence may have to do with embarrassment over the ‘Sokal hoax’ (See Hodge 1999).



to encourage a wider consideration of the nature of journalism and its place in the world” (Meadows 1999: 47). It is hard to see how the exclusion of critical theory from journalism training, can do any more than “reduce journalism to an unthinking set of ‘technical operations’” (Davies 1999: 53; See also Bacon 1999: 39, Ravell 1998: 93).

Employers are more concerned about the ability of journalism students to be able to apply a wide range of knowledges to their craft, rather than bringing from their tertiary experience little more than a competence in writing a story in inverted pyramid style (Meadows 1999: 49).

University of Leeds philosopher Matthew Kieran argues that for journalism the ideology concept is “corruptive because it undermines our recognition of the ability and importance of critical rationality in enabling us to judge whether news reports and practices are appropriate, fair and true” (Keiran 1997: 79). He advises that “if no coherent argument can be found to show that the media are inherently ideological, then the strand of news analysis that is predicated upon the ideological presumption is itself flawed” (Kieran 1997: 81). On the other hand, however, Tomaselli and Shepperson (1998a: 93) pose to Windschuttle the question of how so many journalists in South Africa could have acquiesced to apartheid ideology if they had indeed followed objective, empirical methods?<sup>16</sup> Of course, no one suggests that these reporters were hypnotised by apartheid legislation (Strelitz and Steenveld 1998: 104).

John Hartley (1996) describes journalism, in the words of Terry Flew and Jason Sternberg (1999: 9), as the “sense-making practice of modernity,” and argues that this orientation cannot “be understood from within journalism education, with its focus on how to be a better producer, but instead requires an orientation towards its readership and audiences, which come from media and cultural studies” (Flew and Sternberg 1999: 9). That does not mean that cultural studies is *opposed* to journalism. Hartley agrees that cultural and media studies since the 1970s has certainly had the habit of criticising media power in news coverage particularly, but not to criticise journalists

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<sup>16</sup> Windschuttle spends much effort in his Media Wars seminar paper addressing this issue. He takes to task the views put forward by Tomaselli and Shepperson (1998) and Strelitz and Steenveld (1998) that “new insights” provided by cultural studies should prevent journalists of the future from falling into the ideological complicity committed by apartheid-era journalists who ‘confessed’ at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The fact that Windschuttle ‘understood’ the hidden issues from the critical distance of his Australian vantage point is not surprising. He was ‘outside’ of the discourses of apartheid – a privilege that local journalists did not have. The way he dismisses the argument of these writers is therefore, in my view, superficial at best. It is also somehow contradicted by his second point: “The claim that journalism is a pursuit of truth and an attempt to report what really happens is not refuted by the fact that many journalists often fail to achieve these goals” (Windschuttle 1999: 12). He is right in pointing out as a fallacy any view that all reporting is false if some reporting is false.

or journalism. Hartley writes elsewhere that “[t]he original Birmingham approach was a defence of the importance of journalism, because their aim was to understand how political communication actually works” (Hartley 1999: 23).

But the growing anxiety among some commentators is less about separations than a growing proximity in both the academy and industry between theory and practice, and the shifting of boundaries between conventional institutional and discursive arenas (Lumby 1999: 35, 38). This blurring between the academy and industry seems to contradict the liberal journalism taught to students, which derides ‘theory’ as “irrelevant to practice and to see themselves as transparent mediators of unambiguous signs allowing information and ideology which passes itself off as knowledge” (Ravell 1998: 94). Libertarian certainties about what counts as journalism can no longer be taken for granted. If journalism builds a social picture in the public imagination, it does so beyond news pages and bulletins (Hartley 1999: 20). In this respect the question of ‘what is journalism’ remains a perplexing one (Bacon 1999: 83).

There is a wealth of historical evidence ... demonstrating that the values and methods which are unproblematically associated with ‘quality’ journalism are, in fact, embedded in the dense discursive and institutional history which maps the rise of the media industry (Lumby 1999: 53).

For one, journalism may be conceptualised as a Kantian partisan for modernity, committed to the principles of the Enlightenment (Hartley 1999: 25; Osborne 1998: 29-32). Any critique of the Enlightenment would challenge journalism’s historic place as a conveyor of reason. Positions in cultural studies opposed to Enlightenment philosophy have come to hold that it is “no longer confident about the emancipatory power of reason, or the educative possibilities of knowledge in an information age” (Hartley 1999: 27). Hartley proposes as a type of ‘mediasphere’ the possibility that a postmodern (‘popular’) journalism has always been present from the days of the pauper press, serving suburban vernaculars, doing the job for which journalism was first invented (Hartley 1996: 72. See critique by Hirst 1998).

While Windschuttle may have found some support within cultural studies ranks over postmodern excesses, his assertion that “[journalists] report not to please their employers or advertisers ... but in order to inform their audience (Windschuttle 1998b: 11) remains a poor foundation for journalism training. The implications of realist notions such as ‘objectivity’ remain topics of debate (Hirst 1998: 84). Martin Hirst

acknowledges that journalism students should have at least *some* media theory, but questions “the usefulness and validity of much that the postmodernists believe in” (Hirst 1998: 84); but parceling out theory and practice into separate packages offers no way forward (see Bacon 1998: 81-82; Meadows 1997). However, Wendy Bacon feels quite strongly that “[t]here can be a dialogue between media studies and journalism, even at the coalface of journalism practice” (Bacon 1999: 82).

When as a journalist I first encountered the (then commonplace) view that a sense of news was instinctive, it helped to have an understanding of how commonsense understandings about the world are the product of social relations .... [T]his understanding helped to give me confidence in my own sense of what was a story, and to see where this sense might fit or be in conflict with organizational news agendas” (Bacon 1999: 82).

### **Windschuttle’s naturalist bias**

For so long as the dispute between Windschuttle and representative voices in cultural studies remained at the level of ‘defending the trenches’, it remained unlikely that any significant incursion would have occurred. The debate would remain a tit-for-tat exchange of accusations and denials. The most basic positions were that cultural studies contradicts the realist ontology and methodology of established journalism practice, and standard journalism training is unable to critique its own ideological and social reproductive conditions of practice. That exchange was not dissimilar to debates over the relative worth of *qualitative* and *quantitative* methods in social science; or whether the study of journalism ought to follow *Verstehen* (interpretive understanding) approaches to social inquiry that tend to use quantitative *methods*, and by so doing to eschew naturalistic, empiricist (though not necessarily *empirical*) and any of a range of approaches that retain Cartesian anthropological assumptions found in *Erklären* (causal explanation) approaches. The remedies each proposed were for *empiricist* journalism to adopt constructivist and critical perspectives, and for cultural studies to adopt an outlook followed in Anglo-American analytical philosophy.

It would be incorrect to leap to the conclusion that Windschuttle advocates quantitative methods (as opposed to *methodology*)<sup>17</sup> against the more interpretive

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<sup>17</sup> Even where it remains an effective default practice among researchers who see themselves as positioned necessarily on either side of that imagined divide. One good reason for this default is due not to incorrigibility, but as Thomas Lindlof (1991) explains, due quite simply to a lack of a suitable synonym. With reference to audience studies, he says that although the term *qualitative* “is not used universally by those who engage in non-quantitative” research, “qualitative inquiry is probably the best single descriptor for what the great majority of them do” (Lindlof 1991: 25). But that ‘doing’ may be

qualitative methods common in cultural studies. One should reject this conclusion for reasons that go beyond those well-rehearsed arguments that reject the “incompatibility thesis” (Howe 1988; 1992; 1998). As Kenneth Howe states in the context of educational research: “Far from being incompatible ... qualitative and quantitative methods are inextricably intertwined” (Howe 1988: 12).<sup>18</sup>

Windschuttle’s opposition to the institutional relations between cultural studies and journalism training do not stand or fall on the relative veracity of anything presented in the above section. Instead, these point to the underlying logics that seem to separate his position from that (or those) taken by scholars in cultural studies. That is, Windschuttle subscribes to a *naturalistic ontology*. Put simply, while he castigates the subordination of journalism education under the rubric of cultural studies, he advocates that the field should be constituted according to logics and models more attuned to the natural sciences. This sense can be hidden in sniping over competing claims as to whether journalism is ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’; being terms that are often used to qualify naturalistic from interpretive modes of enquiry. Windschuttle shows his hand most blatantly when he takes a number of scholars to task, and singles out Ann Curthoys (1991) in particular, for claiming an “epistemological gap between many academics and many journalists” (Curthoys in Windschuttle 1998c: 7). Curthoys claims that “[m]ost academics ... in the physical and natural sciences ... now reject positivist concepts of knowledge, the notion that one can objectively know the facts” (Curthoys in Windschuttle 1998c: 7). Windschuttle understandably attacks her for

the pretentious claim to speak for the whole of twentieth century philosophy, a claim which completely ignores the mainstream of Anglo-American analytic philosophy this century, which has long regarded the view about truth expressed by Professor Curthoys [that truth cannot be known] as a simple fallacy, indeed an obvious self-contradiction. If there are no truths, then the statement “There are no truths” cannot itself be true. Moreover, the claim that journalists cannot report the truth is patently absurd. In political reporting, for instance, there is plainly a great deal of opinionated comment and rhetoric that often supports various ideological ends, but there is also a great deal of reporting of facts, that is, of objective truths which no one in his or her right mind would question (Windschuttle 1998c: 7-8).

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part of the problem; and I do not wish to impute that Lindlof does not recognize this, for there certainly exists a range of research technologies that appear to be ‘all about meaning’, and another that is ‘all about numbers’. What I am calling ‘technologies’ (e.g., focus groups, questionnaires, factor analysis) belong under the category of *methods* and not that of *methodology*.

<sup>18</sup> I shall return to this matter in the next and final chapters.

In much of Charles Taylor's earlier work in politics and anthropology (Taylor 1964), specifically in his essay *Social Theory as Practice* (Taylor 1985b), he questions whether the natural sciences provide a suitable paradigm for methods of the human and social sciences. I want to use Taylor's position to argue that while Windschuttle's dependence on Australian philosopher of science David Stove's (1982) thinking may have something to say concerning the *activities* of journalism (like newswriting, observation, interviewing, and so on), it is unable to make sense of journalism as a *practice*. This seems not to advance any position already taken in criticisms of Windschuttle's instrumentalist approach to journalism – that is, for being unable to explain how wider social forces impinge on news production processes. Where Taylor's position does present an advance – or what he calls an “epistemic gain” – is where his Hegelian critique of Cartesian epistemology enables an articulation between what has been accreted as *empiricism*, on the one hand, and *idealism* (and similar modes, such as *constructivism*) on the other.

In an important respect, Taylor effectively collapses a separation that is an essential cause of the entire ‘Windschuttle debate’ – empiricism versus constructivism – but also manages to collapse that between theory and practice. His paper, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (Taylor 1985a), on the main source by which he achieves this end; though his use of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology serves equally as well. Not that anxieties over separations are anything new to journalism. Peter Rosan (1994: 364-65) has argued in another context that the problem with mainstream journalism – as opposed to ‘public journalism’ – is that it is *all about separations*. It separates facts from opinions, news from editorial, and so on. In many ways this schizophrenia extends the separation of *theory* from *practice* that characterizes much thinking about journalism itself. However, as I have pointed out, Windschuttle has no objections to certain (suitable) theories being brought in as journalism's itinerant *explanada*. But what role do these theories play? Theory within the naturalistic mode aims to explain and to predict; and in so far as a normative dimension is allowed, prescribes what *ought* to happen from the desired pattern of all similar events (what *is*).

The above view affords theory a dominantly *descriptive* function from which any normative element is extracted as its own ‘best practice’. But Taylor (1964; 1983a) questions the behaviourist assumptions behind this understanding of theory, and argues that the naturalistic picture it presents does not attend to specifically

*human* actions. “[T]he big disanalogy with natural science lies in the nature of the common-sense understanding that theory challenges, replaces or extends” (Taylor 1985a: 92-93). The classical theorists such as Descartes and John Locke, upon whom empiricism depends, go wrong in their epistemology, which advocates “an impoverished phenomenology of perceptual experience” (Smith 2004: 34). This “ontologizing of rational procedure” (Taylor 1995a: 61) transposes “reflective procedures for generating objective knowledge onto the very nature of the perceiving subject” (Smith 2004: 34).

The method of analysing a complex phenomenon into simple components, treating them as neutral bits of information, and rationally reprocessing them, is written into ‘the mind’ itself .... A picture of what it is to know obscures our understanding of what it is like to be a perceiver (Smith 2004: 34).

If journalism was a practice of representing the natural world – even a world where humans are reduced to *objects* wondering across a landscape – then perhaps natural scientific methods would serve the practice more than adequately. But journalism is primarily about the *human world* – an intersubjective space in which man is “condemned to meaning” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xii). In Taylor’s language, people are “self-interpreting animals” (Taylor 1985a: 10), which entails that there are always pre-theoretical understandings of what is going on among the members of a society. These pre-understandings are formulated in self-descriptions which are involved in the institutions and practices of society. “A society is among other things a set of institutions and practices, and these cannot exist and be carried on without certain self-understandings” (Taylor 1985a:93). In this respect at least, Windschuttle’s understanding of journalism practice provides a very blunt set of tools with which to work in an inherently interpretive and meaningful world.

Natural science gives us a model which is tolerably clear. Theory, say physical theory, gives us a picture of the underlying mechanisms or processes which explain the causal properties and powers of the things we are familiar with. In many cases, this picture, this picture of the underlying reality turns out to be surprising, or strange or paradoxical, in light of our ordinary commonsense pre-understandings of things.... But part of what is involved in having a better theory is being able more effectively to cope with the world. We are able to intervene successfully to effect our purposes in a way that we were not able before. Just as our commonsense pre-understanding was in part a knowing how to cope with the things around us; so the explanatory theory which partly replaces and extends it must give us some of what we need to cope better (Taylor 1983a: 61).

We can see from the above that Windschuttle and his like-minded journalism trainers were not concerned that theory should hinge onto practice. Their charge was

that cultural studies, which had become the premier paradigm within the human and social sciences, contradicted the *methods journalists applied in their practice*. Certainly, journalists “go out into society, make observations about what is done and what is said, and report them as accurately as they can” (Windschuttle 1998a: 61), but there is a difference between that world as objects moved by natural forces (for which natural science is ably equipped to *explain*), and that world as made up of subjects possessed of *intentional behaviour* (for which interpretive social science is better equipped to *understand*).

In *Social Theory as Practice* (1985b) Taylor argues that the natural sciences do not provide suitable methods and procedures of the social sciences (1985b: 91; Geertz 1994: 83-84). In the natural sciences it is common to see theory “as affirming an account of underlying processes and mechanisms of society” (Taylor 1985b: 92). While the natural sciences certainly transform practice (as an application of theory) the practice it transforms is external to its theory. In the social world, “theory ... transforms its own object” (Taylor 1985b: 101). Taylor argues accordingly that social theory is a different kind of activity from the natural sciences. The “disanalogy with natural sciences lies in the nature of common sense understandings that science challenges, replaces or extends (Taylor 1985b: 92-93).

To add also that this view of natural science method could rightfully invite objections that this is indeed a caricature, or an allusion to ‘reductive naturalism’ as might obtain in objectivism, and not science *per se*. This is a criticism Clifford Geertz (1994: 83ff) makes mildly of Charles Taylor’s contention that the naturalistic world-view is “wildly implausible” as a model in the human sciences (Taylor 1985a: 1; 1985b: 21). Taylor takes aim at, say, Skinnerian behaviourism, computer modeled notions of human behaviour, and so on. Instead, he favours hermeneutic or ‘interpretivist’ approaches to explanation.

As I’ve indicated, Geertz criticism of Taylor’s concern that the natural sciences have led to a false conception of what it is to explain human behaviour is far less with his arguments than with their effect (Geertz 1994: 83): “The creation of a fixed and uncrossable gulf between the natural and human sciences is obstructive of either’s progress” (Geertz 1994: 84).

The issue is whether so radically phrased a distinction is any longer a good idea, now that the point has been made ... that the human sciences, being about humans, pose particular problems and demand particular solutions (Geertz 1994: 85).

In the heyday of positivism this distinction may have served the human sciences, but after Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and Peter Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (1958) it has become far harder to accept universal standards of rationality in science. But with the gulf narrowed, or even merged as Geertz suggests, what applies to science must also apply to social phenomena (including morality). There are no ahistorical and acultural standards by which to objectively determine the *good*. These standards are linked to the incommensurability of paradigms. And in this respect, ethical theory cannot necessarily reflect right or wrong in specific forms of human behaviour, taken as an independent object. The lack of universal standards seems to render the idea of rational justification of scientific paradigms *and* of moral precepts impossible. Thus, our options seem to be either a moral subjectivism allowing for a relativist 'anything goes' view in science, or a conservative defence of whatever views and standards happen to be fashionable.

Taylor takes a different route. He accepts that theory ethical theory fashions what is right or wrong in that behaviour. But if theory does transform its own object, it does not follow that anything goes, leading to a charge to relativism. Taylor is undaunted here, preferring a *soft* relativism, and arguing that even here social theory is validating. "[C]ertain kinds of changes wrought by theory are validating, and others show it to be mistaken" (Taylor 1985b: 102). Indeed, both Taylor and MacIntyre (1984; 1991) claim to have gone beyond moral subjectivism by taking a historicist and comparative account of rationality. They both claim that an analogy between rationality in science and in morality should be taken seriously.

## **David Stove**

If one were to name the prime object in all of Windschuttle's objections, it would probably go under the name of *constructivism*; and when considering that he follows Australian philosopher of science David Stove (Windschuttle 1997b: 199-201), it is more than likely that it is this key ingredient that makes cultural studies so objectionable in his sight. Originally proposed within the *sociology* of science, constructivism holds in line with thinkers such as Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper and



Paul Feyerabend that scientific knowledge is *made*<sup>19</sup> by scientists and is not determined by the (objective) research methods they apply to phenomena. On the face of it, this makes constructivists *antirealists*, relativists and ‘anti-rationalists’, whose ideas of reality may herald a turn to George Berkley’s idealism; although the Berkleyan project was very different, and had its own concerns.<sup>20</sup>

In his book, *Popper and After: Four Modern Irrationalists* (1982), Stove attacks as irrational and relativist those postmodern social constructivist views which – typically of Popper, Khun and Feyerabend – he says, claim that in modern science there is no reason to think one theory more true than another (Stove 1982: 18-19).

Our philosophy of science ... lost contact long ago, at least as early as Popper, with the refreshing realities of scientific discovery and invention: with the actual objects of science. But with Khun even the intentional objects of science, the propositions of science, have vanished into thin air, and with their disappearance, of course, the cognitive aspect of science vanishes too. Science, it turns out, whatever may be believed to the contrary by the vulgar and by whig historians, is really as intransitive as sleep (Stove 1982: 18).

Stove launches his book with a hilarious and devastating analysis of how various linguistic devices are used to make these views seem plausible. One of the simplest is to place words like “fact,” “objective,” and “truth” in scare quotes, thus neutralising success-words and turning them into failure-words – a tendency often found in current writing in and around cultural and media studies. The implication is that there can be no cognitive achievement in any statement (Stove 1982: 9-19). In a Foucauldian sense, statements exist as elements of discourses, or not at all. Or as analytical philosopher J. L. Austin wrote: “There’s the bit where you say it and the bit where you take it back” (Austin 1962: 2). Popper’s philosophy entails that we do not know – and cannot possibly know – any such thing as a *fact*. Stove points out, however, that once the implications of Popper’s and Kuhn’s views are presented straightforwardly, no one would take them seriously (Stove 1982: 14-15).

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<sup>19</sup> Constructivists are accused of believing that scientists literally ‘make the world’, in the way that houses are made. But this strong thesis is not the best way to understand constructivism. There are philosophers of science who follow the weaker thesis, and who note that relativism can be useful in the interpretation of science. That is, scientific knowledge is ‘produced’ primarily by scientists and only to a lesser extent determined by fixed structures in the world.

<sup>20</sup> Berkley argued, in *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1701) that there is no external material world, and that ‘things’ we can see and/or touch are merely collections of ideas, and that it was God who produced these ideas. It may be interesting to note that Berkley was writing at a time when science was offering a contending, competing materialist way of understanding the world. At the same time there existed in the philosophical agenda a skepticism about the very existence of the material world. Berkley tried to offer an alternative to both these views (See *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 1995: 89-92).

Another adherent to Stove's work is Roger Kimball, whose book, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics has Corrupted our Higher Education* (1990), attacks the postmodern deconstructionist movement in mainly American universities. In the same vein as Kimball is Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), which, Windschuttle says, argues that

radical theory had captured the entire agenda about how we in the West study human society and how we understand human beings as individuals. The results were that humanities and social science departments within universities had abandoned objectivity and truth and become hopelessly politicized. Most young people today were taught to scorn the traditional values of Western culture – equality, freedom, democracy, human rights – as hollow rhetoric used to mask the self-interest of the wealthy and the powerful. This teaching, Bloom argued, had bred a cynical, amoral, self-centred younger generation who lacked any sense of inherited wisdom from the past (Windschuttle 1997b: 10).

Under such a zeitgeist, “[w]hen the proponents of cultural studies write about the past they now have few reservations about calling their practice ‘history’,” says Windschuttle. Armed with the critiques of Stove and a significant number of followers, Windschuttle takes aim at cultural studies, which, as he says, is “one of the more prominent of the fields to emerge from the French-indebted literary theory and media studies of the 1970s” (Windschuttle 1997b: 14).

I do not wish to contest this particular claim that Windschuttle's makes, but I do want to challenge his reduction of 'French theory' to the handful of thinkers whom he cites. So-called 'French-theory' cannot be represented by this one of its strands, which in the estimation of experts on French philosophy, does not feature very prominently. Furthermore, Charles Taylor, as a scholar inspired by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as an analytical philosopher, and as a critic of naturalism in the human and social sciences, presents a most able armoury of thought by which to counter at least the key claims Windschuttle makes in defence of journalism in the empiricist tradition. Taylor's thought also offers a way of rethinking practice that restores theory to an expressive rather than to the representative role naturalism has it. In addition to these few points, when British Cultural Studies was in its earliest formation, he was already playing an important part in framing the problematics that would become its key definers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter sets out the two problems in the study of journalism this thesis attends to – the disparity between theory and practice, and the prevalence of

naturalistic enquiry in the field. The ‘Windschuttle debate’ encapsulates both of these problems. Both a critique of Windschuttle’s rejection of cultural studies and a basis for an alternative to the naturalistic assumptions of his rejection can be found by way of key features of Charles Taylor’s philosophical anthropology. These features can be articulated in a theory of practice that restores at least the element of agency that Windschuttle’s voices concerns about, and returns theory to a relation that is more autochthonous to the practices they inform.

Certainly to call Taylor a ‘cultural studies scholar’ sounds strange, and even outrageous. But I do suggest that Taylor’s thought offers a way to reconsider key elements in cultural studies’ genealogy, and in light of Taylor’s recent work, to consider whether a connection can be made between it and current thinking as to the field’s ‘lost arcadia’ in Birmingham. Taylor and Stuart Hall were, after all, contemporaries in the New Left movement; and while their paths diverted from the early 1960s onward, there are significant indicators that they remained ‘of a mind’ even as their academic and political careers became explorations of different contexts.

Not that even *British* cultural studies remained the *practice* Hall had imagined it to be. He criticized the ‘postmodern turn’ in cultural studies as having led to a form of ‘theoreticism’ by way of which the field changed from being a political practice to an academic discipline (Hall 1990: 18). For a field founded on a project of straddling contradictions, modeling itself on a dialectic, it was perhaps inevitable that once “the locus of much of its work [became] the university – a bankrupt site for intellectuals addressing the most pressing questions of our age” (Giroux 2000: 29) – **cultural studies fossilized as thesis or antithesis without transforming itself in synthesis** (see Agger 1992: Ch1).<sup>21</sup>

In Graeme Turner’s view the field, comfortably gentrified in the academy, requires urgent recovery. Turner stresses that he has made this point a number of times before, that “I want to retrieve the sense of cultural studies as a political project, *as a practice* which has maintained a sustained engagement with the world in which it operates” (Turner 2002: 196. Italics added). It is the sense of cultural studies ‘as a

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<sup>21</sup> Henri Giroux’s (2000) criticism of the university as a site of practice unfit to ‘do cultural studies’ might not be as easily dismissed as many who have invested their lives in the institutions which claim the name might think. And this is not necessarily a matter of ‘anti-intellectualism’ either. A sober look at current cultural studies as a purely academic and theoretical enterprise shows not a resolution but an abandonment of the tension between theoretical clarification and political engagement by which the field “tries to make a difference in the institutional world in which it is located” (Hall 1992: 284).

practice' that seems critical here. On this point he is at one with Stuart Hall (1992) who warns, in *Cultural Studies and its Legacies*, of an "overwhelming textualization of cultural studies' own discourses" that turns power into "an easy floating signifier" and the field into "every damn thing" (Hall 1992: 286, 292; see Turner 2002: 58; Wood 1998: 400). The problem of 'theoretical practice' is (or has been) central to debates in British Marxism at least. In an attack on E.P. Thompson's historicism, and his confusing theory with theoreticism, Dennis Dworkin (1997: 236-237) quotes Hall as saying:

There is a poverty of theoreticism, but for socialists and Marxists there cannot be a poverty of theory. There is, of course, never theory without practice, but there is never adequate practice that is not informed by theory. What Marx teaches us is that there are by necessity different kinds of work with different levels of abstraction.<sup>22</sup>

To the best of my knowledge, Hall's earliest complaints about theoreticism in cultural studies are contained in his review of work in the Centre (Hall 1980a). "We are aware of the many turning-points where we have fallen into an imitative dependency, or where we have allowed theoretical debates to obscure the absolutely necessary test of concrete work and exemplification" (Hall 1980a: 42). The challenge, he continues, lay in "getting the theoretical and concrete aspects of our work into a better and more productive balance" (Hall 1980: 43).

This struggle-for the best kind of theoretically informed concrete practice-continues: it is one of our highest, most self-conscious priorities. We have attempted to monitor and to transform our organization of intellectual work in the light of it. We believe our future work will show the positive effects of struggling with ourselves in this way for a 'best practice'. It is the only way we know of developing a real intellectual practice which does not merely reproduce The Obvious (Hall 1980a: 43).

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<sup>22</sup> Hall's comments were made during a conference in Oxford. Dworkin (1997: 294, n. 41) refers to his source as Martin Kettle (1979: 542-543).

## Chapter Two

# Science wars, *post-Marxism*, Taylor

The previous chapter concerns three interlocking themes. The first – resting largely upon a *theory-practice* dualism – concerns the apparent gap between postmodern cultural theory and the empirical methodology that Keith Windschuttle (1998a, 1999) argues a journalism education and training should promote. The second theme concerns the *empiricist* foundation in which Windschuttle (1997b: 185ff) invests his criticism of the linguistic idealism to which he reduces cultural studies (see Windschuttle 1997b: 12-19). The third theme concerns political philosopher Charles Taylor, whom, I began to argue in that chapter, offers a non-foundational (yet interpretive) basis by which to nullify the *empiricist* stance that Windschuttle takes in his objections to cultural studies.

These three themes remain connected as the matrix upon which the argument of this thesis is pursued. This thesis ‘joins the dots’ between three propositions given in the introductory chapter, according to the transcendental argument already explained there. The thesis argues that Keith Windshuttle’s contention that the differences between journalism (education and training) and (postmodern) cultural studies are represented by a dualism between, on one end, realism and empiricism (‘modern’), and on the other end, a *postmodern* body of thought that is constructionist, idealist and relativist reveals more than he possibly suspects. I shall contend that the dualism he sets up resembles the same problematic that gave impetus to the New Left and eventually to British Cultural Studies.

Charles Taylor was an integral part of that movement opposed both to empiricism in social science and to economism in classical Marxism. In both instances, Taylor based his rejection on Maurice Merleau-Ponty similar method that illustrated that both *empiricism* and *intellectualism* depicted the human agent as a disengaged subject invented in Cartesian epistemology. Poststructuralist and postmodern theory is not considered to have produced a subject any more robust than the Cartesian one. Through its anti-humanist outlook postmodern thinkers have

confidently announced the “death of the subject itself- the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego .... [T]he end of individuality, the eclipse of subjectivity in a new anonymity that is not puritanical extinction or repression but probably not often either that schizophrenic flux and nomadic release it has often been celebrated as” (Jameson 1991: 15, 174).

Reaction to a ‘death’ as violent as Jameson depicts it has been mixed, and even to deny it while holding onto other postmodern features such as the ubiquity of mass communication and the power of the image (Hebdige 1988). Christopher Norris (1990) has argued that postmodernity – marking an absolute and irreparable break with the unified subject – stands at the end of a line of inquiry that started with Ferdinand de Saussure, worked its way through poststructuralism and ended with Jean Baudrillard (Norris 1990: 143-166), whom, with Jean-François Lyotard, in Stuart Hall’s (1986b: 45) opinion, went “right through the sound barrier.”

Periodizing postmodernity is problematic. Noel Carroll (1997) notes that while the term is used as a moniker of globalism, it “first appears to gain currency in the 1950s and 1960s as the name of various art movements in literature, architecture” (Carroll 1987: 143). As the name of an “expressive totality” correlating with developments in philosophy and science, this became evident in the early 1980s (Carroll 1987: 144). Hall puts the beginning much earlier as “the current name we give to how those old certainties began to run into trouble from the 1990s onwards” (Hall 1986b: 47). But in the end, he rejects any notion of postmodernism representing a total rupture, and he doubts there is any such unified thing as the postmodern condition, but something “plural, disunified, multiple and contradictory” (Chen 1986: 311).

I want to agree with Kuan-Hsing Chen that cultural studies resembles this condition, and may even be termed “postmodern”. But in line with other difficulties of the concept, perhaps Taylor’s depiction of there being not one modernity, followed by a ‘postmodernity’, but “multiple modernities” both gets past the impasse of deciding what postmodernism is, and represents the period as uncertain, plural, multicultural, contingent, and so on (Taylor 2000b). It is in this sense that I want to proceed with the view that Windschuttle’s dualism represents the entirety of cultural studies’ founding problematic; both realist and idealist, empirical and relative, Enlightenment and Romantic.

The most important (third) proposition is that the key features of Taylor's philosophical anthropology are intertwined with the founding debates that led to the formation of British Cultural Studies. Furthermore, his philosophy offers resources that connect the field's *post-Marxist* roots with an emancipatory conception of the subject that is rooted in the humanist Marx. In short, the thesis aligns Taylor's ethics with a similarly ethical stance inherent in Stuart Hall's activism.

The second proposition concerns the *post-Marxist* foundation of cultural studies, and presents a picture of that foundation emerging in tensions between rival sources of modernity. This tension resembles Raymond Williams's definitions of 'residual' and the 'emergent' cultures. "The residual... has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process ... as an effective element of the present" (Williams 1977: 122). The more complicated emergent can be distinguished, in Williams's terms, between "alternative" or "oppositional" cultures (Williams 1977: 235); the first resembling "someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it, and [the oppositional] someone who wants to find a different way to live and wants to change society in its light" (Williams 1980: 42).

The point that I shall be making is one that could as well take into account Ernesto Laclau's (1990) concept of "dislocation", by which he criticises Williams's emergent/residual distinction as failing to account for the indeterminacy that, he argues, constitutes the very condition of political possibility, and hence retaining a measure 'fatalistic certainty' that was a part of classical Marxism's historical teleology (Laclau 1990: 51).<sup>1</sup> *Post-Marxism* rejects that quietism and seeks to restore a measure of agency, displacing some of Marxism's key terms, resulting "in a prioritization of politics as the process by which social identities and interests are not just contested but produced" (Gilbert 2001: 192).

I do not intend to engage in matters raised in Laclau's *post-Marxist* (and poststructuralist) critique of Williams, but will give this only cursory attention in this chapter. Here I merely want to indicate that Taylor's distinction between 'multiple modernities' can be articulated with Williams's terms; where the sources that

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<sup>1</sup> Laclau writes: "For classical Marxism, the possibility of transcending capitalist society depended on the simplification of social structure and the emergence of a privileged agent of social change, while for us, the possibility of a democratic transformation of society depends on a proliferation of new subjects of change. This is only possible if there is something in contemporary capitalism which really tends to multiply dislocations and thus create a plurality of new antagonisms" (Laclau 1990: 41).

constitute the residual and the emergent can be seen as grouped into a ‘family’ of the Enlightenment tradition (residual), whereas other resources derive from a range of positions that emerge from the Romantic tradition (emergent) of modernity. Whether these sources correspond to a ‘modern’ and a ‘postmodern’ oeuvre is not necessarily excluded in Taylor’s work, but his conception of ‘multiple modernities’ does attempt to recover historical goods that he considers as a condition vital to the *dialogical* constitution of modern (contingent) identities. Poststructuralism tends to erase that possibility, and hence the ethical dimension of persons.

The third proposition concerns one aspect extracted from the range of issues that the Media Wars debate brought to the surface: the underlying empiricist framework that Keith Windschuttle assumes to be the preferred outlook of journalism theory and practice. This assumption, even by John Hartley’s reckoning, is not inaccurate in so far as journalism is the sense-making practice (and institution) of modernity. Hartley even entertains the prospect that journalism has a relation to modernity that is rather more coterminous than instrumental. Hartley’s journalism-modernity couplet holds true in so far as he insists on journalism’s inherent function as serving Enlightenment.

Journalism, however, is also democratic, and as Taylor sees not one but alternative or ‘multiple modernities’ (Taylor 2002b), we begin to see that Hartley’s couplet has a capacity for ‘self-critique’ no less limited than Windschuttle’s realist-idealist dualism has for invigorating journalism theory and practice. Both fall shy of Edward Thompson’s (1968) and Stanley Harrison’s (1974) descriptions of a working class press that played no small part in Thompson’s and Raymond Williams’s conceptualizing of cultural materialism (see Higgins 1999). The Romantic tradition is no less a source of modernity; and in this respect, Windschuttle’s realist-idealist dualism also shields an instrumentalist understanding of journalism’s relation to modernity that, were the journalism educators he defends to see it, might very well send them reaching out for the ‘fresh air’ of civic, public and ‘communitarian’ journalism.

This chapter addresses a theme drawn from each proposition in turn. The first section situated the ‘media wars’ debate within the wider contestation of the ‘science wars’. I shall begin with Slavoj Žižek’s (2002) impassioned plea made on behalf of the more embattled party in those wars, cultural studies. The successive section



considers *post*-Marxism as the philosophical background to debates that led to the formation of British Cultural Studies. Finally, Taylor's philosophical anthropology is introduced by way of concepts by which he is better known, and which media scholars focus on (perhaps) exclusively: *communitarianism*. The other concept is *authenticity*. But the discussion aims to extract from these concepts a sense of what Taylor's philosophy is really *about*.

### **'Science Wars' and the hidden Cartesian picture**

[T]he politically correct cultural studies theorists often pay for their arrogance and lack of a serious approach by confusing truth (the engaged subjective position) and knowledge – that is, by disavowing the gap that separates them, by directly subordinating knowledge to truth (say, a quick sociocritical dismissal of a specific science such as quantum physics or biology without proper acquaintance with the inherent conceptual structure of this field). The problem of cultural studies effectively is often the lack of specific disciplinary skills. A literary theorist without proper knowledge of philosophy can write disparaging remarks about Hegel's phallogentrism. We are dealing with a kind of false universal critical capacity to pass judgment on everything, without proper knowledge. With all its criticism of traditional philosophical universalism, cultural studies effectively functions as an ersatz philosophy (Žižek 2002: 29).

Strong language indeed; but it would be mistaken to take Slavoj Žižek as adopting a stance contra to cultural studies. Instead, his is an impassioned plea in a struggle “between the advocates of postmodern-deconstructionist cultural studies and the cognitivist popularizers of ‘hard’ sciences” (Žižek 2002: 19); a struggle for the high ground of the “public intellectual” being lost by the Left not only due to science wars debacles such as the 1994 Sokal hoax<sup>2</sup> (Turner 2000: 356), but also due to a reluctance or inability of cultural theorists to deal with certain epistemological claims and assumptions that help maintain the ideological hegemony held by the ‘Third Culture’ popularisers of science despite the interventions of critical science studies (Franklin 1995).

The contestation is not between natural and social scientists; instead “we are dealing not with scientists themselves but ... with authors who address a large segment of the public in a way whose success outdoes by far the public appeal of cultural studies” (Žižek 2002: 20). Their *success* in convincing a public as to the

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<sup>2</sup> In 1994, New York University theoretical physicist Alan Sokal submitted an essay to *Social Text*, entitled *Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity*. The essay purported to be a postmodern look on the political implications of twentieth century physical theories. After five members of *Social Text*'s editorial board accepted the essay for publication in 1996, Sokal revealed in the journal *Lingua Franca* that it was an ensemble of deliberately concocted howlers and non-sequiturs, stitched together to flatter the ideological preconceptions of the editors.

greater plausibility of their truth claims derives less from their having “reveal[ed] the keys to the great secrets that concern us all” (Žižek 2002: 21) than it does from the background social imaginaries from which their claims derive their authority (see Taylor 2002; 2004). The sources of those imaginaries derive from Enlightenment naturalism, exemplified in the kinds of empiricist and instrumentalist thinking by which human life has come to be imagined in mechanistic ways (Taylor 1989a: 234). But social imaginaries are not all-powerfully determinate. “It is simply the idea that the imagined location of identity has to be something *negotiated in the present by the citizens themselves*, rather than something received or inherited from the past” (Smith 2002: 168. Italics added). Therefore, the success of ‘Third Culturalists’ such as Daniel Dennett, Fritjof Capra, and Oliver Sacks is an *accomplishment* of their being public intellectuals in a way that their cultural theorist adversaries are not.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1940s and 1950s the idea of a public intellectual was identified with an academic versed in “soft” human (or social) sciences who addressed issues of common interest, taking a stance toward the great issues of the day and thus triggering or participating in large and passionate public debates. What then occurred, with the onslaught of “French” postmodern deconstructionist theory, was the passing of the generation of public thinkers and their replacement by “bloodless academicians,” by cultural scientists whose pseudoradical stance against “power” or “hegemonic discourse” effectively involves the growing disappearance of direct and actual political engagements outside the narrow confines of academia, as well as the growing self-enclosure in an elitist jargon that precludes the very possibility of functioning as an intellectual engaged in public debates (Žižek 2002: 20-21).

Žižek draws a crucial distinction between “science itself and its inherent ideologization” (Žižek 2002: 21), arguing a further distinction between the ‘naturalization of culture’ (as when social institutions are imagined as natural entities) and the ‘culturalization of nature’ (as when the natural world is imagined mechanistically) (Žižek 2002: 22). Where Žižek’s provocative argument(s) becomes worrying is in his advocacy of a reified Cartesian philosophy of mind; even as he appears to draw away from similarly rationalist models of the self. Other thinkers such as Charles Taylor are less ambiguous; Taylor, who since the late 1950s has taken a fundamental stance against the Cartesian epistemological construal of human agency.

Furthermore, Taylor’s work pre-dates seemingly innovative solutions such as Bent Flyvberg’s (2001) argument for an Aristotelian way out of the science wars:

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Dennett represents the fields of cognitive science and evolutionary theory, Oliver Sacks represents the field of neurology, and Fritjof Capra represents those physicists who deal with quantum physics and cosmology.

social science (generally) proceeds from *phronesis*, whereas science is generally about epistemology.<sup>4</sup> Flyvberg (2001) recognizes the hinge between *phronesis* (practical wisdom, or practical reason, though the concept has no strict counterpart in English) and *episteme* (pure knowledge) – terms separated by the seventeenth century scientific revolution, though Taylor would see this achievement of an absolute conception of objectivity linked to the priority of mechanistic explanation as a subsumption of teleological explanations under absolute mechanistic ones (Taylor 1964: 11, 98; 1989a: 457). The “requirement of absoluteness,” in Taylor’s words, is that “the task of science is to give an account of the world as it is independently of the meanings it might have for human subjects, or how it figures in their experience” (Taylor 1980a: 31). This stringently atomistic standard of evidence was tied to an exacting new ideal of objectivity. “After Galileo, Taylor is saying, theories proposing mechanistic explanations of nature, couched in absolute terms, tended to be more successful than teleological explanations, until they eventually became the norm in science” (Smith 2002: 40).

In Taylor’s so-called ‘realist’ view of science, scientific theories emerge by a sphere of practical concerns. But they succeed as theories by identifying the real causal powers inherent in different kinds of substance. Incidentally, this realist view leaves it an open question whether causal powers are teleological or mechanistic. It is not up to the philosophy of science to decide what causal powers there are in the world. However, Taylor is convinced that a certain kind of teleology, one that ascribes subject-related properties to physical substance, is no longer credible. Taylor’s philosophical realism leaves open the possibility of a teleological science of nature that neither regresses to the old Aristotelian ‘enchanted’ view nor intrudes into the human sciences in a destructive way. Having said that, it is not a possibility Taylor himself explores (Smith 2002: 40-41).

It is widely agreed that the substitution of mechanistic explanations for teleological ones was a decisive step in the evolution of modern science (Kymlicka 1988; Mansueto 1997; Ringen 1976; Smith 2002: 41). That belief rests on empiricist epistemology, which in the mid-twentieth century grounded the mechanistic explanations of behavioural psychology. But while behaviourism is long dead, “the belief that the laws governing human behaviour must be mechanistic in form is still very much alive” (Smith 2002: 43), as is evident in much of the ‘Third Culture’

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<sup>4</sup> The simple *phronesis-episteme* distinction is not held universally as a model separating the social from the natural sciences; if it was, the science wars would have been senseless, or never have occurred. The terms resemble though do not equate the terms of the *theory-practice* dichotomy that emerges in certain fields such as journalism studies. In *phronesis*, thought and action are hermeneutically related as when the thought is derived *through* action; with the two combined in *practice*.

positions defended in the ‘science wars’. That is, empiricist epistemology underpins the (behaviourist) conviction that behaviour *must* be explicable in mechanistic terms.

A recent skirmish of the ‘science wars’ was seen with the outbreak in the late 1990s of the ‘media wars’ in mainly Australian universities engaged in journalism education. The contestation involved journalism educators (mostly former journalists who had migrated to the academy) objecting to the academic standing afforded to cultural studies scholars who held leadership positions in journalism programmes (see Windschuttle 1997a; 1998a; 1998b; 1999). The main objection was that cultural studies was an inappropriate basis for the training of would-be journalists. The journalistic flashpoint across which this ‘sciences wars’ skirmish was waged found entrenched on either side the antinomies of *realism* and *relativism*, *practice* and *theory*, and *empiricism* and *constructivism*. While the principal target of the journalism educators – commanded by Australian positivist historian Keith Windschuttle – was postmodernism and/or deconstructionism (or just ‘Theory’), left-leaning neo-Marxist practitioners of cultural studies who may or may not have embraced *Theory* were drawn into the fray.

Unhappy memories of the Sokal hoax (Sokal 1996; Sokal and Bricmont 1998) seemed to unnerve the side of cultural studies as much as it emboldened Windschuttle. But after the matter died down at the turn of the millennium, neither side appeared to have scored any lasting gains. The result might have been different had cultural studies scholars looked more widely afield– *without* rather than *within* – to resources that could have properly located the negative implications that empiricism and a Cartesian philosophy of mind hold for the philosophical anthropological dimensions of human agency. Windschuttle’s concerns were, after all, about journalists themselves; were therefore *ethical* rather than instrumental. The problem, as it appears, is that postmodern cultural studies had rendered an ethical subject an impossibility (Slack and Whitt 1992). While theories of the ‘active audience’ and similar acknowledgements of ‘agency’ reduced to resistance to cultural determinations do ground the ethnographic movement within cultural studies (see Morley 1993), the underlying imaginaries – derived from a Cartesian philosophy of mind – that underlie empiricism are seldom if ever recognized.<sup>5</sup> The case of the field

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<sup>5</sup> David Morley (1993) reviews the contesting positions that have made up the concept of the ‘active audience’, and notes the strongest stance as “see[ing] that macro structures can be reproduced only

of communication is another case in point. Lawrence Grossberg (1993; 1997), in considering the difficult articulations between communication and cultural studies, notes how despite work in the 1960s that fed into the 'discipline' having been

intimately tied to issues of culture and community, to the social nature of human reality, and to the political possibilities of utopian aspirations. However, under the pressures of the growing status of "science" and logical positivism, the emergence of psycholinguistics and information theory, the demands of propaganda research and the recurring public fears over new forms and technologies of communication, that legacy was largely submerged. The field of (mass) communications, into the 1970s, was largely quantitative and scientific, seeking to find the statistically or experimentally verifiable effects determined by particular media and message variables. Its theoretical foundations were almost entirely located in neobehaviourist psychology and structural-functional sociology. The normative, theoretical, and populist impulses implicit in the study of communication were, to say the least, rendered suspect and invisible (Grossberg 1997: 280).

Both the variously-contending conceptions of the active audience and the *interpretive conceptions of the self* that underlie "communication" (see Peters J. 1999), tend to rest upon a bid to recover the primacy of human *behaviour* rather than human *action* (see Taylor 1964). The difference is as significant as that between *consciousness* (which all animals have) and *perception* (possessed by language animals only; and hop live in a moral universe). The former advocates a model of *representation* to the neglect of (though not necessarily as opposed to) models of *constitutive* agency. The Cartesian core of empiricism is retained in representational and mediational thinking, whereas the alternative conception critiques that core in a way that recovers a Hegelian philosophy of mind to which Enlightenment rationality that underwrites the 'Third Culture'<sup>6</sup> movement (Žižek 2002) remains adamantly opposed.

At stake is a conception of the self that is at once ethical and emancipatory. Without adequately eradicating the epistemological construal that has derived from

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through microprocesses.... The whole point of that shift was to attempt to find better ways to articulate the micro and macro levels of analysis, not to abandon either pole in favor of the other" (Morley 1993: 17).

<sup>6</sup> On the surface the *science wars* can appear to be between culturalists and scientists; but, instead, it concerns the former and an emergent fusion of science and literature that has formed into a discourse of popular scientism. Elinor Shaffer (1997) describes 'third culture' as a form of social history, or as an interface between science and other disciplines - given to publishing books for an intelligent, reading public open to the hegemony of science in public life. "The interface of science with other disciplines has become a matter of urgency in our time, because science is the dominant intellectual discipline, whose authority, influence and, through its practical applications, financial and political power are unequalled.. Even on 'ultimate' questions science today has taken the place of both theology and philosophy, and books offering scientific answers to age-old questions of the formation and end of the universe, the essential character of human nature and consciousness, and the parameters of decision-making about matters of life and death have attained a remarkable popularity" (Shaffer 1997: 2-3).

the Cartesian core rooted in empiricist and scientific thinking, it seems that cultural studies can do little better than championing one kind of ideological effect against another kind of interpellation. This constraint remains in place even as cultural studies scholarship chooses its contestations as antinomies of “meaning versus effects; interpretation versus quantification; consciousness versus behaviour” (Grossberg 1997: 281).

Charles Taylor’s philosophical anthropology – by seeking to recover a plausible model of human agency and identity – offers a way of restoring what I maintain here to be a missing dimension that may make cultural studies a more potent contender in the ‘science wars’, and that could have provided a more effective way of meeting the challenge of the ‘media wars’ by understanding the empiricist assumptions of populist scientific apologetics. But there is more: as a *post-Marxist* scholar and founder member of the British New Left movement, Taylor played a formative ‘public intellectual’ role in the formation of British Cultural Studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The implications of studying particularly Taylor’s (emergent) philosophy during this period forms the foundation of this thesis.

### ***Post-Marxism and cultural studies***

Cultural Studies is arguably *the* quintessential post-Marxist field located in the human and social sciences given, at least, that “it came into existence as a critique of Marxist economism” (Gilbert 2001: 189). The field of post-Marxism is a long-contested terrain that displays a quite different problematic in the post-Soviet era to its questions in the post-Stalin era, and so I want to distinguish, following Stuart Sim (1998), between *post-Marxism* and *post-Marxism* without necessarily suggesting that they represent a movement from the cradle of cultural studies to its grave.

British Cultural Studies began in response to Marxism’s crisis in the late 1950s and early 1960s; spurred by the weakening of orthodox Marxism that followed in the post-Stalin era and which was powerfully symbolised by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. But the *post-Marxist* thought that responded to these conditions – particularly outside the Soviet bloc – did not occur suddenly. Its ground was prepared by thinkers such as Georg Lukács and Antonio Gramsci who tried, with limited success, to escape the reductionist problematic of Second International Marxism (see Sim 1998). Successive thinkers used their work to explore ‘Marx without Marxism’ –

a direction which gave the New Left its initial impetus, and which it helped to sustain in and through its activism.<sup>7</sup>

Stuart Hall, in his ground-breaking essay, *The problem of ideology – Marxism without guarantees*,<sup>8</sup> called *post-Marxism* one of the “largest and most flourishing” schools in cultural studies (Hall 1986: 28). With its altered accent, the term *post-Marxism* has a meaning incurred in the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union. Together with the term’s ‘post-Soviet’ and ‘post-Cold War’ inflections, the term signifies the 1990s period as a time when Marxism had declined to the point where it had *finally* lost its power as a political imaginary. The period saw scholars and intellectuals either abandon the ideology and project altogether, or like Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle Mouffe to take up defensive positions to fight a rear-guard action to argue its case. Either way, the period ruled out ‘business as usual’. Not insignificantly, this period also saw cultural studies enter a stage of deep uncertainty (see Barrett 1991; Ferguson and Golding 1997), represented partly by a literature that indicates the field had reached a ‘mature’ phase centred upon themes of recollection and reinvention (e.g., Grossberg 1997; Peters 1999).

The simple correspondence I am drawing between two phases of cultural studies and the *post-Marxist* and *post-Marxist* periods is a generalization challenged by both Marxist scholarship and cultural studies being, respectively, sites of contestation. To venture another generalization, however, one issue of contestation within the *post-Marxist* period was to shift the classical Marxist dictate of the class fraction as the basis for revolutionary *praxis* onto other fractions such as race, gender, religions, and so on. The *post-Marxist* period has seen a reverse of that challenge, where scholars seek to shore up the ground lost to the dictate of class. Laclau and Mouffe’s work (1985; 1987) to this effect are one example of this defense at a general level. Stuart Hall’s (1996; 1997) papers defending his continued conviction in Louis Althusser represents a situated defense in cultural studies.

Paul Bowman’s book, *Post-Marxism versus Cultural Studies: Theory, Politics and Intervention* (2005), represents a position between these two examples. Bowman

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<sup>7</sup> Stuart Hall explains to Kuan-Hsing Chen that he abandoned his dissertation on Henry James “literally because of 1956” (Hall 1986a: 497).

<sup>8</sup> “Without guarantees” will probably be Stuart Hall’s epitaph; but if not, the editors of a recent collection of essays in honour of him thought it a suitable title to their book (Gilroy, Grossberg and McRobbie 2000). Charles Taylor is among the global community of cultural studies to contribute essays to the book.

opposes a tendency in cultural studies to evacuate the Marxist problematic in its postmodern moment of ‘scandal’. However, Bowman’s argument is not a conservative gesture, but in line with Angela McRobbie’s (1992: 720) earlier argument, suggests that post-*Marxism* is a suitable ‘replacement’ of Marxism for providing a politico-theoretical ground for cultural studies. Post-*Marxism* effects a “deconstructive displacement of some of Marxism’s key terms, which results in an ontological prioritization of politics as the process by which social identities and interests are not just contested but produced” (Gilbert 2001: 192). Where Bowman (2005) does go further than McRobbie (1992) is to pose the challenge of restoring the integrity of the self in the face of the “morality without [an] ethical code” conditions of postmodern ethics (Bowman 2005: 31).

While Bowman’s post-*Marxist* emphasis finds a sympathetic stance in the argument of this thesis, it is the earlier part of the preceding *post-Marxist* period and philosophy that concerns me here; that is, the period and problematic that corresponds to the formation of British Cultural Studies. That is, questions of subjectivity and human agency were integral to early *post-Marxist* critiques of economism. A continuity between these and other aspects of *post-Marxism* and the shifts from class to alternate social fractions that occupy and constitute post-*Marxist* debate may be found in Charles Taylor’s work. In this respect I am drawing closer to Stuart Sim’s embrace of both inflections in *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History* (1998), where he draws a continuity between the work of George Lukács, Louis Althusser and the Frankfurt School as examples of “a post-Marxism at work within classical Marxism,” and the “growing disenchantment being expressed towards Marxism from the postmodern and feminist camps from the 1960s onwards” (Sim 1998: 2). It is this continuity that is evident in Taylor’s work, and which appears to have been made feasible by his de-emphasis of the class concept in the interests of allowing greater space for pluralistic notions of agency, and no less its ethical dimensions.

Kuan-Hsing Chen (1996) calls for a post-Marxist cultural studies as a way of negotiating between ‘traditional’ Gramscian modes and what he calls ‘postmodernism’.<sup>9</sup> Chen’s use of the terms ‘cultural studies,’ ‘Marxism’ and ‘cultural studies’ is confusing; though understandably so given the difficulties of posing the

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<sup>9</sup> I put the term ‘postmodernism’ in scare-quotes to indicate Chen’s (1986) questioning whether such a thing as postmodernism actually exists; or whether it is more accurate to indicate different modernities.



prospect of 'post-Marxist cultural studies' as a response to its previous forms. Chen defines a post-Marxist cultural studies in the following way:

[P]ost-Marxism can be understood as (1) the movement "beyond orthodox Marxism," (2) as the attempt "beyond the notion of Marxism guaranteed by the laws of history," and (3) as the persistent usage of Marxism "as one's reference point" .... Perhaps the "name" Marxism" does not make a difference as (to the extent that holding onto it claims and authorizes one's patri-lineage, affiliations and right to write and speak) (Chen 1996: 320).

Certainly *post*-Marxism has always been a contested terrain, and its fortunes resemble those of cultural studies: seen equally as an "open-ended and ongoing theoretical struggle to understand and intervene into the existing organizations of active domination and subordination within the formations of culture" (Grossberg 1997: 196). That is, the histories and formations of the two fields are implicitly implicated; and for this reason, the postmodern direction that cultural studies took ought to be seen more as a 'genetic' structure (however latent) than as a recent literary *deviation* from any purported founding principles.

Thus, cultural studies, born into a family in decline, inherited the recriminations against the "discursive effects of 'modernist' theorizing" in Marxism – reductionism, functionalism, essentialism and universalism (McLennan 1996: 54). It was inevitable that the field would embrace postmodern critique of the metaphysical and reductionist character of Marxist economics; though what exactly constituted a 'reductionist' explanatory programme "is the subject of a protracted and complex debate in the meta-theory of the natural and social sciences" (McLennan 1996: 57). The field would remain embroiled there also.

Questions of theoretical consistency aside, the substantive case for the inadequacy and outdatedness of Marxism's reductionist ambience remain to be addressed, and the big points ... are that class-explanatory propositions are less powerful nowadays, that there are now very significant nonclass determinations, and that the whole cultural realm has become considerably more important (McLennan 1996: 56).

In a different key, Gregor McLennan's (1996) discussion mirrors the 'two paradigm' motif that has typified the theoretical development of (British) cultural studies' as a tension between the home-grown socialist humanism of Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson and "the economic reductionism of the Marxists, arguing for the importance of the creative human actor, of human experience, and the determining power of cultural production itself" (Grossberg 1997: 200-201).

But cultural studies emerges as a disciplinary formation and intellectual position in the confrontation ... between this humanist Marxism (which Hall calls "culturalism") and

the antihumanism of Althusser's structural Marxism. The latter pointed to the former's reductionist assumption of a necessary correspondence between cultural forms, experience, and class formation .... It is out of this debate that the position many people identify with Birmingham cultural studies arises. It is a moment in which, to put it emblematically, Williams is "saved" by rereading him through Althusserian structuralism (Grossberg 1997: 201).

However, the cultural studies centre, as it were, did not hold. The swing was made to a poststructuralist reading of Althusser, where the very resistances that had sustained cultural studies beyond adequate theorizing devolved into an "infinite plurality of meaning and the endless fragmentation of the subject" (Grossberg 1997: 202). Michèle Barrett's (1991) book depicts this movement as one from the 'modernist economics of untruth' (ideology) through to a postmodern politics of truth (discourse). Barrett holds that "in recent years, the whole paradigm within which the debate has occurred has been extensively and tellingly criticized" to the point where we must accept that "the materialist (in practice economic reductionist) premises of Marxism are inadequate as a basis for thinking about political, cultural and social life in a late twentieth-century whose 'determinations' are so different from those of mid nineteenth-century manufacturing capitalism" (Barrett 1991: 16, 139).

Barrett is referring to a realization that became evident within post-*Marxism*, accepting as equally true a regime of truth that had prevailed during the height of *classical* Marxism. It becomes possible, therefore, to see a progression starting with classical Marxism, moving through a period of *post-Marxism*, and reaching post-*Marxism*. Upon that timeline we can easily place British Cultural Studies as a movement beginning at (and *as*) a moment of fracture in *post-Marxism* in which it is deeply invested, and traveling fatalistically towards the final fracture in which post-*Marxism* was revealed with inexorable affect and effect of that moment being the logical outcome of its own historical 'disposition'. That is, the fortunes of cultural studies were always tied to those of Marxism; and it is possible in this way at least to see cultural studies *as a post-Marxist problematic* – even given dual meaning of the term as I have been using it. That is, the field has been an expression of that problematic, not only embracing *post-Marxist* debates within its own debates and discourses, but performing also as an index or barometer of the movement from *post-Marxism* to post-*Marxism*.

To the extent that such an image holds true, cultural studies may appear rather more to *represent* the historical shifts and cultural formations it tries to understand

than to be a constituent element as a political agent within those formations. Yet again, a hyper-representative depiction of cultural studies as an effect of history overly emphasises determinations. An ameliorating measure of agency must certainly obtain, thus making cultural studies complicit in the movement from *classical* Marxism, through *post-Marxism*, to *post-Marxism*. It would seem that cultural studies, as an indicator of the post-Marxist problematic in its continuity, has been a *hermeneutic* activity – as a participating actor in history, being both *representative* and *constitutive* (and transformative) of that problematic – rather than a *dialectical* representation of it.

Certainly cultural studies has not engineered itself into a *cul-de-sac*; as if having played itself out in a fatalistic end game. It can (and does) take a lead from post-*Marxist* theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1987), who defend their poststructuralist approach (in discourse theory) to ‘radical democracy’ on grounds that new social movements are mobilized ‘beyond class’ fractions; that is, around “new oppositional counter-discursive forms of consciousness and action” such as gender, race, religion and other cultural criteria (Ingalsbee 1996: 265). Post-Marxism remains a response to crises of Marxism, but instead of these being identified as theoretical matters posed by economism, they are posed by the revolutionary agency of social movements that flouted the class dictate of classical Marxism. Occluded from the post-Marxist analytic is a preoccupation with class as an Enlightenment-inspired scientific truth-claim inherent in a mechanistic deployment of structuralism (Poster 1975: 357). Post-Marxism’s anti-foundational rejection of fixed identities thus avails it to include the postmodern to imagine counter-discursive *praxis* as a movement of shifting identities that “decentres the state as the predominant site of political struggle” (Hartmann 1998: 348).

I mentioned Paul Bowman’s (2005) book a few pages back, and suggested that he addresses the question of cultural studies within a post-*Marxist* problematic, with the assumption that this focus corresponds with ‘postmodern cultural studies’. But whatever correspondences apply, they are not chronological. I do not wish to engage with Bowman in any detail here, but simply to refer to the broadest scope of his book in order to indicate two points about the periodisation of post-Marxism that I am briefly exploring here.

Bowman subscribes to the Lacanian scholar Slavoj Žižek, who contests the contemporary abandonment of radical politics and the postmodern retreat from Enlightenment. In opposition to postmodern relativism, Žižek positions Lacan not as a postmodern theorist, but as an Enlightenment thinker. Furthermore, Žižek, in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (2000), advocates a reinvigorated Cartesianism while at the same time pursuing a defense of the critique of ideology issued from within “a systematic Marxist position in and against the conditions of contemporary Capital” (Sharpe 2004: 127). Matthew Sharpe voices a commonly voiced query as to how Žižek’s open defense of Cartesianism connects with his reading of Lacan and Marx (see Badminton 2003: 16-19).

[H]ow does Žižek’s defence of the Cartesian subject relate to his wider [Marxist] position? What does he think that Lacan, and his attempt to regenerate the critique of ideology, could possibly have to do with Descartes? .... [T]he work that Žižek’s ‘retrieval’ of the Cartesian subject is intended to carry out in the contemporary theoretical climate needs to be elaborated .... [I]t is necessary to read Žižek’s work as a response to the ‘post-structuralists’ who attained such a theoretical hegemony in the 1980s in much of Anglo-American ‘cultural studies or ‘theory’, as well as our courses on ‘continental philosophy’ (Sharpe 2004: 127).

There is no need here to explain where and how (postmodern) cultural studies scholarship has grasped decentredness with unbridled enthusiasm; though considering the tone of Žižek’s essay, *Cultural Studies and the “Third Culture”* (2003), one is left to wonder to what extent he identifies with the cognitivists whose aim, he says, is “to liberate the Left from the irrationalist-relativist-elitist postmodern fake” (Žižek 2003: 27). However, precisely where expressions of this kind leave cultural studies in relation to the *ethics* of postmodernism – thus referring to the salience and thrust of Bowman’s (2005) book – may call into question the ethics of *doing* cultural studies. But the prospect of a suitably vigorous ethical dimension being found within a Cartesian frame, as Žižek advocates, would seem unlikely given the rejection of the ‘ghost in the machine’ image of the human subject that Cartesianism has inspired (Ryle 1947). I mention this much here (and no more) not to dismiss Bowman’s sources, or his use of them, but to draw attention to certain problematic aspects of them.

I am not claiming or assuming (by association) that cultural studies is ‘anti-ethical’, ethically neutral (if that is at all possible), or lacks an adequate philosophical anthropology. However, the absence of discussion and debate on this topic is worth noting. Apart from Jennifer Slack and Laurie Whitt’s paper in *Cultural Studies*

(1992), edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, there has been little work investigating the relationship between cultural studies and ethics; or the ethical dimension(s) of cultural studies. This ought not to suggest that a great gulf exists between them, for as an emancipatory practice in the interests of the voices of alterity, cultural studies has always had ethical underpinnings (see Zylinska 2005). Perhaps the issue at heart concerns the legacy of (the classical) Marxism's understanding of subjectivity which, as Barrett says, is either non-existent, or "lamentable" (Barrett 1991: vii, 155).

The question immediately arises as to whether Barrett's charge applies as much to the *humanist* Marx as it appears to do to the ethical implications of a view that sees all theory *as practice* (Taylor 1985b: 91ff). At least two points arise here: the first has to do with the 'scientific' and 'positivistic' myth of the neutrality of theory, and the second has to do, *volte-face*, with the ethical power of normative descriptions. I shall briefly discuss the notion of communication as a case in point, and go on to consider the suitability of communication as an *imaginary* of journalism. Sociolinguist Deborah Cameron (2000) argues that the importance of talk and communication is generally a common-place assumption of (post)modern culture.

[W]e live in what might be called a "communication culture" ... a culture that is particularly self-conscious and reflexive about communication, and that generates large quantities of metadiscourse about it. For the members of such a culture it is axiomatically "good to talk" – but at the same time it is natural to make judgments about which kind of talk are good and which are less good. People aspire, or think they ought to aspire, to communicate "better"; and they are highly receptive to expert advice (Cameron 2000: viii).

Like *communication*, the salience of the concept of *conversation* in imagining journalism practice is motivated in no small part by Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere, and related attention given to the work of John Dewey, for both of whom *talk* is a constitutive feature of democracy. When Habermas (1991) writes that the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body, he grants conversation a significant political role. So too is Dewey, for whom the revitalization of public life depends on "the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is the problem of the public" (Dewey 1927: 208).

The concept of conversation lies at the centre of discussions on public and civic journalism, for instance, and even there tends to have more normative value than

powers of description. Perhaps this tendency has derived, even partly, from theorists taking face-to-face conversation as a metaphor of democratic life, whereas consumption and rule-following may remain more accurate descriptors instead. Certainly the idealized, if not romanticized, sense of Habermas's schema has attracted its fair share of critics.

Michael Schudson (1992: 146) questions the extent to which "political participation [was] carried out through rational and critical discourse." Elsewhere Schudson (1997) disputes the extent to which writers use it as a descriptor of public life. He adamantly disagrees that conversation is aptly applied to thinking about journalism, and draws into question a swathe of thought that has been inspired to adopt the Habermasian public sphere as an apogee of journalism practice at its innocent democratic best.

One does not have to search far today to find views that place conversation at the center of democratic life.... There is a veritable obsession with the term. It can be found all over the academic landscape – in postmodernist philosophy, in communitarian social criticism, in the public journalism movement, and elsewhere. It is to be found in liberal critics of the mass media and in philosophers of discursive democracy. It is central to Richard Rorty's critique of scientific and philosophical certainty.... Rorty, Michael Oakeshott, and Hans-Georg Gadamer all turn to "conversation" as a model of knowing.... James Carey has been especially eloquent in placing conversation at the center of public life and the restoration of a public at the heart of the contemporary task of democratic society (Schudson 1997: 297-298).

Schudson's critique points at the metaphoric use of the concept of conversation as a type of what happens in journalism. But he is also leveling his critique at an absence that political economists have been on about for some time – the turn from 'conversation' to 'consumption' in the ostensibly democratic culture evident in Western modernity. He notes also, in phrases excised from the above quote,<sup>10</sup> that ours is a culture of conversation, where the 'talking cure' is paraded as the way we conduct our sociability. Lawrence Grossberg (1997) draws attention to this 'more hair of the dog' confusion by referring to James Carey's (1975: 20) point that "the widespread social interest in communication derives from a derangement in our models of communication and community [which are] ... less an analysis than a contribution to the chaos of modern culture" (in Grossberg 1997: 47).

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<sup>10</sup> Schudson refers to literary critic David Simpson's (1997) references to a current "cult of 'conversation'" epitomized in 'talk radio' and the glut of cheap 'talk shows' on television where everyone's right to an opinion is glamorised.

[T]he study of communication seems to have obvious ethical dimensions as soon as the researchers face questions of policy and normative concerns. But it is often difficult to draw the ethical implications of theoretical positions directly out of the more descriptive writings. The notion of cultural crisis, however, allows us to look at the ethical dimensions of the notion of culture at the heart of communication theory; and the concept of culture includes a moral dimension at its very core .... The notion of a cultural crisis implies some image of an ideal culture, or at least a culture not in crisis. And since culture is, broadly speaking, the framework within which an individual lives, the notion of a cultural crisis must have a conception of an ideal form of human existence underlying its judgment (Grossberg 1997: 47).

This leads us back directly to a central tenet of the *post*-Marxist problematic – the recovery of the humanist Marx of the *Paris Manuscripts*, and to at least one *post*-Marxist intellectual – Charles Taylor – who was closely connected to the early formation of British Cultural Studies (though he remains curiously absent in its debates and histories), and whose work and thinking in the 1960s and 1970s engaged with many of the themes that became the bread and butter of the field at that time. As I mentioned earlier, Taylor founded and co-edited the *Universities and Left Review* with fellow Rhodes Scholar Stuart Hall. Taylor taught Hall about Hegel and the humanist side of Marx (Inglis 1993: 154), and was active in the New Left movement until his return to Canada in the mid-1960s. Taylor has participated in review conferences of that period (Archer *et al.* 1989; Eagleton and Wicker 1968), and contributes a chapter to a book published in honour of Hall (Gilroy *et al.* 2000).

Taylor's thought is better known in terms of his philosophical anthropology, but this began as an interrogation and critique of classical Marxism in the 1950s, thus placing him in the tradition of *post*-Marxism. Taylor's work draws strongly on French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), who in turn drew on Edmund Husserl and Lukács – configuring his phenomenology from the former, and his *post*-Marxism from the latter. But Taylor also draws from the later Ludwig Wittgenstein in the analytic tradition. Taylor's thought is therefore characterized as variously philosophical hermeneutic, phenomenological and analytic, committed to a project of restoring to philosophy an anti-essentialist, anti-Cartesian model of human subjectivity. In this respect his philosophical anthropology is deeply ethical at least in so far as it seeks to recover a plausible model of human agency.

### **On the 'communitarian' Taylor**

I want to now address the question of what Taylor's philosophy is *about*, and to do so against the tendency to situate any intellectual's work under a *paradigm* instead

of within a body of *questions*. Taylor is too often telescoped within the focus of communitarianism (see Christians *et al.* 1993; Eagleton 1996: 81-83), thus rendering more opaque the richness of his thinking as a critic of modernity. Applying the communitarian epithet to Taylor as a ‘master theme’ is understandable given the difficulty of applying a defining label to his work. This does not mean that a definition is beyond reach; at least not given his having identified with his former Oxford professor Isaiah Berlin’s (1953) notion of his being a *hedgehog* (Taylor 1985a: 1, 3) – that is, being a thinker driven by a single ‘big idea’, “by which he means his intellectual agenda has centred around one idea or highly related set of ideas” (Bowers 2002: 35).

The *fact*, however, of this tendency to ‘pigeon-hole’ an intellectual is not altogether uninformative as the relevance of any thinker’s project can be measured by the extent to which it is expressed in, or inspires, programmes of social and political activism. Communitarianism stands out as one of these programmes, and in itself translates the powerful imaginaries that Taylor musters, turning them to the purpose of re-imagining journalism as a modern project. That is, against the strictly libertarian (*informational*) functions that journalism is said to perform, communitarianism brings to light the *conversational* aspects by which communities and identities are dialogically constituted – not least through the practice of “storytelling” (Schudson 1995; 1982; Woodstock 2002). Public and civic journalism (Lambeth 1992: 48-51),<sup>11</sup> therefore, can be seen as expressions of Taylor’s thinking, but it is obvious that his thinking is not *about* either of these.

Nonetheless, communitarianism remains an illuminating sign under which to understand Taylor. But I want to draw some distance from that label, while simultaneously retaining a tension between it and the actual project that best depicts the *questions* that Taylor addresses. As a critic of modernity, Taylor’s philosophy is *about* modern subjectivity; and so, his philosophical anthropology forms the centre piece of his entire philosophy. That is, taking phenomenology’s sensitivity to the structural forms of parts and wholes (Sokolowski 2000: 22-27), Taylor’s critique of the Cartesian epistemological construal – that is, his critique of the Cartesian

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<sup>11</sup> I mention Edmund Lambeth (1992) in particular for how he frames the Hutchins Commission recommendations within the Aristotelian thinking of Alasdair MacIntyre’s virtue ethics. This way he develops a programme for ‘communitarian’ journalism. Again, MacIntyre rejects the label of communitarianism.



extension of the inner/outer (mind-body) sorting to the level of human person – can be considered as the *whole*, or ‘master theme’, that integrates all the *parts* of his work. Alternatively, it is the lens through which to view the Hegelian Marx he extracts with the aid of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology, together with his Hegelian theory of practice.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the ‘master theme’, as I have identified it – being Taylor’s ‘anti-epistemology’ (see Dreyfus 2004) – does not square with the ‘core’ of Taylor’s philosophy as Nicholas Smith (2002) identifies it:

At the core of Taylor’s project is the conviction that human reality is structured, and in some sense constituted, by layers of meaning. This is the first principle of his philosophical anthropology (Smith 2002: 18).

Smith is not wrong, but there are grounds to argue that the “first principle” he identifies is an *application* of Taylor’s more fundamental stance. That is, Taylor’s philosophical anthropology rests on a deeper epistemological problematic. Nonetheless, this does show the difficulty of imposing upon Taylor’s work a template that is up to the task of pulling together the many threads of his project; and short of accepting that variously aberrant interpretations of Taylor may at least be ‘more or less true’, it is possible to introduce Taylor’s thought by way of any application to which his work is intended.

Michael Shapiro (1986: 312) lists among these intentions Taylor’s criticism of empiricism, his “advocating communitarianism over social atomism and the integrity of the human subject” (see Taylor 1985b: 187ff; 1992c; 1995a: 189ff). Atomism is the Lockean doctrine that makes “the priority of the individual and his rights over society” (Taylor 1979b: 29) possible by positing a certain view of human nature and the human condition without which the priority of rights could not be asserted. Atomism thus “affirms the self sufficiency of man alone or ... of the individual” (Taylor 1979b: 32). The *modern* doctrine of atomism is what Shapiro refers to as the *epistemological conceit* effected by empiricists and idealists alike (Shapiro 1986: 311).

It is at this point where Taylor’s method becomes particularly sharp; and where his application to this thesis becomes pertinent. That is, within both *empiricist* and *idealist* frames one finds a very similar anthropology, or ‘picture of man’, sharing a

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<sup>12</sup> The same applies to other themes that I do not consider explicitly in this study, such as his theory of identity grounded in the narrative self. For a discussion on this aspect of Taylor’s thinking, Linda Woodhead’s (1999) theological essay, *Theology and the Fragmentation of the Self*, usefully draws the connections between Taylor’s philosophical anthropology and his conception of modern identity.

common epistemological construal rooted in Descartes and Enlightenment fundamentalism (Taylor 2002a). But for all its ‘conceit’, the picture we get of Taylor is not one who rejects the modernity that empiricism depicts (as does Alasdair MacIntyre (1984)) with whom he is sometimes compared (see Tate 1998). Nor does Taylor reject those aspects favoured by *idealist* thought. Like David Scott says of Stuart Hall’s “ethical voice responsive to the violations that grow out of complacent satisfactions, secure doctrines, congealed orders, sedimented identities” (Scott 2005: 1), Taylor refuses paradigmatic encirclement. Instead, he sees not a single modernity, but – Taylor (2000b) writes in an essay honouring Hall – “multiple modernities” invested in contending imaginaries. “A viable theory of alternative modernities has to be able to relate both the pull to sameness and the forces making for difference” (Taylor 2000b: 367).

The picture we gain of Taylor, therefore, is one of a philosopher situated *between* contending paradigms and refusing any for reasons that include, among others, that both empiricist (naturalist) and constructivist (relativist) thinking were rendered from a disarticulation of the holistic Aristotelian corpus – resulting, in empiricist science, in “the subsumption of teleological explanations under mechanistic ones” (Smith 2002: 37). But Shapiro tempts Taylor’s objections to being named a *communitarianism* – being a broad philosophical approach whose general concern is with the bonds of community. Taylor is uncomfortable with the epithet for its usual denotation derived from a *diametrical* opposition to libertarianism *tout court*, whereas his project seeks to retain the best of both; not the rejection of one for the other (Taylor 1994b: 250; 1995a: 182-183; 1996).

The point I am driving at is a matter of parts and wholes; of the difference between injecting Taylor (or any thinker) into a useful conceptual application and letting this term work metonymically, and taking the more difficult route of beginning with *his philosophy* (the whole) and leading to each *signifier* (a part) that it invests. This is what I attempted to do with Taylor; unlike certain communication scholars who have tended to *define* him under the rubric of communitarianism mainly in their interest in applying his thought on practical reason to questions of journalism *ethics*, but possibly also to ‘authenticate’ pre-existing conceptions (Christians et al. 1993; Wilkins and Christians 2001). One dire effect has been to lock Taylor too readily into *existing* discourses of public and civic journalism without considering how the

broader philosophical implications of his thought may actually problematise the *understandings* of those practices. James Ettema's and Theodor Glasser's (1998) sole reference to Taylor is an example of 'getting him right', recognising in Taylor's theory the *dialogic* dimension essential to conversation:

Solidarity, as Habermas conceived it, emerges from – and subsequently strengthens – the kind of genuinely dialogic conversation Charles Taylor had in mind when he wrote about how communication can take us over a certain threshold and into a universe of discourse where commonality is not simply shared but established. Such conversation promotes a sense of “ours” that is something greater than a mere aggregation of “yours” and “mine” (Ettema and Glasser 1989: 201).

I do not wish to examine this or other instances of misplaced attempts to align Taylor squarely with any one school of thought – though there is little reason to contest Thomas Schwandt's (2003: 304) view that Taylor can be contained within philosophical hermeneutics. “The goal of philosophical hermeneutics is philosophical – that is, to understand what is involved in the process of understanding itself” (Schwandt 2003: 304). On the other hand, a too-ready inclusion of Taylor in a *general* interpretive paradigm is sure to be problematic. For instance, Taylor rejects the interpretivist view “that hermeneutics is an art or technique of understanding, the purpose of which is to construct a methodological foundation for the human sciences” (Grondin 1994: 109), thus distancing himself from the nineteenth century hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey.<sup>13</sup> Taylor's focus instead on (hermeneutic) understanding as a kind of moral-political knowledge that is at once embodied, *engaged*, and concerned with practical choice is a central element in the hermeneutic philosophies that draw on Gadamer and Heidegger.<sup>14</sup>

The end to which Taylor's outlook is given is not so theoretical and *practical*. A central focus of his philosophical anthropology is the concept of *engagement*, directed principally at a Cartesian “anthropology of disengagement” that continues to drive a libertarian ideal of self-transparency and instrumental freedom (Smith 2004: 41), and which underwrites notions of human beings as potentially having the freedom to do as they will. But the fact that humans are ‘language animals’ contradicts this notion.

[T]he fact that human beings are language animals means that they can never achieve full self-possession. The thinking and acting subject is always already situated in the

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<sup>13</sup> See Smith, John K. (1984). The problem of criteria for judging interpretive inquiry. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 6(4).

<sup>14</sup> From Gadamer's position, “Hermeneutics ... is not ... a methodology of the human sciences, but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness” (Gadamer 1975: xiii).

semantic dimension, and so is subject to norms that are in some sense “given”. The semantic dimension is, in principle, independent of the will and must escape objectification by the will. The constitutive power of language also militates against the ideal of absolute cognitive self-possession. For if there are experiences, feelings, and social relations that are constituted by the way we express or interpret them, and these things help define who we are, our self-understanding can never be complete. These features of human existence are not objects waiting to be represented by the right kind of designative language. There is no final, “self-authenticating” vocabulary for them; and relatedly, there is always more “meaning” to them than is expressed in any particular self-interpretation. The meaning of human existence insofar as it inhabits the semantic dimension or is constituted by language qua expressive power can never be finalised. In addition, the language of self-interpretation is beyond the individual’s control because language has an inherently intersubjective character (Smith 2004: 41-42).

As Taylor puts it in *The Importance of Herder*: “The language I speak, the web I can never fully dominate and oversee, can never be my language; it is always *our* language” (Taylor 1995a: 99). This brings us back to the question of communitarianism, and possibly indicates common cause that Taylor might find with pragmatists – as his debate with Richard Rorty (1980) indicates, though far from suggesting that he might be a card carrying pragmatist. Nevertheless, much of Taylor’s political thought on the social preconditions for modern identity do suggest an alignment with communitarianism; and certainly he *can* be counted among those Anglo-American philosophers<sup>15</sup> who can be considered to have contributed to the communitarian tradition (Taylor 1995a: 181-203). Alasdair MacIntyre has also been (erroneously) identified among communitarians (Caney 1992; Thigpen and Downing 1987). “In spite of rumours to the contrary,” MacIntyre writes,

I am not and never have been a communitarian. For my judgement is that the political, economic and moral structures of advanced modernity ... exclude the possibility of realizing any of the worthwhile types of political community what at various times in the past have been achieved, even if always in imperfect forms. And I also believe that attempts to remake modern societies in systematically communitarian ways will always be either ineffective or disastrous (MacIntyre in Bell 2005, n.2).

Perhaps the *primary* reason why both MacIntyre and Taylor reject the communitarian label lies in the very framework in which it is understood: the ‘liberalism-communitarian debate’.<sup>16</sup> That is, the debate runs together “ontological and advocacy issues” (Taylor 1995a: 181), and Taylor sets about to disentangle them

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<sup>15</sup> Anglo-American communitarianism has developed most visibly as a reaction to John Rawls’s landmark book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Drawing primarily upon the insights of Aristotle and Hegel, political philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer dispute Rawls’s assumption that the principal task of government is to secure and distribute fairly the liberties and economic resources individuals need to lead freely chosen lives.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, Charles (1989d). *Cross Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate*. In N. L. Rosenblum, (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

– ‘atomists from holists’ – in a manner which delves deeply into political theories of western liberalism. I shall not venture there, save to say that Taylor defends the view that “democratic society needs some commonly recognized definition of the good life,” and that he rejects models of society premised upon notions of ‘unencumbered identities’ (Taylor 1995a: 182). “The target of Taylor’s argument is not the capacity for individual self-determination as such, but rather a failure to appreciate the ontology required to make sense of this capacity” (Smith 2002: 146).

A secondary reason for the appeal of communitarianism may be identified (at least emotionally) with wistful memories of a golden age of *Marxism*; and in a way that ignores Marx’s own sensitivity to the complex relations of identity that individuals have to the *modern* societies to which they belong.<sup>17</sup> But given even these parameters, it is fairly obvious that both Taylor and MacIntyre would have been identified as communitarians at least for having provided “excellent accounts” in the “literature on the historical development of modern liberalism” (Theobald and Dinkelman 1995: 6). But upon closer inspection, both Taylor’s and MacIntyre’s accounts start not from a communitarian *assumption*, but share a critique of the Augustinian ‘inward turn’ that made Descartes’s philosophy possible.

Descartes represents a crucial juncture in terms of liberal conceptions of selfhood. His separation of mind and body is often targeted for blame by thinkers representing diverse intellectual and philosophical orientations; among them ... communitarians.... According to these critics, Descartes ... is responsible for “unleashing” instrumental reason. Bolstered by instrumental reason, mankind was to make its boldest, and largely unprecedented, declaration of dominion over the world.... A modern anthropocentrism began to replace a feudal theocentrism as a central feature of the European world view, just as heliocentric scholarship began to replace geocentrism. From the perspective of communitarians, most important about the Cartesian moment in the evolution of liberalism is that the door was widely opened for culturally defining fulfilment as something that might be found totally within the context of the self. Stated differently, what was radical about Descartes’ magnification of the Augustinian inward turn was that human fulfillment could be achieved merely through the exercise of reason, rendering outside sources or connections nonessential (Theobald and Dinkelman 1995: 7-8).

An additional motive for labeling particularly MacIntyre as a communitarian may be given his insistence on the efficacy of *tradition*; which is not the motif of a

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<sup>17</sup> Marx rejects the atomistic view of the individual in showing that liberal concepts of individuality are “expressions of the social alienation of free market conditions” (Sayers 2007: 84). It is Marx’s depiction of what has become known as the ‘fragmentation thesis’ (see Giddens 1990). In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx describes modernity in terms of “[the] constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of relations, everlasting uncertainties and agitation.... All fixed, fast-frozen relationships, with their venerable ideas and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become obsolete before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air.”

conservative impulse, but is intended as a direct attack on Enlightenment claims for reason's unconditional autonomy vested in 'individual radical autonomy' (see Annas 1989; Colby 1995; Schneewind 1982). As MacIntyre puts it in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*: "[I]t is an illusion to suppose that there is some neutral standing ground, some locus for rationality as such, which can afford rational resources sufficient for enquiry independent of all traditions" (MacIntyre 1988: 367).

MacIntyre therefore rejects the Kantian assumption<sup>18</sup> that reason legislates its own ends (MacIntyre 1984: 222), and thereby stands in general agreement to Gadamer, who rejects the *a priori* status of reason and emphasizes instead that Enlightenment reason is always situated within particular traditions (Gadamer 1975a: 340, 345).<sup>19</sup> Gadamer also rejects Kant's denigration of tradition as the source of 'irrationality' (Gadamer 1979: 246-247). His rejection defines the hermeneutic tradition and its central principle, the *hermeneutic circle*, in that all interpretation involves a tension between one's own perspective and that of another (Gadamer 1979: 273). It is therefore impossible to escape one's own horizon, leaving interpretation as always involving a negotiation between one's horizon of significance and the preconceptions of others within their own horizons (Gadamer 1979: 238, 261). But unlike Kant's confidence, Gadamer accepts as a point of principle that there can be no final truth claims.

In this section I have attempted to present the question of communitarianism, by which many define Taylor's outlook, as lying in tension with the questions of modernity that his thinking is *about*. In this way I have tried to neither dismiss nor thoroughly endorse the term as a label for his philosophy, yet to point out ways in which it can usefully indicate the core of his concerns about modern identities. Furthermore, I have sought to indicate some of the sources and concepts that inform his questions. Gadamer's sense of 'horizon' is one of these, but ought to be read within the field of existential hermeneutics rather than as a self-standing concept. For instance, when we notice how Gadamer's *horizon* informs what Taylor calls the "Best Account" principle (Taylor 1989a: 69), coupled to his notion of "epistemic gain"

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<sup>18</sup> In *Critique of Pure Reason* (Axi-xii), Kant states: "It is a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. This tribunal is no other than the *critique of pure reason*."

<sup>19</sup> See also Bernstein (1983: 142).

(Taylor 1989a: 72), it is necessary to bear in mind the Gadamarian background when, in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Taylor 1991a: 37), we read:

Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. Let us call this a horizon. It follows that one of the things that we can't do, if we are to define ourselves significantly, is suppress or deny the horizons against which things take on significance for us.

That same background informs topics such as Taylor's discussion of the moral dimension of cultural incommensurability or (as he does) the *possibility* of commensurability (see Taylor 1989a: 67-68). A more germane point, however, would be the question of authenticity,<sup>20</sup> which Taylor defines in opposition to 'self-determination', but in a manner that recognizes even in "facile relativism" an ideal central to modern culture of our being "true to my own originality" (Taylor 1991a: 23). Even in the notion of our being "self-interpreting animals" (Taylor 1985a: 10), Taylor's offers an *engaged* understanding of a self that is eminently social, and not atomistic (Taylor 1989a: 39). It is a Heideggarian self, for whom its being is open to question and matters to itself (Taylor 1992: 328). That mattering Taylor explores in terms of "the self as a kind of being that can only exist in normative, moral space" (Taylor 1989a: 49). Thus Taylor demonstrates how the possibility of an authentic identity is frustrated by a moral relativism which denies the validity of our horizons of significance and which underlies an instrumental attitude towards human relationships.

While both Taylor and MacIntyre remain unwavering critics of modernity, MacIntyre does not share Taylor's confidence in any social goods being retrievable from it. "For MacIntyre, the moral philosophy of modernity has lost sight of any conception of man's essence and hence is not able to make sense of the conceptual scheme it has inherited" (Kitchen 1999: 29). The term MacIntyre uses to describe modern liberalism's deterioration of moral frameworks necessary to make informed ethical judgments is "emotivism", which is seen to mirror larger shifts in moral thinking and practice at a social level. Emotivism "is the doctrine that all evaluative

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<sup>20</sup> Stemming from Kant, and Descartes before him, humanist liberalism has tended to regard the individual as atomistic, autonomous, and wholly self-determining. Grounded on this model of subjectivity is the view of freedom as distance or escape from society and its mechanisms of determination. Liberal negative freedom posits an autonomous self that can form its own purposes and act on its own to achieve them. Self-determining freedom – one is only free when that one decides for him or herself what it is that concerns that one. These concerns and motivations are shaped by the self and not by external influences. This notion of freedom 'demands that I break the hold of all such external impositions and decide for myself alone.' Taylor thinks that self-determining freedom is a deviant form of authenticity.

judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (MacIntyre 1984: 11-12).<sup>21</sup> But such a view, at best, conceals a *rationalist* picture of the self, and at worst, a highly *inauthentic* being. Taylor’s historical account of modern identity brings to the foreground the historical roots to contemporary culture’s pre-occupation with self-fulfillment, self-realization, in short, with being ‘authentic’ – that is, in a manner that occupies Theodor Adorno’s book, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1973).<sup>22</sup>

Taylor acknowledges that his understanding of ‘engaged human agency’ – meaning that “the world of the agent is shaped by his or her forms of life, or history, or bodily existence” (Taylor 1993a: 318) – that lies at the centre of his theory of authenticity is indebted to Heidegger’s key concept of *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) as a being who is “embodied in a culture, a form of life, a ‘world’ of involvements,” and the importance of Heidegger in helping us “emerge painfully and with difficulty, from the grip of modern rationalism” (Taylor 1993a: 318).

Taylor sees the idea of authenticity arising at the end of the eighteenth century, building on earlier forms of individualism represented by Descartes’s disengaged understanding of reason and John Locke’s unbounded, punctual self (Taylor 1991a: 25). The concept was given expression with the rise of Romanticism, and hence what developed out of that period (assisted by Rousseau) was a strong sense of individual identity and freedom, and with it its concomitant ideal to be “true to myself and my own particular way of being” (Taylor 1991a: 27-28). Johann Herder developed the

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<sup>21</sup> Political correctness would, in these terms, refer synonymously to emotivism. For a note on the Marxist roots of MacIntyre’s concept, see Chapter 3, footnote n.8.

<sup>22</sup> A comparison between Adorno and Taylor would require at least a chapter in itself; which is certainly beyond these bounds. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Adorno’s book is a criticism of German existentialism addressed from within the Frankfurt School’s attempt to restore the place of critical reason. There are a number of convergences between Adorno’s book and Taylor’s philosophical anthropology; and one of these is a rejection of the ‘inward turn’ that came from Descartes, and which Søren Kierkegaard exemplified in his ‘radical Christian inwardness’ that lost the Hegelian achievement of a dialectical mediation of subject and object. In a foreword to Adorno’s book, Trent Schroyer describes an aspect that closely resembles Taylor’s approach:

That is, the constitutive presuppositions of human subjectivity must themselves be dialectically related to the historical context in which determinate subjects are formed. Failure to so relate the subject and object of historically situated knowledge results in the fallacy of ‘objectivism’ – or the reduction of subjectivity to the in-itselfness of facts (e.g., positivism) or the innate principles of mind (the idealistic philosophy of the identity of reason and mind). Both forms of objectivism are the loss of critical (dialectical) reason. Only the tradition of reflective critique conceived of human subjectivity in a way that did not reduce it to the determinateness of natural facts or absorb it into the spiritual principles of absolute idealism. Kierkegaard’s radical inwardness becomes an idealistic objectivism by failing to comprehend subjectivity as a historical category” (Adorno 1973: xi).



idea of authenticity such that each of us has a ‘way of being a human being’, and hence ought not to live our lives imitatively to the demands of external conformity (Taylor 1991a: 28-29). Without being ‘true to myself’ and my originality, I therefore “miss what being human is for me” (Taylor 1991a: 29).

In short, Taylor’s notion of authenticity is neither the atomistic liberal ‘self in search of its own ends – of itself, for itself- nor is it a self utterly determined (if the term could ever mean such a condition). Taylor’s view of authenticity expresses the conviction that terms such as self-fulfillment and self-realization are not justifications for a narcissistic “liberalism of neutrality” (Taylor 1991a: 17-18). Authenticity is a moral ideal that ultimately answers questions such as *what is it good to be?* That is always a *social* and good given to a *dialogical* self. Expressive freedom or authenticity is, on the one hand, a capacity that all human beings have irrespective of their social or cultural location. On the other hand, the standards of authentic self-expression vary enormously, both at the individual and at the collective level (Smith 2002: 154). As with all of Taylor’s work, the question of authenticity is tied up with those of modernity, identity, freedom, communitarianism, and so on. The very sketchy connections I have made between these would normally be made within a much larger work, such as in Yong Huang’s (1998) extensive paper, *Charles Taylor’s transcendental arguments for liberal communitarianism*. Towards the conclusion, Huang commits himself to the ‘reconciliatory’ view that “Taylor is better characterized as a liberal communitarian” (Huang 1998: 97). I believe Huang’s assessment of Taylor as both a liberal and a communitarian ‘within limits’ is a correct one. Huang’s sense that his view must remain provisional is also well-considered.

Taylor is fundamentally a communitarian and his attempt to reconcile liberalism and communitarianism is made within the limits set by communitarianism itself. He does endorse and in a certain sense radicalize the liberal insight that the right moral-political principles for a culturally plural society must be neutral to various understandings of the good. In this sense, he is a liberal worthy of the name. Yet he is a communitarian because he argues that the liberal idea of neutrality he accepts and radicalizes, contrary to the liberal contention, also depends on an understanding of human goodness, although a universal and trans-cultural one.

I trust that this picture of Taylor can remain true even in view of some of his assertions, apparently different from his straight-forward endorsement of the communitarian claims to the priority of the good (the constitutive good) to the right (the life good) (Huang 1998: 97).

## Conclusion

This chapter expands on each of the three propositions that make up this thesis; the first proposition on Windschuttle's empiricism, the second on the *post*-Marxism of cultural studies, and the third on Taylor's philosophical anthropology. Each 'expansion' is intended to situate its proposition in a context that has a bearing on the overall argument. The first concerns the matter of the *science wars* which, I contend, provide the proper impetus behind the *media wars*. To the extent that my contention is correct, the stakes were considerably higher than providing suitably-educated personnel for the media industry. That does not mean, however, that journalism training has absolutely no grounds to find (postmodern) cultural studies disruptive; though it would seem that these objections apply rather more to matters of 'news production' than they do to 'news consumption'. But both, surely, fall under the title of *journalism*.

The second proposition concerns the *post*-Marxist problematic of cultural studies particularly in its formative years; indicating a dislocation between (residual) empiricist-leaning orthodox Marxism and the turn to elements of (emergent) Marxist-humanism. The purpose of this discussion is to suggest how to undermine Windschuttle's argument by showing that the *empiricist-idealist* dualism he uses to compare journalism with 'cultural studies' is in fact representative of the very problematic that gave rise to British Cultural Studies. Furthermore, and more significantly here, this was the problematic of modernity that *defines* Taylor's work; to which he has given his attention to oppose its empiricist and idealist excesses. The discussion on communitarianism above provides one site of intervention, where he mildly rejects the label and at the same time steers clear on its liberal opposite.

The third proposition is the indispensability claim that, in any valid transcendental argument, is apodictic – that is, it convinces merely by the fact of its being properly understood (Taylor 1995a: 27-28). That is the intention of the following chapter.

## Chapter Three

# Taylor's philosophical anthropology

This chapter serves the simple purpose of presenting those aspects of Taylor's rejection of epistemology and naturalistic social science considered to be necessary supportive background for the successive chapters. The chapter begins with the question of empiricism, leading to an introduction to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's<sup>1</sup> strategy to eliminate its dualistic pairing with 'intellectualism' or idealism. This discussion leads to one on Taylor's philosophical anthropology.<sup>2</sup> This chapter attempts the difficult task of *summarizing* those aspects of Taylor's philosophy that have a bearing on this thesis, borne out in argument set out in the remaining chapters. A significant purpose of those chapters is to explore the significance of Taylor's involvement in the formation of the New Left movement in Britain, and hence his contribution to the debates that led to the formation of British Cultural Studies.

The transition in argument in this chapter, from a critique of empiricism, through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, to Taylor's anthropology is not an arbitrary one. Nor is it cut off from argument in the previous chapters. Windschuttle's empiricism presupposes a Cartesian image of the self *disengaged* from the world it experiences, and whose 'perceptions' are *limited to representations of that world mediated 'in mind'*. Taylor rejects this image. In addition, he rejects John Locke's empiricist view of a "punctual self that is an *object* known through its transparent presence to a consciousness reflecting on a self abstracted from embodied concerns (Taylor 1989a: 49). Taylor's view of persons as "self-interpreting animals" (Taylor 1985a: 10) offers an *engaged* understanding of the self as "enframed in a social

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<sup>1</sup> The French phenomenologist was not read (at least in *English*) in the empiricist atmosphere of Oxford, and the fact that Taylor was called upon to defend his phenomenology in a debate with Oxford linguistic philosopher A.J. Ayer (Taylor and Ayer 1959) indicates something of the novelty that Merleau-Ponty appeared to be within that analytic domain.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Smith (1997: 174) provides a 'cautionary' footnote: "As Taylor reminds us, we have to use the expression 'philosophical anthropology' with special caution. On the one hand, there is hardly any official recognition of philosophical anthropology as a legitimate academic discipline in the English-speaking world. And where it does constitute a recognized strand of philosophical knowledge – in continental Europe – it is often associated with a particular brand of anti-democratic, 'culturalist' politics."

understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a tradition” (Taylor 1989a: 39), yet differs in important ways from similar narrative views that limit identity to a *construction* of accounts of the self. Jerome Bruner’s (2002) ‘narrative self’ typically represents this constructivist perspective: “A self is probably the most impressive work of art we ever produce, surely the most intricate’ (Bruner 2002: 14). Taylor’s account, by comparison, explores the self as a kind of being that can only exist in normative, moral space (Taylor 1989a: 49). His Hegelian conception of practice incorporates this central aspect of his philosophical anthropology.<sup>3</sup> In Taylor’s work,

[p]hilosophical anthropology ... is the attempt to elucidate the basic constitution of human subjectivity, where the human subject is understood as a being whose own being is a matter of self-interpretation. The fact that the subject is a self-interpreting being means that it can only be understood through its modes of mediation and externalization, rather than in an immediate conscious self-presence (Smith 1997: 23).

## Representationalism

A brief explanation of empiricist assumptions is bound to fall short on detail, and require being supported by stilts of footnotes. Nonetheless, empiricism, as part of that branch of philosophy called epistemology (or theory of knowledge), accounts for knowledge as arriving from experience and the evidence of sensory perception. As such, empiricism is the basis of (experimental) scientific method such that what is accepted as real is derived only through observations of the natural world. All notions of intuition and *a priori* reasoning are thus excluded. This view accords with Taylor’s (1964: 92) description of empiricism as the doctrine – starting principally from John

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<sup>3</sup> One easily gains the impression when reading Taylor, who has “never shown much enthusiasm for elaborating a technically detailed hermeneutic of interpretative ‘methodology’” (Smith 2004: 30), that one is getting little, if any, guidance towards arriving at a methodology that is analytically useful. It may be for this reason that one finds in empirical studies references to his work used only in a kind of ‘supporting role’. One study breaks with this trend by showing how Taylor’s concept of strong evaluation can usefully inform nursing practice; but argues in a manner that employs Alasdair MacIntyre’s (1984) virtue ethics as an important prop. Beyond this study I am aware of no others – at least, outside of political science – that applies Taylor’s work in empirical research with an ostensibly ‘Taylorian’ methodology. His work is engaged at mainly a conceptual and theoretical level. Nicholas Smith (2004) addresses Taylor’s work as belong to the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics; and it would be expected that he would turn his hand to hermeneutics as an interpretive method. “Although it is true that [Taylor] has done important work clarifying and defending the role of interpretation in social science, his core interests and intellectual commitments barely touch on hermeneutics in any sense” of textual analysis (Smith 2004: 29). A clue to the way forward appears in Smith placing the word methodology in scare quotes (Smith 2004: 30). I shall assume that he has in mind a distinction between method and methodology. This allows for a way of considering Taylor’s philosophical anthropology as useful in elaborating the axiomatic aspect of the latter, while ascribing to the former a requirement that it be diligently derived from that axiology. My understanding here is that axioms and methods are constituent elements of methodologies (Lincoln 1990: 73; Lincoln and Guba 2000: 167, 169; Lincoln and Guba 2003: 265-266; Potter 1996: 23-24).

Locke and finding its most recent expression in Rudolph Carnap's logical positivism,<sup>4</sup> though certainly not ending there – in which data is imagined as being passively received through mechanism of perception, and thereby producing experience as an effect of external reality *represented* in the mind as if impressed upon a *tabula rasa*.

The Lockean doctrine responds to Descartes's seventeenth century continental rationalism,<sup>5</sup> which, while confirming the modern scientific world-view, asserts also that knowledge is attributable to reason independently of the senses. The term by which this combination is proposed is called epistemological representationalism, which opposes Platonic idealism, and which “offers a very simple analysis of knowledge in terms of the cognitive relation to the subject to a mind-independent cognitive object” (Rockmore 2007: 30). A representational theory of knowledge holds that access to the real or mind-independent external world is gained through ideas in the mind.

For a representationalist, to know is not to know the object directly but rather to directly know the representation, which, it is held, correctly depicts the cognitive object. A representationalist approach to knowledge is pervasive in continental rationalism, English empiricism, in Kant, and in contemporary analytic philosophy. Representationalism, which was revived as early as Descartes, has been a main strategy for knowledge throughout the entire modern era. Representationalism is features in rationalists like Descartes, in empiricists like Locke, and in general throughout the new way of ideas. It is also in part features in Kant. Representationalism is as popular now as it has ever been (Rockmore 2007: 30).

In so far as this description of empiricism is correct, it would seem plainly evident that journalism combines both interpretive and empirical methods. But that is not in dispute, even as the debate over the linkages between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in journalism education assumes the form of whether the practice is better understood under an *empiricist* or an *idealist* rubric. The rubrics themselves are the issue in so far as both put forward a representationalist viewpoint that refuses an adequate conception of human subjectivity. One concept by which representationalism is contested is narrativity, of which Hayden White (1980) writes:

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<sup>4</sup> Carnap sought to combine empiricism with a version of rationalism that drew heavily on the younger Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Logical positivism's strongest tenet was its principle of verification such that propositions could be determined true or false in empirical ways that effectively deemed metaphysical and ethical statements as false. Logical positivism remained influential in post-war philosophy of science, and among its detractors in the 1960s were Thomas Kuhn, Peter Winch and Charles Taylor.

<sup>5</sup> The term “continental rationalism” refers to a set of epistemological doctrines to do with innate ideas built into the structure of mind. This school of thought separated the Medieval linkage between faith and reason, asserting instead an unrelenting ‘faith’ in human reason by which we can arrive at knowledge unassisted by revelation.

To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent – absent or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused (White 1980: 5).

What is being “programmatically refused” is the human subject. Solely empiricist conceptions of journalism can thereby be seen to violate the essentially human element at the core of its practice. Questions about the purposes of storytelling in social life invariably deflect toward the concepts of narrative and the constitution of identities and social life (Antonio 1991; Boje 1991) that seem more salient to the practice than simply getting the ‘facts right’. One way in which the temporality of human experience is expressed is through the notion of ‘narrative identity’ (Bruner 1991, 2004; Carr 1986: 126; Polkinghorne 1996; Ricoeur 1980) which is a lynchpin in Taylor’s philosophical anthropology (Taylor 1989a).

## **Selves, values and traditions**

When Wilbur Schramm (1957) published his survey of twenty years of journalism research, he noted that the period from 1937 to 1956 was marked by a development “from almost wholly non-quantitative research, to a fairly even balance between quantitative and non-quantitative; from an almost exclusive preoccupation with the methods and viewpoints of the humanities, to a concern with methods and problems of the behavioural sciences as well; from a view of the printed media as the shadows of the great personalities, to a view of them as part of the social process” (Schramm 1957: 91). By 1956 more than half the articles in *Journalism Quarterly* were “written in the spirit and method of the behavioural sciences” (Schramm 1957: 93). Schramm’s article continues to celebrate the hegemony of behaviourist and positivist research, which at the time was considered to be a beneficial advance of science.

This, then, is the trend: towards quantitative treatments, as opposed to non-quantitative; toward behavioural science method, as opposed to humanistic method; towards the study of process and structure, as opposed to the study of “great men”; and toward a world-wide concern with the press and press systems (Schramm 1957: 95-96).

Charles Taylor, as I shall argue, was among the very few scholars in the later 1950s and early 1960s to draw attention to the anthropological implications of behaviourism. Following Merleau-Ponty, Taylor’s first book targeted behavioural

psychology (Taylor 1964; 1970a; 1971a; 1971b; 1971c). When positivism had been discredited, he turned his attention to neuropsychology, cognitive science and other fields for subscribing to mechanistic models of persons (see Taylor 1977 [1985a: 15-44]; 1980a; 1985c; 1991b). The *methodological* matter is not between qualitative and quantitative methods *per se*, or whether these are incompatible (Howe 1988; 1992; 1998).<sup>6</sup> Instead, Taylor questions whether naturalism offers to the social sciences appropriate models for the study of human experience (Taylor 1980a; 1980c; 1985a: 1; 1985b: 21; 2002a).

It is not coincidental that during the same period that Schramm celebrated as having ‘advanced’ journalism research, there appeared a corresponding decline in discourses on *value*. Hans Joas, in *The Genesis of Values* (2001: 124), notes a ‘drying up’ of a discourse on value from the 1930s onwards, emerging again in the 1980s with Charles Taylor’s philosophical anthropology. Steven Hitlin and Jane Paliavin (2004) note the paucity of the concept of values in sociology since the 1960’s – though Franz Adler (1956) noted that decline a little earlier. The concept was similarly marginalized in psychology (Rohan 2000). The ‘decline’ does not amount to an absence as such, but to a shift from categorical imperatives to moral relativism.

Although Kant’s philosophy has profoundly influenced Western thought, it is obvious that at least among modern intellectuals his strict and absolutist ‘duty ethics’ has lost considerable appeal and force. A kind of relativism or situationism is in ascendency, an ethics which has a great appeal to those who like to think of themselves as ‘rational’ (Barney and Merrill 1975: 13).

Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) refers to this malaise as *emotivism* (following G. E. Moore) – “the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (MacIntyre 1984: 11-

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<sup>6</sup> One good reason for the imagined divide between quantitative and qualitative ‘research’ is due not to any incorrigibility, but as Thomas Lindlof (1991) explains, due quite simply to a lack of a suitable synonym to define the respective *methods* used. With reference to audience studies, he says that although the term *qualitative* “is not used universally by those who engage in non-quantitative” research, “qualitative inquiry is probably the best single descriptor for what the great majority of them do” (1991: 25). But that ‘doing’ may be part of the problem; and I do not wish to impute that Lindlof does not recognize this, for there certainly exists a range of research technologies that appear to be ‘all about meaning’, and another that is ‘all about numbers’. What I am calling ‘technologies’ (e.g., focus groups, questionnaires, factor analysis) belong under the category of *methods* and not that of *methodology*. As Kenneth Howe states in the context of educational research: “Far from being incompatible ... qualitative and quantitative methods are inextricably intertwined” (Howe 1988: 12).

12).<sup>7</sup> MacIntyre sees in modern liberalism a deterioration of the value resources or moral frameworks necessary to make informed ethical judgments, mirroring larger shifts in moral thinking and practice at a social level.<sup>8</sup> Christopher Smith (1991) describes MacIntyre's view in more detail:

MacIntyre points out that in the circumstances in which emotivism flourishes a double deception is being practiced, a self-deception and, at the same time, a deception of others. Each puts forward his or her views as if they were impersonal, as if they transcended any particular interest, and were in fact objectively, universally true. And all who join in the argument with these views act as if they accepted that this is how they are intended. Yet at the same time no one really takes what is said to be anything more than advocacy of the self-interest of the one saying it – this even if only a Nietzsche, it seems, is willing to come right out and say so. Tacitly everyone assumes that everyone is a sophist, but all are reluctant to admit it, even to themselves (Smith 1991: 9).

There is a close correspondence between MacIntyre's concept of *emotivism* (as a 'moral poverty') and Charles Taylor's concept of *weak evaluation*<sup>9</sup>: A similarly close correspondence exists between MacIntyre's conceptions of *goodness* (MacIntyre 1984: 15) and Taylor's concept of *strong evaluation*, understood as "the fact that these ends or goods stand independent of our own desires, inclinations, or choices, that they represent standards by which these desires and choices are judged" (Taylor 1989a: 4). But it is in terms of Taylor's concept of *hypergoods*, as goods standing independently of desire, that we can begin to see the implausibility of anyone (not without conscience) acting without moral frameworks or horizons. Hypergoods are extant also in *identities* whether we are aware of them or not (Taylor 1989a: 21).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> That is, modern liberal public morality, in MacIntyre's (1984) view, offers little more than the criterion of whether a certain action or option 'feels right'; and if that fails the test one can always fall back on the follow-the-leader dictates of political correctness.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Louw (2005), citing John Hartley (1982: 21), describes this condition (without naming it as 'emotivism' specifically) as one of growing cynicism and disillusionment with political processes in Western democracies: "The demonized celebrity serves the purpose of making 'the enemy' tangible (a 'face'), and providing a convenient fulcrum into which 'boo' words can be poured – as opposed to the 'hooray' words attached to heroes and victims" (Louw 2005: 60). This phenomenon is evident in journalism practice in so far as "[j]ournalists instinctively prefer one alternative over the other, depending on their split-second judgment of the situation" (Van Ginneken 1998: 147-48). On the one hand, we can assume Van Ginneken is referring to habits and typifications by which people (journalists included) negotiate their taken-for-granted world. But journalists do not just 'live in' the world, but more actively than most must interpret it for an audience.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor distinguishes between strong and weak evaluations. Strong evaluations concern *the moral worth* of desires, whereas weak evaluations are morally neutral (Taylor 1985a: 16). Taylor aims the concept of strong evaluation at utilitarian and *emotivist* attempts to reduce morality to mere desires.

<sup>10</sup> Were this not so, it would be possible for any subject to occupy any identity as an actor taking on a particular character – lost in delight of trying on one mask after another. Identity would not really matter, and its 'loss' could be simply remedied by selecting a new one. As for the notion of 'multiple identities', this concept surely refers to 'habituated roles', and does not evince the kinds of responses



Our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not .... The notion of an identity defined by some merely de facto, not strongly valued preference is incoherent (Taylor 1989a: 30).

Taylor's philosophical anthropology – being a hermeneutic-pragmatist philosophy – deals with many of these questions, and advocates in particular a 'narrative identity' in which human subjects make temporal sense of who they are; revising that narrative as new experience comes into play. But Taylor does not advocate a self as an entity frozen in time; and it follows from the sheer temporality of life, Taylor thinks, that "the issue of the direction of our lives must arise for us" (Taylor 1989a: 47).

In Taylor's view, a life without strong value would not be recognizably human. The self cannot but be oriented to some conception of the good in the sense that human beings cannot but live with some comprehension of the distinction between mere life and a properly human life (Smith 2002: 97).

As Taylor puts it, "making sense of one's life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra" (Taylor 1989a: 47). If one accepts the intimate connections Taylor makes between moral frameworks and the question of the self, it becomes more plausible to accept that an ethical theory of journalism can only be elaborated in tandem with questions of goodness and value. Indeed, the idea of a journalist as a 'moral witness' would make little sense without a corresponding conception of value (Ettema and Glasser 1998; Plaisance 2002).

Strong evaluation is a core concept in Taylor's philosophical anthropology, in which he holds as a first principle "the conviction that human reality is structured, and in some sense constituted, by layers of meaning" (Smith 2002: 18; see Laitinen 2003: 67-71). Taylor's anthropology extensively draws its "engaged view" from Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology; from which Taylor is able to fashion a view such that, in Arto Laitinen's (2003: 64) description, "one's grasp of the [lifeworld] is practical, emotional, and evaluative rather than purely cognitive or descriptive."

The disengaged viewpoint to which Taylor objects entails a reification of mind, and certain hegemonic claims made on behalf of a spectrum of Cartesian positions in the philosophy of mind. Taylor's strategy is therefore partly reminiscent of Gilbert Ryle's (1947) attack on the Cartesian *Cogito*, in which the self is understood as an inner mind separated from an outer world. It is the implications of the Cartesian

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that might follow the question of "who am I?" Phrased otherwise, who is the one trying on the different masks?

inner/outer sorting and its corresponding epistemology in conceiving *mentalist* conceptions of human subjectivity that welds Taylor's attention. He does not object to the natural science view that has benefited most from this epistemological construal, but when this disengaged view is then read into the "very constitution of the mind" (Taylor 1995: 64), what ought to be human experience and understanding proper is reduced to a figment possessing mere consciousness.

[T]his model, Taylor insists, is inconsistent with the phenomena of embodied subjectivity. We have seen that an embodied subject is essentially a being at grips with the world. It perceives the world that is non-indifferent to it and acts in the world on the basis of its desires and purposes (Smith 2002: 55).

This brings us to the matter with which I began this section: Wilbur Schramm's (1957) approval of the advances behaviourism had made in social science in general, and specifically in journalism research by the late 1950s. The issue had not to do with the relative powers of research *methods* – though, no doubt, benefits are plainly evident in combining methods germane to both qualitative and quantitative research procedures. The issue, for Taylor, concerns the implied anthropology in behaviourism, positivism, and the epistemological construal – that is, extending the abstract and 'mathematised'<sup>11</sup> Cartesian concept of mind to the level of a generalized model of perception and the human subject.

*Empiricism* stands in Taylor's critique as the epitome of the Cartesian and Lockean extension of the seventeenth century scientific revolution preserved in the Enlightenment. Analytical philosophy in the Anglo-American tradition, too, stands in his view as reinforcing that tradition (Taylor 1966a); and in Britain became the main impediment to Marxism extending any further than it did there. The (Romantic) phenomenological, hermeneutic and existentialist traditions in continental philosophy stand as antithetical to empiricism. And as I have contended since the first chapter, these two broad movements of modern thought – empiricism representing the analytical tradition, and phenomenology and hermeneutics representing the continental tradition – are thus the modern matrix upon which Windschuttle's issue with cultural theory can be mapped.

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<sup>11</sup> Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico noticed a degree of anthropomorphism in Descartes' thinking, projecting mind onto the universe, and discovering 'there' the operations of its own contingency, thus failing to see that the human thinker stands to mathematics as God stands to creation. For Vico, then, "our mind has a perfect grasp of its objects because it has made them" (Tiles and Tiles 1998: 426).

These two *contending* traditions are very much a part of current anthropological thinking. Separating these traditions, even as I am doing – between *empiricist* and *hermeneutic* monikers – belies the range of scholarship that attempts to use language and conceptions from contending frameworks to argue an alternative case. The effect is to appear so as to straddle contending traditions; and certain philosophers of science, such as Daniel Dennett, seem to achieve this effect better than many of his hermeneutic opponents. But as a hermeneutic philosopher, Taylor appears to be an exception, as borne out at least by his recent essay, *Foundationalism and the Inner/Outer Distinction* (Taylor 2002a).

Generally situated within the continental tradition, Hans Joas (2000: 2) makes the claim that the self is “one of the greatest discoveries in the history of the social sciences.” His pragmatic perspective on self and identity follows a premise similar to one outlined by Andreas Reckwitz (2002: 244-45), that the emergence of values cannot be explained within the rational action tradition that followed from the utilitarianism of Scottish moral philosophy. Nor does the normatively oriented understanding of action in the social sciences which Durkheim and Parsons presented as the proper perspective of sociology offer a convincing way in which to theorize the processes in which values emerge (Reckwitz 2002: 245). Michael Oakeshott offers an alternative, Hegelian, model: “The self appears as activity ... not a ‘thing’ or a ‘substance’ capable of being active; it is an activity” primordially so, with “nothing antecedent to it” (Oakeshott 1962: 496).

Representing analytic philosophy, Daniel Dennett’s *cognitivist* ‘self’ is modeled on biological tendencies towards self-preservation. A minimal (biological) self is “an organization which tends to distinguish, control and preserve portions of the world, an organization that thereby creates and maintains boundaries” (Dennett 1990: 10-11). Both recognizing and maintaining boundaries appear, in Dennett’s (1993: 414-415) discussion, as more than a metaphor of how we construct, constitute and distinguish our selves from what, in Oakeshott terms, is the “not-self” (Oakeshott 1962: 496). “This fundamental biological principle of distinguishing self from world, inside from outside, produces some remarkable echoes in the highest vaults of our psychology,” Dennett (1993: 415) writes, before describing ways in which various species make their outer boundaries – whether beavers, spiders, or termites, and the relative cooperations, resources and ‘ways of being’ (for consciousness and intention ought

not to be imputed) by which dams, webs or anthills are extruded from the practices of a being that is capable of constructing each boundary (Dennett 1993: 415-416). An important point Dennett makes here is that it is these boundaries that partly define the organisms that construct them. The way in which an organism ‘bounds’ itself is significantly part of its being. Human beings, too, have a special tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition: by telling stories about who we are (Dennett 1993: 418). “Each normal individual of this species makes a *self*. Out of its brain it spins a web of words” (Dennett 1993: 416).

And just as spiders don’t have to think, consciously and deliberately, about how to spin their webs, and just as beavers ... do not consciously and deliberately plan the structures they build, we do not consciously and deliberately figure out what narratives to tell and how to tell them. Our tales are spun, but for the most part we don’t spin them; they spin us. Our human consciousness, and our narrative selfhood, is their product, not their source (Dennett 1993: 418).

A third (phenomenological) perspective, to which Dennett appears to allude, is found in a range of thought that proceeds from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl;<sup>12</sup> but it is often difficult to detect the family resemblances in the divergent schools that claim a genetic link to Husserl. In Taylor’s case, that link is twice removed through his reading of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Existential phenomenologists<sup>13</sup> also share the view that philosophy should not be conducted from a disengaged standpoint, partly because existential phenomena show themselves only when engaged with the world in a particular way. That way, which is another ‘trait’ common to these schools of thought, is the understanding that subjects are involved in the world in *pre-objective* ways; a notion that stands at the cusp of Taylor’s intellectual career (Ayer and Taylor 1959; Kullman and Taylor 1958). I shall explain this concept briefly.

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<sup>12</sup> Husserlian phenomenology is one attempt to undo what Cartesian thinking has wrought. But it is not to this, but to students of Husserl – mainly Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty – that Taylor turns. The phenomenological reduction in Husserl sees objective representations as one amongst many ways of making human experience explicit, rather than as the primary or essential mode of experience. As Taylor says in ending his essay, *The Concept of a Person* (1985): “[T]he struggle between rival approaches in the science of man ... is no mere question of the relative efficacy of different methodologies, but is rather one facet of a clash of moral and spiritual outlooks” (1985: 114). Questions of method can therefore be seen to hinge not so much on their veracity and technical accuracy, but on the picture of human agency found in the philosophical foundations that underpin them.

<sup>13</sup> The existential phenomenologist’s aim is “to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt what a forest, a prairie or a river is” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: ix).

For Heidegger, a phenomenon “signifies that which shows itself in itself, the manifest” (Heidegger 1962: 51). Merleau-Ponty agrees, and would add that our “primary perception” of entities “is non-thetic,<sup>14</sup> pre-objective and pre-conscious experience” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 242). Unlike the abstractions of objects that empiricists perform, the contextual whole from which those parts are taken remains *pre-objective* for so long as its structure resists reflection. In Merleau-Ponty’s terms, it is a “positive indeterminate which prevents the spatial, temporal and numerical wholes from becoming articulated into manageable, distinct and identifiable terms” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 12).

Merleau-Ponty, and all phenomenologists generally, attack the naturalistic notion that objective thought, whereby the external world is separated from an ‘inner’ perception of that world, is *primitive to perception* (Taylor 2002a; 2004). Instead, objective thought is derived from the pre-objective consciousness, where there exists no distinction between subject and object, and where the perceived world remains essentially indeterminate. But Merleau-Ponty’s specific contribution is the understanding that consciousness is necessarily embodied, and that its bodily incarnation determines its total nature (Macann 1993; Moran 2000).

Journalists, for example, can be understood as engaged in a practice embedded in the material contingencies that both prescribe and afford self-constitution. One concept that expresses this dynamic is Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of a *habitus*. In *An Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu argues that social members learn to participate in ‘social games’ before they *consciously choose* to participate. That is, practitioners and participants are always already, and *prereflectively*, involved in the practices. That is, even as they learn, they are already participating. Much of the power of the socialization process entailed in ‘social games’ is experienced in bodily terms, as simply as part of who we are and how we exist in the world (Bourdieu 1977: 72, 78-79). This sense is the *habitus*, “embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history ... [it] is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product ... [and] what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present” (Bourdieu 1990: 56). In

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<sup>14</sup> A *non-thetic* perception of something refers to an occasion when we have no express experience of it (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 258). It is simply happening before us, like travelling on a train and seeing the countryside passing before one’s eyes. Doing a job, as in reporting, would fit the same category in so far as we are engaged, coping in the practice without being specifically aware that it is journalism that we are doing and not baking a cake.

short, the *habitus* is the meeting point between institutions and bodies. It is the basic way in which each person as a biological being connects with the socio-cultural order in such a way that the various ‘games of life’ keep their meaning, and keep being played.

Produced by the work of inculcation and appropriation that is needed in order for objective structures, the products of collective history, to be reproduced in the form of the durable, adjusted dispositions that are the condition of their functioning, the *habitus*, which is constituted in the course through which agents partake of the history objectified in institutions, is what makes it possible to inhabit institutions, to appropriate them practically, and so to keep them in activity, continuously pulling them from the state of dead letters, reviving the sense deposited in them, but at the same time imposing the revisions and transformations that reactivation entails (Bourdieu 1990: 57).

Central to Bourdieu’s thesis is his determination to overcome those dualisms typical of the Western intellectual tradition. The related dichotomy between *theory* from *practice* is one conceptual framework that confuses by treating these categories as existing in reality. In journalism ethics, for instance, it leads to the mistake that journalists ‘apply’ ethical principles to actuality instead of ‘working out’ the problem using indeterminate resources. Contrasting *knowing* to *doing* tends to neglect this kind of non-theoretical knowledge that is implicit in practical skills – encouraging a value judgment that mental work is ‘better’ than physical labour.

I shall not refer to Bourdieu again, even though a large part of the groundwork for this thesis began with his theory. I shall be using Taylor instead, whose thought is significantly indexed in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. It is interesting to note Iordanis Marcoulatos’s (2001) observation that “reading Merleau-Ponty is like reading a philosophical commentary on Bourdieu” (Marcoulatos 2001: 1). The two thinkers – one a philosopher, and the other a sociologist – compliment each other, and many of their concepts are interchangeable.

Merleau-Ponty’s *phenomenal body* can be seen as equivalent to *habitus* as presented in Bourdieu’s work; I would argue that the *habitus* is the overall actuality of a living human being as immediately experienced – it may not be reduced to a cluster of dispositions as superficially assumed by certain commentators (Marcoulatos 2001: 2).

One distinction between the two, however, is that while Merleau-Ponty grounds his thought in Edmund Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology,<sup>15</sup> Bourdieu’s is

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<sup>15</sup> Husserl proposed that we could suspend our natural attitudes of the world and rely instead on ‘categorical intuitions’ and presuppositionless understandings to get at the essences of things. Husserl rejected the claims of Max Scheler and others that the epistemic boundaries between the self and the other were dissolved in an unmediated empathic encounter. Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty

grounded more in French structuralism (Hanks 2005: 71, 77-78). Merleau-Ponty, however, as I shall argue a few chapters forward, entertained structuralism in his theory; but he is better understood as suspended somewhere between structuralism and Husserlian phenomenology from which he develops his “concept of the ‘pre-objective’ world [being] the key at once to his theory of perception and to his philosophical anthropology” (Kullman and Taylor 1958: 108). Merleau-Ponty writes:

We make perception out of things perceived. And since perceived things themselves are obviously accessible only through perception, we end by understanding neither. We are caught up in the world and we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of the world. If we did we should see that the quality is never experienced immediately, and that all consciousness is consciousness of something (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 4-5).

Taylor readily incorporates Merleau-Ponty’s conceptions of perception, intention and embodiment into his own analytic thinking. The ‘pre-objective’ points not primarily to the world within which we move, setting for the phenomenologist the task of attaining pure description. Instead, it aims “to describe the ‘original’ experience upon which our universe of descriptive discourse is ‘founded’” (Kullman and Taylor 1958: 110).

This leads back to the question of Keith Windschuttle’s *empiricist* framework, and whether it *accurately* imagines journalism practice. That is, can journalism practice be understood (even explained) within an imaginary that befits mechanistic models of natural science rather more than they do the interpretive practices that *ought* to be ascribed to journalism within the social sciences? I think not. Again, I draw attention to the ‘ought’ in so far as naturalistic thinking holds considerable sway in and over the social sciences. My contention is that the hermeneutic framework behind Taylor’s philosophical anthropology, which both critiques naturalism in social science and informs a version of ‘practice theory’ that is particularly interpretive, offers a far more plausible imaginary. Theodore Schatzki (2001) contends that Taylor’s conception of practice cannot stand in a dualistic relation to anything

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argued that we can perceive the other because our own bodies at times present themselves as something unfamiliar to us. Any further knowledge of the other is mediated through language and culture. This position leads to Martin Heidegger, who argued that we do not know the other directly, but through the world of things which point to a social world populated by others. From Heidegger’s focus on how tradition determines our relations with others by shaping the world of common meanings, it is a short step to Hans Georg Gadamer’s focus on language and the shift from phenomenological intersubjectivity to hermeneutics and mutual interpretation. At this point we reach Taylor who, in developing his philosophical anthropology, advances a *thin* version of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenal self – that orients us to the physical world – and a narrative self that orients us to the social world.

resembling ‘theory’, but stands instead in a constitutive relation to the social orders of which they are a determinate though self-modifying component.

Taylor ... highlights practices as site and not just as activity: Practices are contexts where actions are carried out. He suggests, further, that the meanings that are instantiated in the arrangements established within a given practice are drawn from the possibilities contained in the practice’s semantic space. He thereby links the establishment of social order to abstract contexts. Taylor also, finally, anchors a practice’s semantic space in the distinctions marked by the language used in it. For Taylor, as for many contemporary theorists, language is an essential constitutive dimension of social reality – and also of practices and social orders as a result (Schatzki 2001: 46).

## **The naturalistic self and the reification of mind**

Merleau-Ponty’s *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/1962) sets up as its protagonists, *empiricism* and *intellectualism* (or idealism). But unlike intentions (such as Windschuttle’s) to argue for one against the other, Merleau-Ponty’s strategy is to show how each, in destroying its opponent, accomplishes its own self-destruction, “thereby creating an intellectual vacuum into which Merleau-Ponty is able to move with his own alternative account of the facts” (Macann 1993: 165). It would be mistaken to consider empiricism an unassailable and untroubled region of science. Empiricism has as its starting point the doctrine of sensation as a *primitive* source of knowledge; and depicts experience to be derivative of sensation *a posteriori* (Kitcher 1980). That is, “[a]ccording to Locke, our understanding of the world is composed just from the simple ideas we receive through sensation and reflection” (Nagel 2000: 346).

To claim to possess more substantive *a priori* knowledge – say, to know *a priori* the principle of the uniformity of nature – would be to risk forgetting our clearly rational promise to respect the deliverances of experience, whatever they might be. So there seems to be a very short path from the quite uncontroversial admission of experience as a source of real information to the quite controversial rejection of all nontrivial *a priori* knowledge (Nagel 2000: 345-346).

Jennifer Nagel’s essay is not an empiricist apologetic, but argues, mainly through a treatment of empiricist psychologist Bas van Fraassen’s work, that “neither traditional [Lockean] nor contemporary empiricism is as economical as it might at first have appeared, and that there might be no such thing as a pure empiricism which succeeds in banishing all *a priori* knowledge” (Nagel 346). While van Fraassen insists on identifying empiricism as “the epistemological thesis that experience is the sole legitimate source of information about the world” (in Nagel 2000: 357), he admits



“not to have a full account of experience that is satisfactory from an empiricist standpoint” (Nagel 2000: 358). The constraints he sets on experience reduces his “position to a phenomenalism of the present moment” (Nagel 2000: 365), yet at the same time he has to account for our ability to relate our sensation with the things we sense on grounds that do not concede *a priori* knowledge. In Nagel’s view, van Fraassen is caught between empiricism and aspects of experience he cannot explain without compromising his premises. One can say that his dilemma is that of empiricism in general.

Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) strategy is not about finding a way out of that dilemma, but to erase it altogether. He sets up ‘empiricism’ and ‘intellectualism’ as protagonists, though doing so in terms too broad to specify its use in any particular philosophy (see Moran 2000: 391). In line with David Schenck’s (1985) essay on the problem of perspectivism with respect to embodiment in Merleau-Ponty,<sup>16</sup> Taylor (1967b) indicates that this seeming imprecision has to do with “go[ing] beyond the dualism mind-nature by developing a conception of the *body* which partakes of both sides” (Taylor 1967b: 113. Emphasis added). The contradiction that Merleau-Ponty faces is that between the non-perspectival implications of a synthesis of all perspectives (or a view from anywhere and nowhere), and the necessary perspectivalism of (embodied) perception.

Caught in a more Kantian dilemma than one might have expected, Merleau-Ponty wants to sacrifice neither situated and subjectivity nor the truths of philosophy .... The apparent necessity of choosing must then be shown to be illusory, the two alternatives shown to be actually two facets of the same reality. Or, more pointedly, the two facets must be seen as necessary partners in existence – partners whose tension is the definition of human being-in-the-world (Schenck 1985: 310-311).

Added to the concept of embodiment is that of horizon, which, intertwined with subjectivity, indicates that a real world can only be posited in the realm of experience, rendering objectivity impossible apart from “our unique internal experience” (Schenck 1985: 312). “Given the logic of our existence, which is also the logic of our perception, we can focus on the ‘boundary’ of an horizon and transform it into a ‘figure’; but the shift simply engenders another horizon ... the definition of focal perception” (Schenck 1985: 311). The argument around embodiment can be extended

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<sup>16</sup> David Schenck (1985) poses the Nietzschean problem that perspectivism must necessarily lead to relativism. But Schenck argues that Merleau-Ponty’s account of perspectivism is still our best account of why Nietzsche’s sketches of topics from various angles in multiple aphorisms yields a compelling and rich universe, and not simply chaos” (1985: 313).

to physics and its *scientific* experiments, which necessarily occur in time and space; and would be impossible to monitor “in an eternal present a random collection of atomistic moments” (Schenck 1985: 312).

Given Merleau-Ponty’s insistence that “the external world may not be severed from the experienced one” (Schenck 1985: 312), it appears that he has embraced the central pillar of empiricism in so far as experience is the *sole* source of knowledge of the world. But within empiricism, experience is limited to a ‘figment’ of *sensation as something absolutely originary* – in its purview, sensations as “the building blocks of experience, to furnish the atoms out of which the composite whole of experience is constructed” (Macann 1993: 165). It is that doctrine that becomes the starting point of Merleau-Ponty’s *critique* of empiricism, and rejects the claim that *sensations are original* on the basis that its anthropological implications are grounded in scientific *ideology* instead of actual empirical evidence. That is, a *mechanistic* anthropology is presupposed instead of accounted for.

The traditional notion of sensation was not a concept born of reflection, but a late product of thought directed towards its objects, the last element in the representation of the world, the furthest removed from its original source, and therefore the most unclear. Inevitably science, in its general effort towards objectification, evolved a picture of the human organism as a physical system undergoing stimuli which were themselves identified by their physiochemical properties, and tried to reconstitute actual perception on this basis, and to close the circle of scientific knowledge by discovering the laws governing the production of knowledge itself, by establishing an objective science of subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 12).

Sensations are derived, firstly by presupposing qualities in certain objects, and then by isolating and abstracting those qualities from those objects. Merleau-Ponty objects to mechanistic explanation of perceptual experience because they leave present a ‘seeing’ in which nobody is actually there to see. It is consciousness without experience; a ‘blind sensor’ upon which sense data impinge as a causal reaction on a subject – the *Cartesian* subject disengaged from the world it merely *represents*. But even supposing it were a full-blooded being present in experience, the contingencies of that present experience may not be adequate to draw atomized and abstracted parts into a coherent whole. Memory then has to be resorted to in order to support the mind with the hindsight of past experience, thus combining sensation with recognition. Thus, as always, the *objective world is presupposed*.

Thus the appeal to memory presupposes what it is supposed to explain; the patterning of data, the imposition of meaning on a chaos of sense-data. No sooner is the

recollection of memories made possible than it becomes superfluous, since the work it is being asked to do is already done (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 23).

With empiricism defeated in Merleau-Ponty's argument, a rationale is now provided for idealism, or what he refers to as *intellectualism*. But this turns out to be the reverse side of its empiricist opposite by subscribing to the same objectified world as its empiricist adversary. Both take the objective world for granted. "Whereas empiricism seeks to arrive at a correct representation of the world without any advanced knowledge, intellectualism is in possession of the intelligible structure of the world from the first though, for the most part, only in principle rather than practice" (Macann 1993: 167). Merleau-Ponty presents *empiricism* and *intellectualism* as nominal adversaries, and then shows their deeper agreement in presupposing the objective world. Thus he expresses the gist of his strategy to undermine the dualism that sustains them:

Empiricism cannot see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it, and intellectualism fails to see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or equally again we should not be searching. They are in agreement in that neither can grasp consciousness *in the act of learning*, and that neither attaches due importance to that circumscribed ignorance, that still 'empty' but already determinate intention which is attention itself (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 33).

In light of Merleau-Ponty's strategy it becomes clearer why Keith Windschuttle's charge against cultural studies self-destructs. His empiricism entails an implicit philosophical anthropology that assumes an implausible picture of journalism practice. Windschuttle (1997a: 4) obviously understands journalists to be *conscious* beings,<sup>17</sup> but this minimal condition says little about what makes them human in any phenomenological sense of *experience* (see Zahavi 2005: 301-302). That is, on grounds of his empiricist assumptions, there are good reasons to believe that the conception of the self and the kind of human 'behaviour' he posits (and hence, the kind of journalism *practice*) is imagined along lines of a Cartesian subject disengaged from the world.<sup>18</sup> This subject is not extraneous to the modern condition, but is intrinsic to its Enlightenment common sense – denoting a shift from a "*substantive* conception of rationality when *getting it right* is a necessary condition of being rational" (Taylor 1994a: 217; emphasis added), to a *procedural* conception of reason.

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<sup>17</sup> "Journalists go out into society, make observations about what is done and what is said, and report them as accurately as they can. They have to provide evidence to verify and corroborate their claims and they have to attribute their sources" (Windschuttle 1997: 4).

<sup>18</sup> See Charles Taylor's essay, *Social Theory as Practice* (1985b).

What we are called to do is not to become contemplators of order, but rather to construct a picture of things following the canons of rational thinking. These are differently conceived by Descartes and Locke, but on this basic notion of reason they are one. The aim is to get to the way things really are, but these canons offer our best hope of doing that. Rationality is above all a property of the process of thinking, not of the substantive content of thought (Taylor 1989a: 168).

In the Lockean theory of mind, ideas derive from sense impressions; or what in the more recent register are referred to as ‘sensory data’ thematised by disengaged, philosophical-scientific reflection (Taylor 1989a: 159ff). In the Cartesian intellectualist theory, mind is furnished with ideas (building blocks of knowledge) imagined as discrete representations (Smith 2004: 33-34; Taylor 1989a: 143ff). In both theories, our representations are considered primitive. But both theories – embracing “the famous historical controversy between the Cartesian variant, stressing clear and distinct inferences, and the empiricist counterposition, which focuses on rules of evidence, the methodologies of induction” (Taylor 1994b: 217) – take the subject on the foundationalist “inward turn of Augustine to the new stance of disengagement which Descartes inaugurates and Locke intensifies” (Taylor 1989a: 177):

With a proceduralist conception of theoretical reason, we turn towards our own thinking processes. We turn to reflexive self-examination. This is a key element in the whole epistemological shift of modern philosophy, and the accompanying ambition of founding our knowledge claims. Together with the resolute-composite method, it produces the typical structures of modern epistemology (Taylor 1994b: 217).

This picture imposes ‘what it is to know’ onto ‘what it is to perceive’. This inversion rests on an impoverished phenomenology of perceptual experience, and “fails to acknowledge the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge, that is, its transcendental conditions” (Smith 2004: 34). In Merleau-Ponty, perception is our primary access to the world. Taylor follows this view, and thus opposes the classical Cartesian and Lockean doctrines of mind which are paradigmatic of modern ‘common sense’ understandings: “We perceive before we reflect, theorise, or judge” (Smith 2004: 33). The point I am driving at here concerns the modern (Enlightenment) conception of the self as something to which we become effectively *disengaged*. After a discussion on Locke’s “punctual self” – an objectified, de-natured and reified self abstracted from its embodiment, a pure *ego* “diagnosed in empiricist theories of the ‘mental’” (Taylor 1989a: 171) – Taylor arrives at a synopsis of the inwardly-turned modern condition:

Adopting the stance of disengagement towards oneself – even if one doesn't push it to the Lockean extreme of punctuality – defines a new understanding of human agency and its characteristic powers.... To come to live by this definition – as we cannot fail to do so, since it penetrates and rationalizes so many of the ways and practices of modern life – is to be transformed: to the point where we see this way of being as normal, as anchored in perennial human nature in the way our physical organs are. So we come to think that we 'have' selves as we have heads. But the very idea that we have or are 'a self', that human agency is essentially defined as 'the self', is a linguistic reflection of our modern understanding and the radical reflexivity it involves. Being deeply embedded in this understanding, we cannot but reach for this language; but it was not always so (Taylor 1989a: 177).<sup>19</sup>

Taylor's strategy is partly reminiscent of Gilbert Ryle's (1949) attack on Descartes's concept of mind, but also shows more affinity to Merleau-Ponty's critique of the classical doctrines of perception. Taylor's reservations about the underlying concept of the 'mental' (found notably in hegemonic forms of cognitive science) is based on his view that it "misconstrues the nature of human experience" (Smith 2002: 51) – a misconstrual that is most evident in classical Cartesianism and empiricism, the philosophical precursors not only of cognitive science but a spectrum of positions in the philosophy of mind. Taylor's views in this regard are largely shared by a wide range of scholars such as Dan Zahavi (2005), Jeff Coulter (1999) and Alasdair MacIntyre (1984).

Taylor maintains that the Cartesian-Lockean reification of 'ideas' bears little resemblance to lived experience. He opposes this combined view by mustering Merleau-Ponty's insistence that we must describe how things appear to the subject prior to reflection; to the perceptual, *pre-objective* world, which signifies in a way that relates to the desires and purposes of the perceiver. Perceptual knowledge is agent's knowledge (Taylor 1995: 10). Things in the world are partially disclosed, and point to other things, and serve as points of orientation for the subject's activities. Perception is inseparable from coping and engagement with things. The content of perception, which is our "primary mode of access to the world," is not contingently related to the world in which the knowing subject is embodied. "[T]he predicament of knowing subjects is never entirely free of its agent structure" (Smith 2004: 33). The classical theorists go wrong in their epistemology, which advocates "an impoverished

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<sup>19</sup> The turn inward infects both the Enlightenment and Romantic aspects of modernity, thus indicating its deep embeddedness in modern thought (Taylor 1989a: 139, 156, 183, 251). "Even those Romantics who aspired to rediscover Spirit in nature learn the nature of Spirit through an inward turn" (Taylor 1989a: 258).

phenomenology of perceptual experience” (Smith 2004: 34). This “ontologizing of rational procedure” (Taylor 1995: 61) transposes

reflective procedures for generating objective knowledge onto the very nature of the perceiving subject. The method of analysing a complex phenomenon into simple components, treating them as neutral bits of information, and rationally reprocessing them, is written into ‘the mind’ itself .... A picture of what it is to know obscures our understanding of what it is like to be a perceiver (Smith 2004: 34).

The classical doctrine persists in contemporary naturalistic approaches to knowledge that render background context as “merely a causal antecedent of our cognitions” thus confusing “a transcendental condition of knowledge with a causal-empirical one; or rather, it fails to acknowledge that there is an issue about transcendental conditions for epistemology to address as well as an issue about the mechanisms of representation” (Smith 2004: 34).

This difference is evident in ethnocentric types of development theory that stress modernization.<sup>20</sup> In his essay, *Two Theories of Modernity* (1995b), Taylor distinguishes between *cultural* and *acultural* theories of modernity. In *acultural* theories, modernity is conceived, by virtue of instrumental reason, as a set of transformations that any culture can go through (Taylor 1995b: 24-25). *Cultural* theories of modernity, as Taylor conceives them, attend to the internally generated pressures that force one particular culture to evolve into another. They attempt to reconstruct the intrinsic appeal of the values and standards that help constitute modern culture, as they mutated from the values and standards of a predecessor culture (Taylor 1995b: 24).<sup>21</sup>

The essay continues to draw out implications of the cultural/acultural distinction that Taylor develops in an earlier essay, *Inwardness and the Culture of Modernity* (1992), where the connections between ‘inwardness’ and modern rationality are given

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<sup>20</sup> Wilbur Schramm (Schramm 1960; Lerner and Schramm 1967; Schramm and Atwood 1981) was a staunch advocate of modernization theory, which sought to impose Western industrial development as a template for the managed evolution of ‘pre-modern’ societies. The perceived role of communication science was to implement communication technologies for the purposes of ‘information transfer’, the imagined engine of development. Marxists critiques of modernization are developed in dependency theory (see Amin 1976).

<sup>21</sup> “I’m leaning on a use of the word culture which is analogous to the sense it often has in anthropology. I am evoking the picture of a plurality of human cultures, each of which has a language and a set of practices that define specific understandings of personhood, social relations, states of mind/soul, goods and bads, virtues and vices, and the like. These languages are often mutually untranslatable. With this model in mind, a ‘cultural’ theory of modernity is one that characterizes the transformations that have issued in the modern West mainly in terms of the rise of a new culture” (Taylor 1995b: 24).

particular emphasis. Taylor returns to this question in an essay entitled *Modernity and Difference* (2000) – an essay contributed to a volume in honour of Stuart Hall’s cultural criticism<sup>22</sup> – where Taylor translates his concepts against the grain, as it were, into those of “multiple modernities” and “social imaginaries”. These terms he develops elsewhere also (see Taylor 2002, 2004, 2007). Returning to previous concepts, Taylor explains that the *acultural* variety is of the family of development theories that describe cultural and historical “transformations in terms of some culture-neutral operation” (Taylor 1992: 88).

These ethnocentric theories from explanations of “the growth of scientific consciousness or the development of a secular outlook or the rise of instrumental rationality” a template by which to predict (and prescribe) changes any culture can (or ought to) undergo (Taylor 1992a: 89). Modernization theory is of this type of explanation and programme. But in Taylor’s hands, the *acultural* explanation is not used so much as to condemn these, as to show how these theories help us see how a certain kind of modern identity arose; how a culture’s ‘strong values’, conceptions of the good, and its self-definitions came to summon the allegiance of modern subjects. Similarly, the *culturalist* explanation serves to bring to mind the non-contingent *background* of shared pretheoretical interpretations that arise spontaneously within *any* lifeworld, including ‘scientific’ ones.<sup>23</sup> Taylor (see Taylor 2002b) draws heavily on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s notion of a “fusion of horizons” to explicate this learning process.<sup>24</sup> And in so doing, Taylor contributes to the clarification of the hermeneutic claim that the social sciences have an “interpretative logic” that departs in key ways from the logic of the natural sciences (Smith 2004: 35).

Our primary sense of reality is bound up with our being in the world, and without this sense representational cognitions of nature would be impossible. Essentially the same point holds, according to Taylor, for our knowledge of the human world. That is to say, for Taylor the human sciences as much as the natural sciences are grounded in a prereflective, practically structured grasp of reality. But whereas the natural sciences

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<sup>22</sup> Gilroy, Paul, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie (eds.) (2000). *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*. London and New York: Verso.

<sup>23</sup> “The background is a transcendental condition of knowledge in the sense that it is required for the intelligibility of the knowledge claims we make. It cannot be completely objectified (or represented), since any objective knowledge claimed of it, to be intelligible at all, must itself have a “background” presupposition – precisely what complete objectification would annul. This transcendental level of reflection, therefore, exposes limits to the objectifiable, representable world. This is how Taylor interprets the epistemological significance of Heidegger’s (and Gadamer’s) reclamation of human finitude” (Smith 2004: 34).

<sup>24</sup> See Taylor, Charles (1990c). *Comparison, History, Truth*. In David Tracy and Frank Reynolds (eds.), *Myth and Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

refine the pre-objective sense of reality by depicting nature from a subject-neutral point of view, this strategy is unsuitable for deepening our knowledge or understanding of the human world. For meaning-content and subject-relatedness are integral to the very notion of human activity. Human activity is by its very nature directed by desires and purposes – without them, we wouldn't have actions to understand or explain – and interpreting these desires and purposes is an essential part of reaching an understanding or explanation of the activity (Smith 2004: 35).

## **On naturalism and practice in social science**

Taylor does not deny “that human beings do have a capacity for generating objective representations of the world” (Smith 2004: 34; see Taylor 2002), but he holds that they do so against a background of the transcendental conditions that make objective knowledge possible.<sup>25</sup> Representations can only arise against a background of concerns – “a background of practically oriented perceptual awareness” (Smith 2004: 35) – which, of itself, cannot be the object of such (abstract) knowledge.

I ought to be accused of misdirection here insofar as I am presenting a view that assumes the validation of theory is determined by its capacity to describe and explain the phenomena of a certain domain, and to help predict those phenomena. To add also that this view is typical of natural scientific method could rightfully invite objections that this is indeed a caricature, or an allusion to ‘reductive naturalism’ as might obtain in objectivism, and not science *per se*. This is a criticism that Clifford Geertz (1994: 83-84) mildly makes of Taylor’s contention that the naturalistic world-view offers an implausible model in the human sciences (Taylor 1985b: 21).

In *Social Theory as Practice* (Taylor 1985b) Taylor argues – specifically naming Skinnerian behaviourism and computer modeled notions of human behaviour – that the natural sciences do not provide suitable methods and procedures of the social sciences (Taylor 1985b: 91). In the natural sciences it is common to see theory “as affirming an account of underlying processes and mechanisms of society” (Taylor 1985b: 92). While these sciences certainly transform practice (as an application of theory), the practice it transforms is external to its theory. In the *social* world, “theory ... transforms its own object” (Taylor 1985b: 101). Taylor argues accordingly that social theory is a different kind of activity from the natural sciences. The “disanalogy

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<sup>25</sup> As Taylor argues in *Understanding in Human Science* (1980a), the ‘background’ articulates of the conditions of possibility of the knowledge we do in fact have. Taylor does not intend to cast doubt on scientific knowledge, but instead to bolster a realist theory of science that attributes the success of scientific theories to their ability to locate the causal powers that really do inhere in objects. “If anything, it is the positivist and falsification philosophies of science, rather than hermeneutics, that shortchange [sic] the explanatory competence of scientific theories” (Smith 2004: 36).



with natural sciences lies in the nature of common sense understandings that science challenges, replaces or extends (Taylor 1985b: 92-93).

As I have indicated, Geertz's criticism of Taylor's concern that the natural sciences have led to a false conception of what it is to *understand* (rather than to *explain*) human behaviour is far less with his arguments than with their effect (Geertz 1994: 83): "The creation of a fixed and uncrossable gulf between the natural and human sciences is obstructive of either's progress" (Geertz 1994: 84).

The issue is whether so radically phrased a distinction is any longer a good idea, now that the point has been made ... that the human sciences, being about humans, pose particular problems and demand particular solutions (Geertz 1994: 85).

During positivism's hegemonic period, this distinction may have served the human sciences, but after Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) it has become far harder to accept universal standards of scientific rationality. But with the gulf narrowed, or even merged as Geertz (1994) suggests, what applies to science must also apply to social phenomena (including morality). There are no ahistorical, and acultural standards by which to objectively determine the *good*. These standards are linked to the incommensurability of paradigms. And in this respect, ethical theory cannot necessarily reflect right or wrong in specific forms of human behaviour, taken as an independent object. The lack of universal standards seems to render the idea of rational justification of scientific paradigms *and* of moral precepts impossible. Thus, our options seem to be either a moral subjectivism allowing for a relativist 'anything goes' view in science, or a conservative defence of whatever views and standards happen to be fashionable. MacIntyre's (1984) charge of *emotivism* thus stands.

But Taylor takes a different tack. He accepts that ethical theory fashions what is right or wrong in behaviour. But if theory does transform its own object, it does not follow that 'anything goes'. Taylor is undaunted here, preferring a *soft* relativism, and arguing that even here social theory is validating. "[C]ertain kinds of changes wrought by theory are validating, and others show it to be mistaken" (Taylor 1985b: 102). Indeed, both Taylor and MacIntyre (1983, 1991) claim to go beyond moral subjectivism by taking a historicist and comparative account of rationality. They both claim that an analogy between rationality in science and in morality should be taken seriously.

For the most part, we understand the meaning of actions in a prereflective, pretheoretical manner. The distinctive aim of the human sciences, according to Taylor, is to improve on these shared pretheoretical interpretations that arise spontaneously within a lifeworld, without ever completely cancelling them out, and without abandoning their interpretative form. The task of a science like anthropology, for instance, is to advance the prevailing understandings of the purposes expressed in a particular culture. Taylor draws heavily on Gadamer's notion of a "fusion of horizons" to explicate this learning process.<sup>26</sup> And in so doing, he contributes to the clarification of the hermeneutic claim that the social sciences have an "interpretative logic" that departs in key ways from the logic of the natural sciences (Smith 2004: 35).

To consider a phenomenological alternative to the neo-behaviourist (naturalistic) view, to refer to a *phenomenal self* entails a link between selfhood, self-experience, and a first-person perspective (Zahavi and Parnas 1998: 687, 689). "When we study consciousness ... we should take phenomenological considerations<sup>27</sup> into account, since an important and non-negligible feature of consciousness is the way in which it is experienced by the subject" (Zahavi and Parnas 1998: 688).

In terms closer to Taylor's post-Heideggerian hermeneutics, if journalists merely *represent* external events in 'internal mind', as the Cartesian and Lockean frames would prescribe, their (ethical) practices can never extend beyond the limited *naturalistic* requirements of discovering and accurately recording those events.<sup>28</sup> Naturalism is the belief that human beings are part of nature, and Taylor would not contest this claim. However, his critique of naturalistic human science draws attention to what features of human life these sciences accept as being natural phenomena.<sup>29</sup> Naturalistic social science typically rejects anything considered 'not real', and would therefore ignore meanings and values as existing 'in our heads' and not 'out there' in the world. Taylor, in his critique of naturalism and its claims regarding moral

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<sup>26</sup> See Taylor's essay, *Comparison, History, Truth*, in Taylor (1990c [1995a: 146-164]).

<sup>27</sup> Dan Zahavi and Josef Parnas (1998) here refer to the continental philosophical tradition rather than, say, Daniel Dennett's (in Zahavi and Parnas 1998; Zahavi 2005: 316) vague use of the term in cognitive science, referring to higher-order representation theories. Zahavi (2005) launches a similar line of argument in his attack on David Chalmers's book, *The Conscious Mind* (1996).

<sup>28</sup> According to naturalism, explanations of phenomena 'in the world' are objective when given in absolute terms, that is, terms that exclude human experience of those things.

<sup>29</sup> In naturalism, thoughts, motivations, emotions, aversions and values are not considered part of nature, but rather as projections of an ephemeral subjectivity onto a value-free world. Trends in psychology that reduce psychological phenomena to neurophysiology, computational models, or observable behaviour, are a case in point (see Taylor 1988a: vii-ix) Subject-related phenomena are rejected in naturalistic social science, or are explained in language that excludes reference to human subjectivity.

ontology, has consistently rejected this line of thinking; and *Sources of the Self* (Taylor 1989a) is his most elaborates statement in this regard.<sup>30</sup>

The great problem for naturalism, Taylor submits, is that it fails to reconcile phenomenology and ontology. On the one hand, many naturalists would agree that imports and values are experienced, and that they may even be necessary for us to get on with one another; but on the other hand, they insist this is not what the objective world is really like. According to Taylor, the naturalistic ideal that the world can be experienced and explained in absolute terms is peculiar, and excludes all that is critically unique to human life. Human beings simply could not think, act and experience in the ways they do if meanings, interests and values were not accepted as part of the world. We are part of the world (Sugarman 2005: 795-796).

This limited type of practice that naturalistic conceptions require may be implied in the term *reporting*, where apart from objective stresses on observation all other story elements are limited to mere articulations of *discourse*. Human agency is effectively excluded. The world is only ever represented, and not fully perceived. What is occluded resultantly is the ‘human interest’ in both the production and consumption of news, which in addition to representation requires also the originary and *constitutive* dimension of knowledge (notably found in *speech*). That is, as Taylor elaborates in his essay, *The Importance of Herder* (1995a: 79-99), interpretation entails *expression* prior to *representation*.

Taylor subscribes to an expressivist model of language through his adherence to Johann Gottfried Herder’s expressivist theory of language. Herder’s theory “originates a fundamentally different way of thinking about language and meaning” (Taylor 1995a: 79), and hence opposes the designative approach to language that was reinforced by John Locke’s empiricism following the requirements of the seventeenth century scientific revolution. That difference, found in linguistic aspects of the Romantic movement that influenced Hegel’s concept of *Spirit*, puts greater store on language use in the context of ‘interpretive communities’. Hence, Herder’s critique concerns both the notion of a disengaged self and representative theories of language that proceed from Enlightenment rationality. The Enlightenment played a formative role in creating the instrumental rationality which, no doubt useful in science, has also had the side effect of constituting the modern notion of selfhood through an “ontologizing of rational procedure” exemplified in empiricism (Taylor 1995a: 61,

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<sup>30</sup> Moral meanings are not merely projections of human sentiment onto what naturalists (and positivists) consider to be a morally neutral and natural world. Rather, Taylor’s claim is that moral meanings are part of what is a distinctively human world and are made manifest in human individual and collective life.

63). This results in human beings thinking and acting as if they are separate from their larger environment. This image offers a picture of self-centred agents likened to computer modeling – a picture of disengaged rationality (Taylor 1997: 7) – taking in bits of information to process as though through a calculus of means and ends (Anton 1999: 26-27; Taylor 1995a: 63), impressed by knowledge and technique, but incapable of any *human experience* that intentionality entails.

The dominant rationalist view, Taylor writes, screens out engagement and gives “us a model of ourselves as disengaged *thinkers*” (Taylor 1995a: 63. Emphasis added).<sup>31</sup> Representationalism exemplifies the aspect of empiricism inherited from Enlightenment, inscribed in the “symbol model” that underwrites the encoding-decoding logic prevalent in the Western tradition (Anton 1999: 29). “In speaking of the ‘dominant’ view I am not only thinking of the theories which have been pre-eminent in modern philosophy, but also of an outlook which has to some extent colonized the common sense of our civilization” (Taylor 1995a: 63).

To conclude this section, I want to draw attention to Corey Anton’s (1999) essay,<sup>32</sup> in which he proposes a fusion of the constitutive-representational dichotomy. His argument has all the hallmarks of Taylor’s theory without mentioning him even once.<sup>33</sup> Anton (1999) draws on some of the phenomenological sources in continental philosophy that Taylor uses – Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty – but departs from Taylor by drawing on John Dewey’s pragmatic theory influenced no less by Alfred Schutz’s similar subscription to Husserl and the phenomenological tradition. Anton’s target is John Stewart’s (1995; 1996) emphasis upon the constitutive at the expense of representationalist models of language. “To counter [the symbol model] Stewart, drawing from thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamer, [Mikhail] Bakhtin, and [Martin] Buber, argues that language is fundamentally ‘constitutive’ of the human world and thus, is intricately linked to who and how we *are*” (Anton 1999: 27).<sup>34</sup> Such a sentence could well find a place in the hermeneutic

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<sup>31</sup> Taylor, Charles (1995a). *Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein*. In *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>32</sup> Anton, Corey (1999). Beyond the constitutive-representational dichotomy: The phenomenological notion of intentionality. *Communication Theory* 9(1).

<sup>33</sup> Anton (1999: 27) complains that John Stewart’s (1995; 1996) argument was anticipated seventy-five years earlier by John Dewey, who “does not appear in either of Stewart’s two texts” (Anton 1999: 27). Similarly, Anton’s argument was anticipated by Charles Taylor.

<sup>34</sup> Like Taylor, Corey Anton (1999) advocates an articulation or fusion of both constitutive and representational elements. I shall briefly discuss Anton’s argument because it does provide a distanced

repertoire of Taylor's philosophical anthropology, given Nicholas Smith's (1997) reference to the field, in relation to Taylor, as being "made up of those irreducible categories that are held to have, or are presupposed as having, general application to human reality," and its purpose to provide "answers to questions concerning the kind of being human beings are" (Smith 1997: 36). Again, the refusal to acknowledge Taylor is inexplicable.

## **Taylor's traditions**

Taylor's distinctive approach is rooted in his emphases on the constitutive role of language and the intersubjective nature of agency. Commentators generally agree that Taylor's thought subsists in *philosophical hermeneutics* (Abbey 2004: 2-5; Redhead 2003: 8-10; Smith 1997: 36-39; 2002: 120), which "forms part of a broad movement<sup>35</sup> away from empiricism and representational accounts of meaning and knowledge" (Schwandt 2003: 304). He draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, Ludwig Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy, and the strong ontology of Martin Heidegger's existentialism hermeneutics. He finds his anthropological bearings in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and understands his linguistic heritage in both Johann Gottlieb Herder and Alexander von Humboldt.

Others would cast Taylor in an interpretive frame (Hiley *et al.* 1991), and this would not be incorrect but for one or two not so minor qualifications. For instance, Taylor rejects the interpretivist view "that hermeneutics is an *art or technique* of understanding, the purpose of which is to construct a methodological foundation for the human sciences" (Grondin 1994: 109. Emphasis added). Instead, philosophical hermeneutics presents *understanding* as the very condition of being human, rather than it being merely a procedure-governed or rule-governed undertaking. In short, understanding is interpretation; which provides the sense in which Taylor defines

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insight into this aspect of Taylor's thinking, though, ironically, without any reference to Taylor. But perhaps of more importance, Anton's (1999) argument helps express one aspect of the question I am trying to explore: the alignment Windschuttle unwittingly establishes despite his opposing an empiricist conception of journalism practice to linguistic idealism that he attributes to cultural studies.

<sup>35</sup> The range of this movement extends to Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science, the philosophy of language from Wittgenstein and Austin, Thomas Winch's philosophy of social science, Martin Heidegger's existential phenomenology, and ethnomethodology's concern for situated actions as publicly interpreted linguistic forms (e.g., Garfinkel). Some would include as one of the beacons American pragmatism, such as John Dewey's epistemological behaviourism, though by Taylor's (1997) own admission, not Mead's theory of the social self and sociality of language. Mikhail Bakhtin receives more favourable treatment in Taylor's work.

humans as “self-interpreting animals” who engage in processes of moral and practical reasoning (Taylor 1985a: 45-76). Taylor’s self-interpretive view of human agents “essentially resists reduction of experience to a merely subjective view on reality, or an epiphenomenon, or a muddled description” (Taylor 1985a: 47).

On the contrary, the claim is that our interpretation of ourselves and our experience is constitutive of what we are, and therefore cannot be considered as merely a view on reality, separable from reality, nor as an epiphenomenon which can be bypassed in our understanding of reality (Taylor 1985a: 47).

Taylor’s use of the term ‘understanding’ is not one he usually has in mind, such as that resembling an earlier conception Dilthey famously articulated when he distinguished the *Verstehen* approach from explanatory methods (*Erklären*) of the natural sciences. Gadamer had convincingly critiqued important aspects of Dilthey’s project (Sullivan and McCarthy 2005: 622-623); and the aspect that attracted both his and Heidegger’s attention was the separation between the researcher and his or her object of research (Harrington 2000; Schatzki 2003: 302-303, 314).

The researcher, according to Gadamer, approaches the object of study from his or her own particular historical perspective and not from the perspective of the object. In this sense there is as much dissimilarity between researcher and participant as similarity (Sullivan and McCarthy 2005: 622).<sup>36</sup>

If Dilthey was the founder of the *Verstehen* approach to social science, it was modified first by Heidegger, and later by Hans-Georg Gadamer, in a way that refined and radicalized Dilthey’s notion of understanding as a method of interpretation *one reaches*. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (1975: 153ff) argues that the nineteenth century historicist tradition within which Dilthey, Schleiermacher and other hermeneutic scholars conducted themselves remained under the influence of Enlightenment ideals of reducing error in the attainment of knowledge (Harrington 2000: 492; Oliver 1983: 522-523). For Gadamer, understanding is not “an isolated

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<sup>36</sup> In a paper published decades earlier, David Linge (1973) presents an entirely different view of the differences between Dilthey’s and Gadamer’s views of historical consciousness and the implications this has for methodology. One difference is that “Dilthey’s philosophy of life stands within the great tradition of German historical scholarship which has its roots in early nineteenth-century romanticism,” and argued within that tradition that “historical understanding constituted a kind of heightened self-possession” (Linge 1973: 540, 545). The essential approach here is the interpreter’s transcendence of history. With Gadamer, however, the historicity of understanding is elevated to the level of a basic hermeneutic principle. “Quite explicit in Gadamer’s work, therefore, is a thorough-going critique of the excessive claims made by Dilthey and others that methodological self-consciousness and critical self-control amount to a vehicle whereby the knower transcends his own historicity. Such claims reflect the Cartesian and Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous subject who successfully extricates himself from the immediate entanglements of history and the prejudices that come with that entanglement. For Dilthey, historical understanding occurs only insofar as the knower breaks the immediate and formative influence of history upon him and stands over against it. Historical understanding is the action of subjectivity purged of all prejudices” (Linge 1973: 546).

activity of human beings but a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something as something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate” (Gadamer 1970: 87). In recognition of this advance, it is now common to use an expression made famous by Gadamer, ‘hermeneutics’, to denominate a way of thinking about the social sciences as essentially interpretive (Oliver 1983: 533-535). But it is also no exaggeration to add that after Gadamer, Taylor “has been the most eloquent and influential advocate of the hermeneutic model of social science in the English-speaking world” (Smith 2002: 120).

It is within the framework of Gadamerian hermeneutics that we can at least tentatively situate Taylor’s philosophical anthropology, but at the same time it would be inaccurate to cast Taylor’s work as singularly representing that frame. A wider scope is required to embrace his work. For that he is better situated (nonetheless obliquely) within continental philosophy, even as that emerged in Husserl’s breakthrough in phenomenology, but more cogently as it was interpreted through Heidegger, and later by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and Derrida. But even here the relationship is unequivocal, if not contradictory. These four offer no concerted front for phenomenology, and there are good reasons to argue that Heidegger contributed less to prolonging than to putting an abrupt end to the phenomenological movement (Rockmore 1995: 51-52). On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty stressed the basic continuity between Husserl and Heidegger. He maintained quite approvingly that “Heidegger’s own main text can fairly be understood as the ‘explication’ of Husserl’s idea of the life world” (Rockmore 1995: 12). The philosophies of both Sartre and Derrida do not figure in Taylor’s scheme. His lineage is traced more directly to Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Gadamer; and it is particularly the Heideggerian influence to which Nicholas Smith alludes when he says that, as a hermeneutic theorist, “Taylor’s first principle of philosophical anthropology is that human beings are the kind of being for whom their own being is open to question” (Smith 1997: 36).

There is one other tradition that ably identifies Taylor: Catholicism. A study of Taylor’s contributions to each of the fields, disciplines and traditions listed provides a sense of the dimensions of his anthropology, but it is one aspect that Ruth Abbey

(2000: 2) leaves out<sup>37</sup> – the connections between Taylor’s Catholic faith and his philosophy, that Mark Redhead notes are “increasingly important to his work” and “informs his political thought and moral theory” (Redhead 2002: 170, 171). Judging from the introductory chapter to Taylor latest book – the 800-odd page length *A Secular Age* (2007) – there are good grounds to agree with Redhead, and to suspect Abbey of displaying the very politically correct ‘moral squeamishness’ that Taylor uncovers in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1990), and which he rejects.

Taylor is a profoundly Catholic philosopher, and is quite unequivocal about this, together with having both French and English parentage (his Catholic faith inherited from his French mother’s side), and having political sensibilities from having been reared on such conversation from an early age (Redhead 2002: 10-17). Taylor’s inclusion of his Catholicism in the various aspects of his thought – going against the discursive grain to obviate what may be said to be true, and to leave unspoken what is proscribed – seems to have had a disquieting effect on his critics. Abbey avoids discussing Taylor’s Catholicism at all. Ian Fraser (2003) treats it gingerly with as much ‘objectivity’ as he can muster. Michael Morgan’s (1994) discussion resembles one handling a strange object at arm’s length. “Belief in God, in Divine Providence, and such matters is no longer taken for granted by the majority; religious commitment is more selective, vaguer, and without the old robustness,” says Morgan (1994: 49), without letting on that he sees the irony behind his words. Admittedly, Taylor has never been one to pander to popular causes. But not all scholars find Taylor’s refusal of academic protocol distasteful. George Wright (2001: 789) notes that Taylor’s book, *A Catholic Modernity* (1999), from his Marianist Award lecture, is his first concerted articulation of what the Christian faith means in the modern world; and may be envisioned “as a sort of belated concluding chapter” to *Sources of the Self* (1989). Others entertain Taylor’s Catholicism in relation to questions of moral philosophy (Kitchen 1999: 34; Redhead 2001: 86; Redhead 2006: 648-651), questions of Judeo-Christian theism, and to the question of Kantian transcendence (Fraser 2003: 300). Nonetheless, one difficulty with each author’s approach is that it misses an important point about Taylor’s anti-Cartesian conception of a moral *horizon*: none of us lives in

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<sup>37</sup> Abbey (2000: 2) lists Taylor’s interests as being in “the topics of moral theory, selfhood, political and epistemology.”



a solipsistic universe of the ‘mind’, whether this be a disembodied spirit or wanderer divorced from history.

These are Taylor’s traditions. But as he fashions his outlook, he refuses what Fred Dallmayr (2005) calls (borrowing an image from MacIntyre) the “self-images of our age”, and “writes against the grain of prevalent intellectual prejudices” (Dallmayr 2005: 225)

At a time when all academic disciplines were increasingly patterned in the model of the natural sciences, he reminded his colleagues in the humanities and social sciences of a different standard of inquiry: that of the interpretive understanding of meaning -- a standard depending on participant engagement rather than neutral observation. At a time when the legacy of Hegel was shunted aside by devotees of logical rigour, he almost single-handedly rescued from oblivion this philosopher of “spirit” .... Above all, at a time when agnosticism and indifference or even hostility to religion are *de rigueur* in much of academia, he never stopped to inject into his writings a certain mode of faithfulness or fidelity -- a faithfulness to something unconditional, something that cannot be grasped or instrumentally manipulated and which, despite its oblivion, never stops to call on us (Dallmayr 2005: 225).

One indication of the conviction with which Taylor is prepared to travel against the paradigmatic traffic of the academic common herd is evident in his exploration of the concept of authenticity;<sup>38</sup> to which he gave his fullest treatment in *Ethics* (Taylor 1991). In this book, which Taylor extracts from *Sources of the Self* (1989), he identifies three malaises of modernity. These are individualism, instrumental reason (referring to the economic application of means to ends) and to a subtle political power he calls “soft despotism”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The concept of authenticity is a difficult one to provide definitively an approach in recent academic discourse. Theodor Adorno’s rejection of the concept for its ostensive promotion of individuality, while symptomatic of intellectual sentiments of its time, managed to articulate, and possibly promote, an overall hostility to the concept. It became a ‘liberal’ concept. Adorno’s book, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964), is therefore a benchmark of its time.

The way in which the meaning of ‘authenticity’ has been derived has been far from parasitic. Instead, authenticity has been seen as a hopeless cry of modern *angst*, and its most authoritative expression has been consistently located in Nietzsche’s pathos of authenticity. Jacob Golomb’s book, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (1995), presents this view of illusive authenticity. Golomb dismisses Taylor’s intervention on the matter, even though having considered in a chapter Heidegger’s subsumption of the concept in his ontological question of being. Heidegger repositions the starting point of the question of authenticity in the notion of authentic *Dasein*. Authenticity is a genuine “is-ness” (*Existenz*). For Heidegger the very search for authenticity “constitutes its meaning” (*Being and Time* 59). Taylor’s identification of authenticity in the value of ‘ordinary life’ seems to acknowledge Heidegger’s conversion of the question to terms of being, and at the same time address the Nietzschean problematic.

<sup>39</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville’s term for a society in which most of its members have given up an active role in the ordering of that society only to discover that society and government is run by an ‘immense tutelary power’ which endangers political liberty and discourages participation.

Drawing on his analysis of the modern self, Taylor shows how the search for authentic self-fulfillment can become incoherent and self-defeating when it is tied to atomistic individualism, the overvaluation of instrumental reason, and an alienation from public life. At the same time, he argues against pessimism, suggesting that the other elements of our philosophical and cultural traditions give us resources for confronting our current challenges. Crucially, he calls for recognizing that our wants are necessarily qualitatively distinguishable (so that, among other things, we can want to have better wants), that our individuality is grounded in sociality (so that we can conceive of freedom in ways other than absence of external constraint), and that frameworks of strong evaluation are inescapable (so that the attribution of significance is not simply a matter of immediate subjective choice).

Taylor also demonstrates how the possibility of an authentic identity is frustrated by a moral relativism that denies the validity of our horizons of significance and which underlies an instrumental attitude towards human relationships. He therefore asserts the impossibility of constructing an authentic identity without accepting a non-instrumental commitment to relationships, and without acknowledging our “horizons of significance” that generate moral demands from outside ourselves.

There is an important point made above that is worth exploring further. In *Sources* (1989a) Taylor discusses at length the transition of Western culture from an ethic of glory and heroism to what he calls the “affirmation of ordinary life”. The paradigm shift is one that moves from sources in ancient Greek culture – with its ethic of honour – to a condition where the “affirmation of ordinary life finds its origin in Judeo-Christian spirituality” (Taylor 1989a: 215). But the transition was not complete until the Reformation, which, Taylor argues, premised salvation upon the faith of the *individual believer alone*. We begin to sense how Taylor can be considered a ‘communitarian’, even though he rejects that label (Taylor 1994b: 250; 1995a: 182-183; 1996). From the Reformation onwards there followed a steady movement away from mediated salvation.

Taylor argues that in premising salvation upon the faith of the individual believer alone, and in attacking the idea that one could achieve a closeness to God through the mediation of those who absented themselves from the profanity of the ordinary (i.e. monks, celibate clergy, etc.), the locus of the spiritual life is shifted to the ordinary. Thus, for instance, not a separate priesthood, but a priesthood of all believers. The idea of Vocation’, associated in the Roman Catholic tradition with priesthood or

monasticism is, for the Protestant, something that can be acted out within even the humblest of employments (Fraser, Giles 2002: 134).

As Taylor puts it: “The highest in life can no longer be defined by an exulted *kind* of activity; it all turns on the spirit in which one lives whatever one lives, even the most mundane existence” (Taylor 1989a: 224). But as Mark Redhead (2002: 184) points out, “Taylor finds himself on the same side of the fence as Nietzsche,” whose “affirmation of ‘aristocratic values’ is, on one level, associated with his rejection of claustrophobic domesticity and antipathy towards ‘ordinary life’” (Fraser, Giles 2002: 134-135). Taylor is, hence, caught in a paradox. The idea of self-responsibility can infer full culpability for what one becomes, as in Descartes’s ‘disengaged subject’, which Taylor rejects, and which advocates the possibility of complete freedom from one’s material and social worlds. These ideas step outside of human boundaries, so that one can make one’s self with complete detachment from the external world. Taylor criticizes these ideas in *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987a [1995a]).

Taylor’s response to his Nietzschean dilemma side-steps the cruel choice of self-negation or the will to power. As modern subjects, we live inescapably in its horizon, and its constellations of values are integral to who we are as persons (Taylor 1989a: 520). Its constitutive and life goods define who we are. “Moreover, since the life goods of this horizon are ones we cannot escape, they must necessarily be appealed to in some form by any set of shared values and common goods that might hold a deeply diverse state together” (Redhead 2002: 190).

Taylor’s thought owes much to the traditions he taps into, but his articulation of these sources cuts across philosophies and ideologies, and he refuses to build a system of his own. His thought is an “armamentarium of interlocking ideas” (Kitchen 1999: 33) with an “intractable unity” that makes it hard to compartmentalize (Baker 2003: 141). His questions are profoundly ontological, and impatient with any knee-jerk submission or service given to schools of thought for their own sake (Kerr 2004: 85). His interrogation of modern identity cuts to the bone of human experience, remaining all the while keenly aware of the place of history, tradition and horizons in the constitution of selves and identities. Even so, persons are no mere emanation of underlying structures. They are “self-interpreting animals”, as he famously declares, and they engage so in practices of moral and practical reasoning by ways of which selves – never fixed – are perpetually becoming (Taylor 1985a: 45ff). In this respect

an essential and defining tension exists between persons and the communities in which they subsist, reflecting in Taylor's politics, at the micro level, a similar balance between individual rights and social goods (Saurette 2004: 724-725).

## **Taylor's philosophical anthropology**

What do we mean by a person? Certainly an agent, with purposes, desires, aversions, and so forth. But obviously more than this because many animals can be considered agents in this sense, but we don't consider them persons. So generally philosophers consider that to be a person in the full sense you have to be an agent with a sense of yourself as an agent, a being which can thus make plans for your life, one who also holds values in virtue of which different such plans seem better or worse, and who is capable of choosing between them (Taylor 1985c: 257).

A basic principle of Taylor's philosophical anthropology is that it is a non-contingent fact that human beings are oriented against some background framework that confers moral significance on personal identity. Identity is never fixed, and Taylor argues that changes in identity, once articulated in a narrative form, constitute an "epistemic gain". A human being is "a being for whom certain questions of categoric value have arisen" on which it has "received at least partial answers" (Taylor 1985a: 3). In other words, his strong hermeneutics proposes limits to the contingency of self as a condition of its intelligibility.

This is what makes the identity of a person – a self-identity dependent on self-interpretations – different to the identity of other kinds of being.<sup>40</sup> "For while the identity of other kinds of being might be fixed by a set of physical properties which uniquely individuates an object through processes of change, explanations of the actions of persons must take into account interpretations of what matters to the person" (Smith 1997: 29). Rather than being a set of neutrally describable individuating facts, identity is what interpretations disclose as mattering. "We are selves," Taylor writes, "only in that certain issues matter for us" (Taylor 1989a: 34).

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<sup>40</sup> In Taylor's view, we need to have a 'portrait of the modern identity' in place before we can diagnose its ills. This is just what Taylor sets out to do in *Sources of the Self*, though he does not consider himself to have completed the task in that work (Smith 2002: 200).

As a theorist of (ontological, post-Heideggerian) hermeneutics,<sup>41</sup> taking as his central thesis that human beings are “self-interpreting animals” (Taylor 1985a: 45ff), Taylor’s first principle of philosophical anthropology is the Heideggerian notion that human beings are the kind of being for whom their own being is open to question (Taylor 1992: 328).<sup>42</sup> For Heidegger, “human existence is constituted by the meanings things have for it, meanings determined more or less explicitly by self-interpretations” (Smith 2004: 31). As a theorist of *strong* hermeneutics (see below), Taylor adds a second principle, the core claim of his philosophical anthropology: that the question of one’s being is answered by reference to non-contingent moral identity (Smith 1997: 36). In other words, a person is a being for whom things matter.

Mattering, Taylor informs us, is only intelligible as a background of qualitative discrimination; if everything mattered the same, if anything mattered, nothing would. What matters makes a difference, its articulation requires qualitative distinctions between the worthwhile and the worthless, the significant and the trivial, the fulfilling and the vacuous. For Taylor, the identity of a person is intelligible in virtue of the capacity to make such distinctions, and a person’s being matters, is good life rather than ‘mere’ life, to the degree to which it can be interpreted as actually or potentially worthwhile, significant or fulfilling (Smith 1997: 37).

The distinction between *weak* and *strong* hermeneutics comes from Nicholas Smith (1994, 1997: 15-25), and these terms add an explanatory dimension to Taylor’s distinction between *weak* and *strong* evaluation (Taylor 1976a; 1985a: 14ff).<sup>43</sup> Taylor

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<sup>41</sup> Taylor rejects the interpretivist view “that hermeneutics is an *art or technique* of understanding, the purpose of which is to construct a methodological foundation for the human sciences” (Grondin 1994: 109. Emphasis added). Instead, philosophical hermeneutics presents *understanding* as the very condition of being human, rather than it being merely a procedure-governed or rule-governed undertaking. In short, understanding is interpretation; which provides the sense in which Taylor defines humans as “self-interpreting animals” who engage in processes of moral and practical reasoning (Taylor 1985a: 45-76). Taylor’s self-interpretive view of human agents “essentially resists reduction of experience to a merely subjective view on reality, or an epiphenomenon, or a muddled description” (Taylor 1985a: 47).

<sup>42</sup> *Dasein* (being-in-the-world), the *Being* of human beings, is distinctive in that its *Being* is an issue for it, Heidegger says. Its life, unlike the life of animals (or other entities such as chairs for that matter) is something with which it must concern itself. Heidegger’s first tentative, yet affirmative outline of the subject of *Being and Time* (1962: par 17): “*Dasein* is in such a way as to be something which understands something like Being ... it does so with time as its standpoint.”

<sup>43</sup> Taylor introduces his concept of strong evaluation in the context of Harry Frankfurt’s theory of second-order desires, as a further refinement of Frankfurt’s (1971) theory of reflective self-evaluation. “In Frankfurt’s view, it is second-order *volitions*, not second-order desires, which are criterial for personhood. Second-order volitions are a (major) subclass of second-order desires. In exceptional cases we may want to have a certain desire and yet not want the desire to be effective. Frankfurt gives the example of someone wanting to know what a compulsive desire to have drugs feels like, so as to be better able to understand addicts whom he wants to help. But he does not want the desire to be satisfied; he does not want to take drugs, but just to have the desire. Such a case is one of second-order desire, but not of second order *volition*. Second-order volition is a desire for a certain desire to be one’s *effective* desire, one that leads to action. Frankfurt calls one’s effective desire one’s will” (Laitinen 2003: 21).

presents strong evaluation as the defining capacity of persons to examine critically their desires and to determine whether they want (at a 'second order' level) to have those desires. Strong evaluators take an active stance toward those desires – either condemning them or endorsing them. To engage in strong evaluation, then is to grapple with the question of whether one wants to be the sort of person who is moved in the way one finds oneself being moved (Anderson 1996: 18).

According to a basic insight of Taylor's hermeneutics, the good is a matter of the kind of interpretation he calls 'strong evaluation'. Self-interpretations cannot be qualitatively neutral, since interpretive disclosure always takes place by way of articulating a contrast (Smith 1997: 38).

To explain the difference between strong and weak *hermeneutics* in light of different *evaluations*, I shall stay close to my sources in Smith (1994; 1997; 2002). *Weak* hermeneutics corresponds to a Nietzschean-inspired perspectivism (Smith 1997: 16-17), that "all knowledge is interpretation: interpretations are always value-laden; values are ultimately non-cognitive; therefore truth-claims are ultimately expressions of a non-cognitive faculty or event" (Smith 1994: 20). It is the idea that "knowledge is either relative to the point of view of the knower, or reducible to the pre-discursive forces and mechanisms that constitute that point of view" (Smith 1994: 20). Compared, *strong* hermeneutics is realist in orientation. "[A]ccording to strong hermeneutics, the competent, articulate interpreter honours the ontological commitments entailed by the best available account *over and above* any more general epistemological or metaphysical considerations" (Smith 1994: 21).

When we find a certain experience intelligible, what we are attending to, explicitly and expressly, is this experience. The context stands as the unexplicated horizon within which ... this can be understood (Taylor 1995a: 68).

Strong hermeneutics draws out the implications of the non-contingency of things *mattering* for human beings. "It inquires into the sources of significance which shape the identity of such beings, the conditions under which such sources are opened up or closed off, and most concretely, it explores the structural conditions of satisfaction of presumably core human needs" (Smith 1997: 38). And we see from Taylor's argument in *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987a), that the modern philosophical tradition's refusal to address such questions on the basis of a naturalistic bias evident in the "epistemological construal" of mechanistic methods and concepts of (empiricist) science onto models of human self-understanding (Taylor 1995a: 4),

that the kind of metaphysical critique found in what Smith calls strong hermeneutics amounts to a critical imperative.

[Strong hermeneutics] takes its point of departure not from the epistemological fragility of foundational truth-claims, but from the conditions of possibility of actual interpretative practices. The conditions include the historical embeddedness and linguistic mediation of the interpreting subject upon which weak hermeneutics insists, but language is recognised as able to disclose independently subsisting realities. Reality is what is disclosed by the better of competing interpretations, and the property which interpretations compete over is truth. This moves the epistemological emphasis from *foundations* to *transitions*: disclosure, unlike correspondence, can only ever occur in relationship to a concealer and something concealed, hence truth becomes intelligible in terms of a *movement* from one interpretation to another (Smith 1994: 20-21).

The agenda of strong hermeneutics is set by the agenda of philosophical anthropology, to determine the most suitable means to comprehend the nature of beings whose own being is a matter of self-interpretation. But, to this end, Taylor rejects a foundationalist epistemology; a move that has “radical ... implications for the status of the human sciences” (Smith 1994: 21).<sup>44</sup> It is here that his association with Gadamer’s hermeneutics is more pronounced. More amorphous than MacIntyre’s (1984) conception of *tradition*, Gadamer’s conception of *horizon* can incorporate different, competing horizons to achieve a fusion of horizons to adopt more inclusive viewpoints (Gadamer 1976: 15-17). “[A]t first distinct ... the ‘fusion’ comes about when one or both undergo a shift; the horizon is extended so as to make room for the object that before did not fit within it” (Taylor 2002b: 287).

While Taylor regards the commitment to one’s “horizons of significance” as a necessary pre-condition and ultimate standard of relevance of self-evaluation, he also recognizes the limits of hermeneutic evaluation. In so far as these limits refer to one’s cultural background, it is crucial to see that horizons are also socially produced and reproduced (Kitchen 1999: 46; Taylor 1989a: 27-29; 2004b: 2, 24-25). As language constitutes various ways of being human, so too do cultural frameworks (Taylor 1989a: 18). And as these change, so too do our ways of being human. Taylor’s “Best Account” principle (Taylor 1989a: 69) “takes the values constituting self identity as the ultimate point of reference and subscribes to the hermeneutic tradition’s recognition of the inherent circularity of such forms of judgment” (Tate 1998: 21).

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<sup>44</sup> “For the fact that human beings are self-interpreting animals, combined with the fact that they are intrinsically capable of conceptual and linguistic innovation, means that there is something inherently unpredictable about the subject-matter of the social sciences – the life activity of human beings” (Smith 2002: 124).

Since in practical matters the best accounts are articulated in concepts invested with significance, and the investment of significance imparts evaluative force, the ontology incumbent upon the interpreter in this domain will also be evaluatively laden -- it will be, that is to say, a *moral ontology*. Conversely, if truth is understood as a matter of disclosure between contrasting interpretations, and the favoured interpretation is articulated in a vocabulary of evaluative significance, then truth will also be describable in evaluatively significant terms. For strong hermeneutics, such moral relativism is unavoidable (Smith 1994: 21).

That which makes the life of a person worthwhile and fulfilling is the evaluative framework that defines the good life for that individual (or group of individuals). An evaluative framework incorporates a plurality of goods to which we are committed (Taylor 1989a: 20, 66). Choices are made on the basis of what one happens to desire, and at stake in a weak evaluation is the choice of satisfying that desire by choosing between two more or less equal goods. A choice, for example, between a ham sandwich and a turkey roll would not matter unless I was Jewish or Muslim; but if I were either, the choice would matter according to a standard independent of my personal fancies, and would entail a strong evaluation: a qualitative distinction concerning the *worth* of alternative desires. The stand the strong evaluator takes tells us something about what matters to the person, and the background conception of the evaluation. The measure of evaluation becomes more than mere preference, but stands out as an independent standard of worth against which the value of my choices may be questioned.

Strong evaluation is a core concept in Taylor's philosophical anthropology, in which he holds as a first principle "the conviction that human reality is structured, and in some sense constituted, by layers of meaning" (Smith 2002: 18; see Laitinen 2003: 67-71). Taylor's anthropology extensively draws its "engaged view" from Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology; from which Taylor is able to fashion a view such that, in Arto Laitinen's (2003: 64) description, "one's grasp of the [lifeworld] is practical, emotional, and evaluative rather than purely cognitive or descriptive." But the matter goes further. There is a further conceptual linkage between strong evaluation and identity (Taylor 1989a: 27-29). Allegiance to the background horizon provides the 'identity', and contributes towards one's conception of 'self'.

It is this sense of 'identity' and 'self' that is conceptually tied to strong evaluations. As a person is a being for whom things matter, so a particular person's identity is what particularly matters for that person, and in both senses of 'particularly'. In the first sense, I am specifically this person rather than that, according to Taylor's view, because I take this kind of life to be fulfilling and that kind of life to be empty, or because I interpret this course of action as right and that action wrong, or because I



find this species of motivation admirable but that species contemptible. In the second sense, what I find fulfilling or empty, right or wrong, admirable or contemptible, is no small matter, but is of particular or fundamental significance to me as a person. In answering the question of identity, I am forced to take a stand (Smith 1997: 38).

“A self-identity that is constituted against a background framework of strong evaluations is in an important sense non-contingent, since matter of fact desires stand accountable to an independent source of worth” (Taylor 1989a: 39). Among the goods there are what Taylor calls ‘hypergoods’, which are of central importance for us (Levy 2000: 50; Baker 2003: 141; Redhead 2001: 85). Hypergoods are “goods which not only are incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about” (Taylor 1989a: 63). These goods are backed up with ontological background beliefs which form another central part of the framework (Taylor 1989a: 4-9, 70-71, 105). For Taylor, “doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us ... that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative distinctions” (Taylor 1989a: 27).

Taylor identifies three different strata to the good life – meaningfulness, dignity and obligation – that correspond to three axioms of moral intuition (Taylor 1989a: 14-19). A good life will be meaningful, without which a life lacking can be considered ‘wasted’. Secondly, a course of life can possess dignity, without which it lacks goodness. Thirdly, forms of individual or collective life have obligations and duty towards others. But here Taylor is not separating a Kantian “categorical imperative”. He rejects Kant’s distinction between the right and the good, and the neo-Kantian differentiation of the moral and the ethical domains. “For Taylor, the ‘moral’ domain of rights and obligations represents one dimension of the culturally specific conception of the good to have emerged in Western modernity, not a normative sphere whose autonomy (as the realm of the universalizable) moderns ‘have come to see’” (Smith 1997: 37-38).

From this point of view, the categorical imperative of respecting the other as an end in itself is worth following only in so far as it is anchored in an understanding of what it is to be a fully human agent. In each of the three strata, Taylor contends, the good must be defined contrastively, and definitions of goods taken together make up a framework that furnishes human beings with an orientation for acting for the best, or living to their full potential (Smith 1997: 38).

Our identity is defined by the commitments and identifications that are provided by the framework within which we determine what is good or not. To be without a

horizon of strong evaluative distinctions, or evaluative framework, would amount to a “identity crisis” (Taylor 1989a: 27) where the very intelligibility of a meaningful life is threatened or negated. Taylor explains this condition with reference to a phenomenological account of embodiment and orientation. We do not know who we are since we do not know where we are. Taylor describes the experience as one of an “acute form of disorientation” which presupposes the absence of a stand from which to take one’s orientation, (Taylor 1989a: 30). Since, as Taylor puts it, “the condition of there being such a thing as an identity crisis is precisely that our identities define the space of qualitative distinctions within which we live and choose,” it follows that these distinctions themselves are not something we can choose on the basis of matter of fact desires and preferences (Taylor 1989a: 30). For Taylor, to know who I am is to be oriented in moral space. This space can be mapped by strong evaluations (Taylor 1989a: 27-29).

## **Conclusion**

These influences are found extended in Taylor critique of the Cartesian basis of naturalism in social science. From the combination of these discussions I aim to show how Windschuttle’s rejection of cultural studies *tout court*, as a basis within which to study journalism, is founded upon an obverse reflection of the theory he rejects. That is, while Windschuttle rejects the relativistic and arguably ‘idealist’ notions he ascribes to cultural studies as unsuited to taking into account the types of practices and ontologies he sees as journalism’s foundation, the naturalistic framework that he uses to launch his attack (which he seems to prescribe as one suited to journalism’s self-understanding) is equally incapable of taking into account the interpretive work all people (journalists included) do in making sense of and coping with their everyday life situations.

The objective is to argue what may admittedly be seen to be a ‘third way’ between Windschuttle and his reductionist conception of cultural studies. My intention, however, is more ambitious than simply to provide an alternative, of which there must surely be a number of significant contenders. I argue that Taylor offers a critique of modernity that at one and the same time makes a claim *on* the project of cultural studies, and in so doing undermines Windschuttle’s claims *against* the field. But there is one proviso here: Windschuttle’s impression of cultural studies is clearly

reductive (Turner 2000), taking its most vulnerable relativist and idealist theoretical aspects as if they were doxological. The field's own internal dissent is thus ignored (Grossberg 1993: 30-32).<sup>45</sup> Likewise, I cannot pretend that the phenomenological and hermeneutic 'comportment' of Taylor's theory *should* represent the field in its entirety. But the more ambitious claim that I *am* making is that the Romantic-expressivist 'positioning' of the sources of Taylor's thought at least *shares*, if not entirely *resembles*, the field's general opposition to empiricist, rationalist and Enlightenment sources of modernity.

The philosophical and methodological (as opposed to 'method') ground of this study draws extensively from the positions Taylor takes towards social science, the human person, and language in his philosophical anthropology. It is not uncommon, in trying to understand a philosopher, to seek out a master category into which to situate his or her thought. For example, a thinker might be labeled a liberal, communitarian, interpretivist, pragmatist, Tocquevillian, Hegelian and other categories can be used. Each distinguishes the kind of thinking characteristic of that philosopher. Each label immediately affords a handle or index by which to make sense of the overall corpus of that person's writing and outlook. It also becomes possible to measure the degree to which that thinker corresponds to the 'normative' the class of all others belonging to that category.

In the case of Taylor, however, each of the above categories has been, and continues to be, applied to him by his critics and collaborators. But this variety of epithets amounts in no way to Taylor being a kind of intellectual chameleon. His *project* is quite *definite*, and can be understood as a *culturalist philosophical anthropology* written around the organizing idea of there being various layers of meaning and normativity inherent in human being-in-the-world. The following chapter provides a general view of Taylor as an intellectual whose engagement with the exigencies of the modern world has shaped his outlook.

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<sup>45</sup> There is no shortage of books and papers that attempt to trace the genealogy of cultural studies, done mainly to clarify the identity and purpose of the field. Notable papers obviously include Stuart Hall's *Two Paradigms* (1980). In my view, Lawrence Grossberg's paper, *The Formations of Cultural Studies* (1993), and his book, *Bringing it All Back Home* (1997), offer among the most thought-provoking and genuinely reflexive accounts of the field.

## Chapter Four

# Taylor and the New Left

Charles Taylor edifies. It is not his fault that most practitioners in the human sciences remain relatively unaware of the devastation the tradition of German speculative philosophy from Kant through Heidegger has wrought on the epistemological conceits within which they operate (Shapiro 1986: 311).

Thus Ian Shapiro introduces his review of the two volumes of Charles Taylor's *Philosophical Papers* (1985a; 1985b), taking a side-swipe at disciplines in the human and social sciences that remain enthralled by models of human agency adopted from natural science.<sup>1</sup> Taylor has engaged successively in debates to repudiate behaviourism in psychology (Taylor 1964; 1967a; 1967c), logical positivism (repudiated in turn) (Taylor 1971a; 1976a; 1977), and continues to cognitivist reactions to critiques of empiricism in the social sciences (Taylor 1982c; 1987a, 2000a).

These 'anti-science' debates can be identified as formed by a *dislocation* out of which the "Third Culture" (Žižek 2000) emerged, coinciding with interventions from scholars such as Thomas Kuhn (1962) and Peter Winch (1958) who, respectively, addressed the *real* interests of natural science and human science which had collectively become entangled with the decidedly 'anti-interpretive' ideology that 'third culture' thinking represents, and which *empiricism* legitimates. That is, Kuhn maintained that his reading of Max Weber and Ernst Cassirer offered a way to explain interpretively how scientists actually worked, even though the literature from which he derived these insights loudly proclaimed the utter difference between the natural and social sciences. "What then followed [in that literature] was a relatively standard, quasi-positivist, empiricist account of natural science, just the image I had hoped to set aside" (Kuhn 1991: 17). Kuhn explains that his earlier insights were reinforced by reading Taylor's essay, *Interpretation and the Sciences of Man* (Taylor 1971a). "For

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<sup>1</sup> Hilary Kornblith (1999), a defender of naturalism in social science, has this to say about it: "Naturalism in philosophy has a long and distinguished heritage. This is no less true in epistemology than it is in other areas of philosophy. At the same time, epistemology in the English speaking world in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by an approach quite hostile to naturalism. Now, at the close of the twentieth century, naturalism is resurgent" (Kornblith 1999: 158).

me it's a special favourite: I've read it often, learnt a great deal from it, and used it regularly in my teaching" (Kuhn 1991: 18).

Winch, on the other hand, faced a different set of difficulties. A kind of non-return value seemed to exist between the natural and human sciences, where methodological influence legitimately flowed from the natural to the human, but was prevented from flowing in the opposite direction. Under these conditions, Winch objected to (analytic) philosophy having been harnessed as an "underlabourer" of science, where its sole purpose was to guard science against any errors of language (Winch 1958: 3-10).

These debates that both conditioned Taylor's overall approach then, and to which he contributed significantly, continue to inform his more recent writing. And while these scholars – Kuhn, Winch and Taylor – addressed different audiences, they drew from the same general pool of opposition to positivism in social science. Taylor's own work in this regard was articulated in his first book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964). And although it is tempting to plot *Explanation* along a lineage beginning with Winch (1958) and Kuhn (1962), the realization that Taylor (1964) was using Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Elizabeth Anscombe as his guides tends to skew that illusion, and to broaden the scope of those debates. Even the title of Taylor's book tends to give this away; alluding to Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it is safer to conclude that all these scholars were part of a general movement in the philosophy of social science, and to add that it is perfectly possible that (in some sense) they were each looking over the shoulders of their collaborators.

Taylor's sources straddle analytic philosophy and hermeneutics in the existential tradition of continental philosophy. Ludwig Wittgenstein's intervention in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953 [2001]), which remained particularly influential until the late 1970s (Wright 1972; 1974), retains a strong influence on Taylor's work in analytic philosophy; but the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions in Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer remain stronger influences. The strongest influence, however, remains Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963) was translated the year before Taylor's book. But being fluent in French and German, Taylor will no doubt have read Merleau-Ponty in the 'vernacular': *Le Structure du Comportement* (1942).

Taylor's central role in instigating debate on the matter of human behaviour remains perhaps his most significant achievement; though, by no means does it eclipse the range of his other intellectual achievements, notably in political philosophy and ethics. The thrust of his attacks on behaviourism support a teleological<sup>3</sup> model against causal, mechanistic models proffered by natural science. His teleological analysis in *Explanation* (1964) "represents a big step in the right direction ... [and] offers us something much further removed from the details of an underlying mechanism than any of those that went before it" (Wright 1972: 206). Taylor's argument provides a defence of "final causation, anthropomorphism and teleological explanation not reducible to an underlying, deterministic causal mechanism" (Wright 1972: 207).

The concluding four words of the above quote could well fit within a sentence on *classical* Marxism; and it is in response to that problematic that Taylor, together with Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and other Marxist intellectuals in Britain in the late 1950s forwarded a critique that contributed significantly to the development of *post-Marxism* (see Archer *et al.* 1989; Eagleton and Wicker 1968). Taylor's 'Marxism', in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty and Georg Lukács, amounts to a rejection of economism in the base/superstructure metaphor and an affirmation of the humanistic Marx of the *1844 Manuscripts*. Together with Hall, Williams and many others, Taylor was a founding member of the New Left – the topic of this chapter – and hence contributed towards the formation of British Cultural Studies, even if he was never part of it formally. In short, as a multi-faceted intellectual, Ian Shapiro can say of Taylor:

Alongside Charles Taylor the critic of empiricism stands Charles Taylor the hermeneutically oriented political philosopher, and hovering in the background, directing these two, is Charles Taylor the moralist, advocating communitarianism over social atomism and the integrity of the human subject against what he sees as immoralist, Nietzsche-inspired views of a fragmented subject (Shapiro 1986: 312).

It is entirely fortuitous that as a Rhodes Scholar Taylor was to find himself at Oxford in the 1950s. Together with fellow Rhodes Scholar Stuart Hall, Taylor engaged in what may be seen as the philosophical questions of the century as they were posed at that time. Having emerged from those debates with convictions tied to

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<sup>3</sup> An action is teleological or goal-directed in when it "occurs because it is the type of event that brings about this end" (Taylor 1964: 9); that it, it occurs *for the sake* of some end. Taylor's position is etioloical in that it concerns what brings about behaviour (see Rescher 1967; Wright 1974: 350-352).

continental philosophy, it is to be expected that his adversaries would come to draw mainly from the *naturalistic* interests found in the Anglo-American analytic tradition so framed in that *time* and *space*. From that tradition would come some of his harshest critics (see Ringen 1976).

## Chapter outline

The previous chapter presents Taylor in the wide scope of his philosophical anthropology. From here onwards the scope is narrowed by providing a survey of Taylor's activism in the New Left movement from 1956 to about 1961, when he returned to Canada. During this time Taylor, through Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology, came to reject orthodox Marxism due to both its economism and its debilitating effects on those living under its rule, yet endorsed Marx's earlier humanistic writing.

This aspect of Taylor's work gets hardly more than a mention in the large corpus of commentaries on his philosophy. Among both the 'knockers' and the 'boosters' of his work,<sup>4</sup> scholars generally agree that it is in the traditions of analytical and continental philosophy that the anti-epistemological core of his hermeneutic thinking is situated (Abbey 2000; Dreyfus 2004; Smith 2002), yet few (Fraser 2007; Smith 2002) consider his earlier activism as having had any role to play in that development. His involvement in the formative debates of the New Left is treated as though it is of mere biographical interest and something which he 'grew out of' once he returned to Canada. While scholars readily cite Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Hegel, Kant, Herder and Wittgenstein as Taylor's sources, they curiously air-brush Marx out of the picture (see Abbey 2004; Redhead 2002; Smith 1997).

This chapter discusses that amnesia about Taylor, but rather than enquire into any 'genetic' links between work for which Taylor is better known and his earlier Marxist enquiries (see Fraser 2004; 2007), it investigates the historical record, and notes certain intimations and disjunctures to do with yet another aspect of Taylor's early work: his contribution to the formative debates that led to the founding of

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<sup>4</sup> In *Sources of the Self* (1989a), Taylor chastises both the optimistic 'boosters' of modernity and the denigrating 'knockers', such as Alasdair MacIntyre. Both 'get it wrong'. The context of his discussion is the moral value of "ordinary life," which "has become one of the most powerful ideas in modern civilization" (Taylor 1989a: 14), yet one that is increasingly difficult to 'get right' against critics for and against (Elshtain 1994: 67).

British Cultural Studies. Despite his having been centrally involved in the New Left movement that was centred in and around Oxford from 1956 onwards, Taylor is acknowledged little beyond his having launched and edited the *Universities and Left Review* with Stuart Hall, Gabriel Pearson and Ralph Samuel (Davies 193: 118). The journal's policy was to confront both the Stalinist persuasion of British Marxism and the welfarist policies of the Labour Party (Dworkin 1997: 62; Hall 1989: 20).

Beyond Ian Fraser's (2007) extensive discussion on Taylor's dependence on Marx, and Nicholas Smith's (2002) brief discussion of Taylor's writing on the politics of that period in the late 1950s, the record on Taylor's contribution to Marxist scholarship runs dry. Even these two authors fail to sufficiently connect Taylor's work to one development that flowed from the New Left: the critical practice of British Cultural Studies that has been *popularly* ascribed as the accomplishment of Hall, Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson – an icon status that Hall vehemently rejects, not least on grounds that “cultural studies is not one thing [and] has never been one thing” (Hall 1990: 11). On the other hand, Hall says, “when pressed to say what cultural studies is and what it isn't, something in me stops short. I have a stake, and cultural studies isn't every damn thing” (Hall 1992: 292).

Certainly Taylor was never materially part of the group of extramural English teachers in adult education who migrated to Birmingham after Richard Hoggart was offered a professorship there and decided to continue his work begun in *The Uses of Literacy* (Hoggart) (Hall 1990: 12). Nor does Taylor seem to have had any connection to cultural studies in its American migration. While Taylor's work on multiculturalism has drawn attention from many in the business of mediating in cultural tensions (no less in Quebec itself), it would be far-fetched indeed to label him on these grounds as a ‘cultural studies scholar’. But while this much may be ‘materially’ true of Taylor, his earlier involvement in the debates from 1956 onwards that led to the formation of the field, and the direction his thinking has taken since then, indicates that the failure to consider these connections may be more myopic than strategically justified. As Hall (1990) notes, cultural studies did not start with Birmingham, but with debates almost a decade before the formation of the Centre there.

The attempt to describe and understand how British society was changing was at the centre of the political debate in the 1950s, and cultural studies was at this time



identified with the first New Left. The first New Left, dated not 1968 but 1956 (Hall 1990: 12).

Before moving on to a discussion of Taylor's contributions to post-Marxism, I shall provide a picture of him as a public intellectual; to round off an image that studies on his extensive scholarship can misrepresent. In this sense I am alluding to the statement Slavoj Žižek (2002: 20-21) makes about the decline of the public intellectuals since the 1950s, and hence to say something those scholars who formed cultural studies then.

### **A monomaniac hedgehog**

Literary scholar Terry Eagleton found reason recently to compare academics to intellectuals. Academics, he wrote in the *Irish Times* (10 February, 2007), "are usually specialists in a single subject, whereas the classical intellectual has a more ambitious range .... [W]hile academics are largely confined to industrial production units known as universities, intellectuals seek to occupy a more public sphere, as journalists, political commentators and opinion shapers." Eagleton refines his point:

[A]cademics are usually conservative or middle-of-the-road, while intellectuals tend to be politically dissident. Since they have less investment in power than politicians and entrepreneurs, they can occasionally speak the truth to it.

Taylor is ambivalent about whether he is better understood as an academic or an intellectual.<sup>5</sup> He does call himself a "monomaniac" (Taylor 1985a: 1) in addition to adopting his former Oxford professor, Isaiah Berlin's (1953) notion of the hedgehog – referring to an intellectual who views the world through the lens of a single 'big idea'. A fox, on the other hand, is in Berlin's description one who accumulates an outlook constituted out of many different and even contradictory experiences and ideas.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Eagleton cites Taylor approvingly; possibly not least by mistaking him for a "lapsed Catholic" like himself (Eagleton 1996: 82, 124), though I suspect he projects himself onto Taylor, given Mark Redhead's (2002: 10-17) description of the place of Taylor's reflexive Catholic faith on both his politics and his philosophy. Nonetheless, Eagleton's wish to identify with Taylor (if that is what he intends) may signal a confluence of concerns, if not unqualified approval itself.

<sup>6</sup> Berlin's distinction, drawn and developed from the Greek poet Archilochus (Berlin 1953: 6), and by which he introduces his study on Tolstoy's view of history (whom he describes as a *fox* who wished he was a *hedgehog*), is generally instructive, but is more so given that Taylor adopts the distinction as a self-description. As Berlin writes:

For there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel – a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance -- and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some de facto way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these last lead lives, perform acts,

Taylor's self-description as a 'monomaniac hedgehog' may on first impressions be surprising given his wide-ranging contributions to contemporary philosophy. Ruth Abbey lists these contributions as being in "moral theory, theories of subjectivity ... epistemology, hermeneutics, philosophy of mind ... [and] philosophy of language" (Abbey 2004: 1). In an earlier book Abbey (2000: 2) considers interests in "the topics of moral theory, selfhood, political philosophy and epistemology" to represent the range of Taylor's thought. But there is a whole into which these fit, which resembles less the unity of a single idea than a "tightly related agenda" (Taylor 1985a: 1). That agenda Taylor understands as "philosophical anthropology", but what that term entails, and its precise content, requires judicious teasing out.

Other writers have found Berlin's model cause for self-reflection, and one overlays a more familiar set of concepts. Jerome Bruner (1983) plays with this motif in querying his own thinking, wondering why he is "a fox rather than a hedgehog, preferring to know many things rather than one big thing?" (Bruner 1983: 8). Bruner, who in a discussion on narrative identity elsewhere cites Taylor approvingly (Bruner 1991), briefly reviews his own intellectual journey before deciding that "being a fox [entails] ... having a *syntagmatic* rather than a *paradigmatic* mind" (Bruner 1983: 9. Emphasis added). Berlin's description of his former student appears to agree with Bruner's distinction. In a short introduction to James Tully's *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism* (1994), Berlin describes Taylor's views on social and political matters as "imaginative, generously receptive, deeply humane and formed by the truth as he sees it, and not as it ought to be in accordance with dogmatically held premises or overmastering ideology" (Berlin 1995: 1). He continues,

This gives his work an authenticity, a concreteness, and a sense of reality which some of his less open-minded, proselytising, not to say formula- and ideology-ridden allies and disciples do not always show. He is vastly superior to them all, and, as I can testify from my own experience, a genuine source of continuous inspiration even to those who hold views very different to his own (Berlin 1995: 1).

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and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision. The first kind of intellectual and artistic personality belongs to the hedgehogs, the second to the foxes; and without insisting on a rigid classification, we may, without too much fear of contradiction, say that, in this sense, Dante belongs to the first category, Shakespeare to the second; Plato, Lucretius, Pascal, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Proust are, in varying degrees, hedgehogs; Herodotus, Aristotle, Montaigne, Erasmus, Molière, Goethe, Pushkin, Balzac, Joyce are foxes" (Berlin 1953: 1-2).

Berlin does admit to significantly disagree with Taylor – though sharing a mutual interest in Herder – but adds that it is regrettable that Marx’s influence on his former student has been generally neglected (Berlin 1995: 1-2). But Taylor’s Marx digs deeper: into Hegel. Mark Redhead (2002: 83) notes Cornel West’s view of Taylor as being “deeply grounded in the Hegelian tradition without being a Hegelian.” Redhead agrees with West’s summation, but adds that “it would be quite unfair to label Taylor simply a Hegelian, as there are a host of other influences, such as Tocqueville, Aristotle, Herder, and Heidegger, at work in his thought” (Redhead 2002: 83). Another is Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Reiser 2000: Marks 2005). Yet another is Saint Augustine “who saw the road to God as passing through our own self-awareness” (Taylor 1994a: 29). In *Sources* (1989a: 127), Taylor remarks that “[o]n the way from Plato to Descartes stands Augustine” (see also Taylor 1992b: 103-104), thus noting the important role Augustine plays as a lynchpin between the ancients and the moderns. As Michael Hanby (2003) writes:

Augustine is important to Taylor’s story because of his contribution to the “moral sources” constitutive of modern identity and because this contribution anticipates Descartes. Foremost among these contributions is radical reflexivity or a profound sense of “inwardness”. This reflexive self will later combine a Protestant affirmation of everyday life with deistic and romantic conceptions of nature to produce a self that grounds both a liberal agreement on moral standards and a general agnosticism over the sources of these standards (Hanby 2003: 8).

As a critic of modernity – though not rejecting it as Alasdair MacIntyre does – Taylor’s is a project of ‘modern rehabilitation’ that rests significantly on an understanding of the inwardness that typifies modern life (Taylor 1992a).<sup>7</sup> There are

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<sup>7</sup> My reasons for using Augustine instead of, say, Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutic understanding of experience as negation, building on Wilhelm Dilthey’s distinction between experience in the natural and human sciences (see Warnke 1987: 26-27), is firstly to illustrate-in-use an element in the tradition of Christianity that led significantly to the Cartesian conception of the *cogito* (Hanby 2003: 8, 166-178). As Michael Hanby writes:

Descartes’ *Cogito* is an idea, but its birth is more than an event in the history of ideas. The Augustinian self who is its alleged precursor helps us both to understand this event in theological terms, and to see in more profound depth just what was dying as this creature was born. Although Descartes is often credited with rigidifying an Augustinian dualism between mind and body, his *res cogitans* is symptomatic of an altogether different *caesura* already well underway by the seventeenth century. Now the individual will – distinct and separated from the love of beauty, the longing for God, or the praise of Christ – becomes a will to power, and it is set over against *God’s* body, which must be placed under house arrest. One need only consider the attempts to police the Church by the early modern political philosophy at the root of our own political arrangements to bear out this view (Hanby 2003: 178).

While it is my intention to collapse the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy in a concept of practice that draws significantly from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, my goal is to use the philosophical anthropology of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who himself draws from both thinkers but regards the *interiority* typical of modern identities as a necessary feature of modern moral horizons (Smith 2002: 219-220).

two aspects here that attract Taylor's attention. One concerns "the fact that Augustine found a crucial use for the first-person perspective" (Taylor 1992b: 104) that made possible, in modernity, *narrative identities* through an articulation of *narrative*, *experience* and *temporality*.<sup>8</sup> Attention to Augustine helps us to see how a certain kind of modern identity arose; how a culture's 'strong values', conceptions of the good, and its self-definitions came to summon the allegiance of modern subjects.

In Taylor's view, we need to have a 'portrait of the modern identity' in place before we can diagnose its ills. This is just what Taylor sets out to do in *Sources of the Self*, though he does not consider himself to have completed the task in that work (Smith 2002: 200).

To this point I have provided an array of sources that purportedly form as a constellation around a single idea. That idea, as I have argued, began with Merleau-Ponty. But it was also derived from Taylor's reading of Marx (Fraser 2007; Taylor 1957a; Taylor 1985a: 243-244), though he downplays this influence with reference to what *Marxism* has wrought in Bolshevism (Taylor 1995b),<sup>9</sup> repeating aspects of an argument he published in 1957 in response to E. P. Thompson's critique of Stalinism (Taylor 1957a). Certainly Taylor's Marx is that of the *1844 Manuscripts* (and not the old Marx), as I shall explain in this and the following two chapters. To what degree Taylor's Marx is filtered through secondary sources is difficult to say; though the influence of Merleau-Ponty cannot be doubted.

Taylor found in Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology an approach through which he "sketched an approach to the theory of human subjectivity, or philosophical anthropology, that would go on to serve him throughout his writings"

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<sup>8</sup> In the tenth and eleventh books of his *Confessions*, Augustine offers us an early reflection on memory and time. Consciousness, he writes, "anticipates and attends and remembers, so that what it anticipates passes through what it attends into what it remembers" (XI: xxviii). Here Augustine posits how a future, which could not yet be existent, passes into a past -- a no longer existing present -- through a present that without a sequential including past and future would remain no more than a meaningless metaphysical modality. That much seems to be entirely uncontroversial, but were it not for objections certain scholars (Strawson 2004) make against conceptions of a 'narrative self'; positing instead that personal identities can be modeled along lines of a sequential present tense.

<sup>9</sup> In their introduction to Taylor's (1989b) essay, Robin Archer *et al.* (1989) define him as an instrumental and pivotal mover in the New Left:

Rejecting as impoverished the two prevailing left doctrines of the 1950s, Stalinist communism and social democracy, the New Left sought to reconsider the basic moral and intellectual tenets of socialism. The ensuing attempts to spell out a 'socialist humanism' represent not so much a unitary theory as a shared set of concerns.... Charles Taylor, one of the original contributors to this debate in the 1950s, reassess his position on the extent to which Marxism itself can be seen to give rise to fundamentally anti-humanist forms of social organization. He reaches the provocative conclusion that socialists should abandon the Marxist paradigm altogether and search for an alternative theoretical framework in other strands of social and political theory (Archer *et al.* 1989:60).

(Smith 2002: 26). Here Taylor's dual English and French background was not going to be left as unexplored ground. Taylor describes in a recent interview<sup>10</sup> how growing up in his family meant having a "complete love affair with France," and having a grandfather for whom

Paris was the centre of the universe. This was an axiom of my childhood. I thought everyone believed this. Even now, I'm surprised when others disagree.

Taylor's first interest in going to Oxford was to earn a PPE to prepare him for a political career upon his return to Canada. His regular visits to France left him with a taste for francophone thinkers. On the continent he was to discover a ferment of intellectual activity involving names such as Merleau-Ponty, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Jean-Paul Sartre (Redhead 2002). Following his 1961 doctorate on a critique of behavioural psychology (supervised by Herderian scholar Berlin), Taylor was to draw further on Merleau-Ponty in the publication of his first book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964). This way the dye had been set; and all of Taylor's future work was to straddle the continental and analytic traditions (Smith 2004: 32).

Taylor describes himself nowadays as a social democrat;<sup>11</sup> but perhaps he always was one. After returning to Canada in the 1960s he ran four times (unsuccessfully) for parliament as a candidate for the centre-left New Democratic Party. In 1965 he famously contested in the Quebec constituency of Mount Royal against his friend and fellow intellectual, Pierre Trudeau, who was to effectively define Canada as prime minister. Taylor returned to Oxford in 1976 to become Chichele professor of social and political theory – a position once held by Berlin. Taylor came with the reputation of being a Marxist philosopher (see Taylor 1978b), though his time there was spent reintroducing Hegel to analytic philosophy. Taylor admits that Hegel's metaphysics may be dead, particularly in its teleological view of nature as an expression of spiritual power; but he argues that Hegel's analysis of the tensions between scientific instrumentalism and Romantic expressivism still offers a better way of understanding the malaise of modernity that continues to infect Western societies, cultures and philosophy today (Taylor 1985a: 77-78).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rogers, Ben (2008). Charles Taylor interviewed. *Prospect Magazine*, 143, February.

<sup>11</sup> Rogers, Ben (2008). Charles Taylor interviewed. *Prospect Magazine*, 143, February.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Grondin (2000) characterizes continental philosophy as a self-defining invention of British analytical philosophy, formed in the 1930s as "a welcome antidote to British idealism inspired by Hegel's *Logic*" (Grondin 2000: 75).

In interviews Taylor appears more self-deprecating than views offered by his commentators, as Mark Redhead found out. In a far more recent interview, published in *Prospect Magazine* (February 2008), interviewer Ben Rogers asks: “Did you come from a family of intellectuals?”

Taylor replies: “My family was very involved in politics but there was nobody who would have thought of themselves as an intellectual.” Rogers’ previous question was: “What drew you to philosophy?”

I guess I just got angry. I studied history at McGill University, in Montreal, and then I came to Balliol, Oxford, to do PPE and I thought it was going to be mainly politics. But it was the fag end of a kind of post-positivist era in which -- unluckily for me -- there were two very tired dons who were fed up with the subject, and who gave lectures sub-sub-sub-Hume in a bored tone of voice. I thought: this can't be what it's all about, so I began to move around and get into other reading. I read Merleau-Ponty, and I took off from there. It was kind of reactive.

### **On the neglect of the topic of Taylor's Marxism**

In commentaries on Taylor it is extremely uncommon to find his core idea traced to his early experiences and reflections in the New Left movement. Two recently published books (Abbey 2004; Redhead 2002) give no more than a passing mention to Taylor's early interest in Marx. Smith (2002: 180-183) pays some attention to this aspect of Taylor, and situates it with illustrative effect in the context of Taylor's overall activism. Fraser (2007) thinks little of Smith's brief section, and notes instead that apart from an observation Isaiah Berlin makes in James Tully's (1994) edition of essays, “there has been little written about Taylor's relationship to Marx, Marxism *and the notion of the self*” (Fraser 2007: 2. Emphasis added). Fraser's qualification is correct, and he does treat Taylor's ambiguous relation to Marx at book length, though treating Taylor's work somewhat more hermeneutically than the historical treatment I am attempting here. Paul Saurette (2004) neglects to mention Marx at all in his review of books on Taylor (Abbey 2004; Redhead 2002; Smith 2002), despite opening his article with an observation that “Taylor shares Marx's appreciation of the importance of questions” (2004: 723). Beyond this opening gambit, Saurette makes no mention of Marx again. But perhaps this neglect is intended to reflect the similar one common mainly to Mark Redhead's (2002) and Ruth Abbey's (2004) collections of essays.

Fraser therefore notes quite correctly that “Taylor’s engagement with Marx and the Marxist tradition has been *relatively* neglected in the literature on his work.” He goes on to say: “Such an omission is strange, because Taylor has a long history of sympathy, albeit critical, with the more humanist side of Marx’s and Marxists’ writings” over a thirty-year period (Fraser 2003a: 759). Fraser sets out in both his book (2007) and his article (2003a) to correct the record; and in both publications his treatment of ‘Taylor’s Marxism’ remains the most exhaustive to date. Smith’s (2002) account is short on detail, but usefully divides Taylor’s political career into three stages.

The first corresponds to his involvement with the British New Left in the 1950s; the second to his activism within the Canadian New Democratic Party in the 1960s; and the third to his contribution to the debates surrounding Canada’s constitutional crisis throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The chief task of Taylor’s earliest political works is to elucidate the meaning of socialism, the nature of a socialist society, and the role of the intellectual in achieving it (Smith 2002: 173).<sup>13</sup>

Smith does avoid stating that Taylor’s *thought* or *theory* can be grouped by these phases, but he does not actually proscribe even an implication that this might be so. He ought to have done, as very definite strands extend over these three periods. Smith identifies “a key element of [Taylor’s] social theory: the idea that a truly democratic socialist society arises not by way of a self-determining, unified and homogeneous ‘will of the people’, but from the self-management of spontaneously associated, heterogeneous groups” (Smith 2002: 173). Taylor explains his view in an address to a reunion of the New Left, by pointing out how Marx’s (and Marxism’s) adoption of Rousseau’s model of freedom in the ‘general will’ made Stalinism and other atrocities possible (Taylor 1989b: 63, 65).

The civic-humanist model derived from Tocqueville “makes us look at society as a participatory community in which the common institutions, the common rules and laws that give structure to the form of this participatory life, are seen as the common repository of the human dignity of all the participants” (Taylor 1989b: 64). The communitarian inflection here, as I have said earlier, needs to be articulated with the important understanding of ‘self-making’; an understanding he attributed directly to Marx’s in his important break with Hegel (Taylor 1968a: 155). That is:

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<sup>13</sup> There is continuity between Taylor’s first and second stages of his political career. “The second concern, which occupies Taylor throughout the 1960s, is the prospect for democracy, again understood along socialist lines, especially in Canada” (Smith 2002: 173).

In seeing man's nature as made, Marx is breaking with Hegel. The subject of the Hegelian dialectic is not man, generic man, but the world spirit, that is, the spirit of not just man, but also the universe which surrounds him. This spirit comes to consciousness in man, and nowhere else ... but is still the spirit of more than man ... Marx's split with Hegel here is what gives his theory its radicalism (Taylor 1968a: 155, 156).

At first sight it can seem peculiar that Fraser links Taylor's understanding of Marx with his "the notion of the self" (Fraser 2007: 2). Fraser's book expands on an article (Fraser 2003a) in which he considers Taylor's approach by way of key themes: the self, the affirmation of ordinary life, democracy, ecology, and religion. But Fraser is quite correct here, as indicated in the above quote from Taylor, and as I shall indicate towards the close of the next chapter, in a discussion on Taylor's reading of Feuerbach. Fraser notes that "[o]ne of Taylor's major criticisms of Marxism is that, if it is to be a more relevant theory, it must say something extra about the 'personal level' of the individual" (Fraser 2003a: 761).

Thus far I have indicated that Taylor cannot be read without keeping an eye out for the influences of Marx, but that his most dedicated commentators have found little or no reason to adopt this view. I want to turn towards a related neglect, where scholars deal with subject matter to which Taylor *obviously* has made an authoritative contribution. I'll discuss just one of these topics: the *Hegelian* Marx, and focus on one scholar who inexplicably refuses to acknowledge Taylor.

Perhaps there *are* good reasons why scholars such as Tom Rockmore (2002) – currently exploring much of the Hegelian territory Taylor (1975a)<sup>14</sup> had mapped out decades earlier – should neglect to mention Taylor's earlier initiative in recovering (the Hegelian) Marx from the bankruptcy of Marxism-Leninism. There may be similarly valid reasons why Rockmore fails to acknowledge any lineage between his present aim to recover the Hegelian Marx from the post-Perestroika wreckage of

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<sup>14</sup> In a review of Paul Redding's book, *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (1996), Paul Franks (2001) notes that the book "is one of the most ambitious and suggestive book-length interpretations of Hegel's system since Charles Taylor's *Hegel* .... Many accept Taylor's view of Hegel as a pre-Kantian metaphysician who invokes Spirit as a divine subject actualizing itself in a history that culminates with Hegel's own God's-eye viewpoint .... But Redding challenges Taylor's view, offering a non-metaphysical or post-Kantian interpretation of Spirit that also moderates Hegel's apparent hubris. In particular, Redding places distinctive emphasis on the intersubjective concept of reciprocal recognition" (Franks 2001: 817).



Marxism, and Taylor's earlier work in recovering Marx's *humanism* in a largely Hegelian framework.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, in the introduction of his book, Rockmore presents his project as if it were *original* (Rockmore 2002: x-xvii). But the absence of any substantial reference to Taylor's work is stranger still given Rockmore's interest in *Heidegger* and the German philosophical tradition. That he does mention in a begrudging endnote that Taylor's *Hegel* (1975a) offers a "good account" of Romantic expressivism, and leaves it at that, simply begs belief (Rockmore 1980: 177). Certainly Taylor draws a portrait of Hegel's *Phenomenology* using a dualism comprising 'expressivism' from Herder, Vico and the Romantics, and 'rational autonomy' that corresponds to Kant and the Enlightenment. It is a dualism he imports into *Sources of the Self* (1989) (see Solomon 1985: 56, 112). But that Rockmore makes this limited gesture to Taylor in a book *on Marx*, bearing chapters on the "Marxian theory of man" and "Man as an active being", and without mentioning Taylor's earlier arguments, defies explanation. The dismay is hard to hold back given that in Rockmore's second book, *Heidegger and French Philosophy* (1995), he makes no mention of Taylor scholarship at all, despite their mutually impressive commitment to Heidegger and 'German philosophy' in the continental tradition. This is the same Heidegger who, as Rockmore states more recently, "insists on the importance of coming to grips with Hegel" (Rockmore 2001: 339).

In the previous chapter I drew attention to Redhead's comment that Taylor is no *adamant* Hegelian (Redhead 2002: 83). However, I neglected there (though for good reason), to explain how Taylor *could be* considered a Hegelian. This can be explained by way of three responses that together can also provide a coherent frame through which to read Taylor's work. I shall provide merely an outline of each. Writers readily draw attention to Taylor's Hegelian inflections, as they do to the central influence of Merleau-Ponty (Hewitt 2000; Pinkard 2004), but the caution they adopt to extending that influence to Marx may reflect the greater salience afforded to the materialist Marx of Engels and Lenin than to the Hegelian Marxism we more readily associate

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<sup>15</sup> Whether or not Fraser (2007) noticed this gap and seized it as an opportunity is hard to say; he makes no mention of Rockmore's neglect (or resistance); nor shall I mention it any further. But there is one gap that Fraser does not explore: the influence that Taylor may (or may not) have had on the nascent field of British Cultural Studies, which started as a critique of economism in British Marxism. That is the topic of this chapter. Another inexplicable neglect in Fraser's book is any consideration of how Merleau-Ponty's Marxism must have influenced Taylor.

with Georg Lukács (Corredor 1997: 116; Cristi 2005: 30).<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, this absence contradicts Taylor's sense of the diachronicity essential to understanding any philosopher's work (Taylor 1984) – an idea he says he gained from Merleau-Ponty. “For him you could not philosophize without doing the history of philosophy and vice versa,” Taylor says in an interview (Taylor 1998: 105).<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere he attributes this view as “strongly articulated by Hegel” (Taylor 1984a: 17). One can take Taylor's view as a simple didactic commentary, but it also harbours a more illuminating self-reflective element operating at a meta-level. That is, it is entirely plausible that Taylor's attraction to Merleau-Ponty's work lies in their mutual appropriations of Hegel.

At the conclusion of a section of *Sources* (Taylor 1989a), Taylor provides a chapter titled *Digression on Historical Method*, in which he discusses the “idealist account” by which ‘vulgar Marxists’ have been among the most vociferous opponents of Hegel and post-Kantian philosophy. But as if ‘striking back’, the kernel of Taylor's argument hinges on a criticism of a diachronic-causal explanation limited to “[o]ver-simple and reductive variants of Marxism” (Taylor 1989a: 202) that provide materialist explanations of, for instance, the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism. Elsewhere he describes the materialist schema as a “mechanistic explanation” that can be traced back to seventeenth century science; and which is “at home basically in the dualist outlook common both to Cartesian and empiricist philosophy” (Taylor 1993a: 72).

For Hegel, who like Aristotle before and Marx after him, sees an indissoluble link between economics and ethics, political economy concerns the fulfillment of human needs. Hegel, who is a political realist, is under no illusions about the effect of modern society on individuals. Although he has little tolerance for the modern failure to remedy endemic poverty and other similar difficulties, he is not mainly concerned with providing an accurate formulation of the foundations of political economy (Rockmore 2002: 27).

An alternative, interpretive and anti-dualistic explanation might be considered “idealist”, he explains “if the underlying thesis were that somehow an interpretive study of *idées-forces* was *sufficient* to answer the diachronic-causal question” (Taylor 1989a 204). Such a position, were it to exist, could be called “vulgar Hegelianism”.

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<sup>16</sup> Lukács may have posed difficulties for Taylor. Eva Corredor (1997: 6) points out that he too had published an acclaimed work on Hegel, *The Young Hegel* (1934), but also that “[i]n 1948 Lukács personally confronts Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and subsequently publishes a severe critique of the French existentialists' efforts to combine Marxism and existentialism” (Corredor 1997: 6).

<sup>17</sup> See Merleau-Ponty (1962: xvi) and Taylor (1959a: 103).

But the Hegelian explanation Taylor accepts as the authentic one reaches back to Aristotle's refusal to separate form from matter. Hegel's position emerges in a climate in which qualitative conceptions were in the ascendancy against Cartesian and empiricist views. However, Hegel's philosophy was not a simple opposition to Cartesianism, but entailed a recovery of the subject and a rehabilitation of the Aristotelian inseparability doctrine (Taylor 1993a: 73). This was an extremely important discovery for Taylor, and he applies it to good effect in his critique of epistemology. For example, Taylor uses the distinction such that the 'mechanistic' explains *behaviour*, and that the Hegelian conception 'explains' *action* (Taylor 1964; 1993a).

The confusion arises because reductive Marxism seems to want to allow *no* causal role *at all* to *idées-forces*, which is the equal and opposite absurdity to "idealism"; and worse, this kind of Marxism has trouble recognizing that there is a third possibility between these extremes. But in this middle ground lies all adequate historical explanation. One has to understand people's self-interpretations and their visions of the good, if one is to explain how they arise; but the second task cannot be collapsed into the first, even as the first cannot be elided in favour of the second (Taylor 1989a 204).

The second response directly concerns a query about popular interpretations of Marx and his apparent rejection of Hegel. The commonly-held belief is that Marx turned Hegel 'on his head' – an interpretation based upon a famous remark Marx makes in the German edition of *Capital*<sup>18</sup> (see Cristi 2005: 152; Fine 2001: 62, 69, 80). I do not wish to dispute this remark, but to briefly point out an observation Tom Rockmore (2002: 15-16) makes about the controversial relation of Marx to Hegel; and then just as briefly to indicate how Taylor's conception of 'social imaginaries' – which are not sets of ideas, but "what enables, through making sense of, the practices of society" (Taylor 2004: 2) – draws principally from his reading of Hegel. Furthermore, we can come to see how Taylor's philosophical anthropology is grounded in a 'Hegelian Marx'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "My own dialectical method is not only fundamentally different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. For Hegel the thought process, which he even transforms into an independent subject under the name of "idea", is the demiurge of the actual; the actual forms only its outer appearance. For me, on the contrary, the ideal is only the material when it is transposed and translated inside the human head.... In Hegel, the dialectic is standing on its head. One must turn it the right way up (*umstülpen*) in order to disclose the rational kernel in the mystical covering" (*Das Kapital*, Preface to 2nd edition of 1872 (Paul and Paul, 1930, vol. II, p. 873)).

<sup>19</sup> Philosophical anthropology can be defined as "an area of thought about the nature of man and the nature of knowing" about man (Holbrook 1987: 13). The central point of this interrogation deals with the embracing question about the particular being of human beings. Its purpose "is to render an account and clarify human existence as we objectively observe it and as we subjectively experience it in our

Rockmore (2002: 15) draws a distinction between the ‘idealist’ Marx of the young Hegelians, and the ‘materialist’ Marx as interpreted through the lens of Frederick Engels (and later, Lenin). Rockmore points out Engels’s own ambivalence as to whether Marx effected a ‘break’ with Hegel, or remained a Hegelian *though* embracing the mechanistic-causal explanations of seventeenth century science which Hegel included only as an element in his *dialectic* (the term made current by Johann Fichte – a founding figure of German idealism – but Hegel using the term *Aufhebung*, that is, “sublimation” or “overcoming” (Solomon 1985: 311, 589). The difference can be crudely put as a Hegelian Marx formerly accepting an ‘idea-materialist’ dialectic, and after his ‘break’ with Hegel positing a historical materialist dialectic. But Rockmore shows the difficulty of separating Engels from Marx in this later formation, and that Marxist scholars (following Lenin’s earlier rejection of Hegel, but ignoring his later more nuanced position)

... tend to follow Engels’s more schematic, negative view of the great idealist philosopher as someone needing to be overcome .... Since Engels, generations of Marxists have approached Marx’s position as the inversion of Hegel’s. Anglo-American analytic philosophy, which arose out of the revolt against British idealism, and has traditionally been skeptical about Hegel, usually approaches Marx without consideration, or without adequate consideration, of Hegel. Even Lukács, whose very nuanced treatment of Hegel is the main source of what is called Hegelian Marxism, continues to insist on a difference in kind between Marxism and Hegel (Rockmore 2002: 15-16).

### **Taylor’s New Left activism**

I have ended the above section with a somewhat more synchronic description<sup>20</sup> of Taylor’s humanist approach to Marx, but in order to appreciate it correctly, it is necessary to explore what *motivated* Taylor to move in this direction, and even to consider whether any personal values, prior knowledge, or contingencies of his context ameliorated or inhibited his motivation. We need to begin with Taylor’s postgraduate student career at Oxford in 1956. To get the chronology right, Taylor had completed an undergraduate degree in history at McGill in Montreal in 1952, then

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own life-world” (Vergote 1996: 25). The field has strong roots in German idealism, most strongly articulated more recently in the philosophy of Max Scheler and contemporary Thomists (Copelston 1963: 435), but extends back to the left wing of the Young Hegelians, to which Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer and others who made a virtue out of setting Hegel on his feet (Copelston 1963: 294-95).

<sup>20</sup> I have neglected to provide a similar discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, but do so at the beginning of the next chapter for reasons that should become clear then. There I introduce the philosopher by way of a discussion about how French structuralism may have been introduced to British Cultural Studies. But to reach there, I need to start with a question of why Taylor got involved in Left politics in the first place.

went to Oxford (at Balliol College) on a Rhodes Scholarship. He completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy, politics and economics in 1955; went on to do research for a Master of Arts degree, which he completed in 1960. He received a doctorate the following year, and returned to McGill in Canada.

Taylor could not have gone to the famous university town at a more momentous time. He began his postgraduate studies in 1956, the *annus horribilis* of communist parties in Europe, if not worldwide. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had delivered his ‘secret speech’ indicting Stalin’s personality cult. Workers in Hungary began organizing, leading to the Soviets crushing the rebellion with a symbolic effect that caused Communists abroad to abandon party structures to weaker-minded members with neither the intellect nor the good sense to understand what had happened. During the spring days of Budapest, and before the Soviet invasion, Egypt’s Gamal Nasser saw an opportunity to nationalise the Suez Canal to settle long-standing tensions with Britain, prompting an ill-conceived Anglo-French attack to secure the canal. The Egyptians were quickly overwhelmed; but without United States support, the humiliating Anglo-French withdrawal “signaled the end of any residual [British] capacity to act independently of Washington” (Milner 2002: 51). Such was the context against which, and the motive forces by which, the British New Left was formed: “by the collision and fusion of the two world-wide shock waves of Suez and Hungary” (Widgery 1976: 25).<sup>21</sup>

The New Left was formed as a response to the deepening crisis facing socialists, communists and other leftwing activists. When Khrushchev addressed the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, he spoke of the Stalinist purges that had been an integral feature of communist rule. The shock was profound, though for many communists it did not come as a surprise. The system, which had appeared to offer Eastern Europeans a radical alternative to Capitalism, had instead been an instrument of repression and terror (Davis 2004: 8).

Such is an aspect of the background to the beginning of Taylor’s postgraduate period at Oxford. It was the same year Stuart Hall says Taylor “went off [in the summer of 1956] to Paris to work with Merleau-Ponty” (in Inglis 1993: 154). But there are few clues why Taylor *should* have been attracted to the politics of the Left, and not opted instead for the quieter sedentary life of a student. Taylor does give a clue in an interview cited earlier: he “just got angry” with the post-positivist academic

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<sup>21</sup> Hellen Davis (2004: 7-8) describes these events as having a profound effect on Stuart Hall. It gave new urgency to debates around imperialism and Stalinism. “The enormity of the situation could not go unacknowledged. It now became imperative for Hall and his peers to find a way of mounting an oppositional stance” (Davis 2004: 7).

fare on offer, he says, “so I began to move around and get into other reading.”<sup>22</sup> But simply ‘getting angry’ seems to be an implausible reason to read Marx.

Taylor had gone to Oxford with the express intention of reading politics and entering into a political career in Canada. But he was at *Oxford* from the mid-1950s; and this fact is significant. Taylor says little about his time there, though one further comment does reveal something about the quality of his ‘moving around’. In 1957 (two years after completing his PPE, and before completing his MA in 1960) philosopher of language John L. Austin – famous for his speech act theory and president of the Aristotelian Society to which Taylor belonged – asked Taylor to explain Merleau-Ponty at a seminar:

Austin had broader views, French philosophy interested him. I remember his fascination with Merleau-Ponty at the Royaumont conference in 1957. On his return to Oxford, he invited me to present Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy at his seminar. I began to expound on the *Phenomenology of Perception* but he stopped me at the first sentence with ‘What does it mean?’ He was not prepared to enter into a different philosophical style (Taylor 1998: 104).

Austin’s work veered closely to Wittgenstein’s; though he denied Wittgenstein had influenced his work. Taylor had a different attitude. He says he “was very fortunate to be a pupil of [Wittgensteinian scholar] Elizabeth Anscombe, who was at Oxford at the time” (Taylor 1998: 104-105). It is worth quoting at length what Taylor says next because it connects a number of pieces I consider here and in the next few chapters:

Oxford’s good side was the freedom and liveliness of the discussions in the seminars of these great individuals. At the time, Anscombe was developing her book on intentionality, *Intention*, and this philosophy of practical rationality, inspired by Aristotle and Wittgenstein, taught me a lot. Two paths thus opened up for me to escape from the empiricist yoke, and I tried to combine them by elaborating my problematic of philosophical anthropology. My first book was influenced as much by Wittgenstein as by Merleau-Ponty. There was actually an important convergence between Wittgenstein and certain themes of the *Phenomenology of Perception*. When Anscombe said about intentionality that ‘we have a terribly abstract view of these questions’, she was criticizing empiricist anthropology (Taylor 1998: 105).

As Taylor says, that was Oxford “at the time”. But universities also have institutional memory; and perhaps Oxford has more than most. Part of the institutional memory there was the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, which captured the imagination of intellectuals who were idealistically drawn to the heroism of taking up arms in defense of the conflict between a democratically-elected Republican

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<sup>22</sup> Rogers, Ben (2008). Charles Taylor interviewed. *Prospect Magazine*, 143, February.

government against the Fascist insurgency led by General Francisco Franco.<sup>23</sup> Many British communists, anarchists and others in the British Left joined the International Brigades to support the Republic; and a high proportion of them died there (see Samuel 1989: 45-46; Dworkin 1997: 11-13; Graves and Hodges 1940: Ch. 20).<sup>24</sup>

Spain was one memory the New Left would have been unable to avoid, given that their meeting premises was the moribund Socialist Club, which had not seen much activity since the late 1930s (Hall 1989: 20).<sup>25</sup> But the disillusionment of Spain put no end to student Marxism. Dennis Dworkin notes that Oxford and Cambridge students of the 1930s were instrumental during the immediate post-war period in promoting Marxist historical scholarship (Dworkin 1997: 10-11, 15-25). As an undergraduate history major at McGill, Taylor (1966a: 227-231) would understandably have taken note of this legacy. He also indicates in *Marxism and Empiricism* (Taylor 1966a) his having considered Neal Wood's book, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (1959). What he found in its pages may have led him to see himself at Balliol as an heir to that radical tradition (Wood 1959: 76, 85).<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, he also noticed that Oxford's Marxist tradition was an island in the empiricist sea of British intellectual life.<sup>27</sup> As Wood writes:

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<sup>23</sup> Poets such as WH Auden, Stephen Spender and, most famously, writers like George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway wrote hopefully of the fighting and the brave determination of the ordinary people involved. This literary legacy has ensured a continuing fascination with the civil war, which took place between 1936 and 1939.

<sup>24</sup> Somewhat fewer than 50 000 foreigners fought in Spain, including over 40 000 in the International Brigade, which never consisted, however, of more than 15 000 at any one time. British volunteers in Spain totaled 2762. Their casualties were exceptionally high: 1762 wounded and 543 killed. About one-half of those killed were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain or the Young Communist League. It is difficult to estimate the number of British intellectuals who participated in the fighting, drove ambulances, or otherwise assisted at the front. The most widely known communist intellectuals were John Cornford, son of Francis MacDonald Cornford, the Cambridge classicist, and Frances Cornford, the poet; David Guest, son of the future Labour peer, Lord Haden-Guest; Christopher Caudwell, a brilliant young Marxist critic and poet; and Ralph Fox, the novelist and critic. All four died on the battlefield. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the non-communists in Spain was the death of the young poet Julian Bell, son of Clive and Vanessa Bell. Those who survived included Auden; the novelist, Ralph Bates; the journalist, Claude Cockburn; George Orwell; Wogan Philipps, the painter; and Esmond and Giles Romilly, nephews of Sir Winston Churchill. Spain was the first and last crusade of the British left-wing intellectual. Never again was such enthusiasm mobilized, nor did there exist such a firm conviction in the rightness of a cause. Disillusion had not yet sapped the idealism of the young (Wood 1959: 56-57).

<sup>25</sup> Stuart Hall's (1958c: 14-15) brief discussion of working class literature includes references to George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and the related work on the Spanish Civil War, which may indicate the salience of the conflagration to their circle.

<sup>26</sup> Neil Wood was an American who read for his Ph.D. at Cambridge University from 1955 to 1957. The book is derived from his thesis.

<sup>27</sup> "Not only has Marxism been a minority phenomenon in working class movements, and even in working class socialist movements, but Marxism as an intellectual tradition has had very little

The radical movement was concentrated almost entirely in London, Oxford and Cambridge – where the children of the leisure-classes were educated. The majority of the left-wing activities were to be found among the students of the arts and certain of the sciences, particularly biology and physics. Very few of those studying for the professions of law, medicine, and engineering seemed to be inclined in this direction. Finally, only a small proportion of the radical activists were members of the Communist Party; perhaps no more than one thousand at any one time. Most of these probably drifted out of the Communist Party after a very short period. Student communism, in addition to being fashionable, served the useful purpose of arousing the political and social sensibilities of numerous alert and intelligent youths (Wood 1959: 53).

It may be safe to say that, for Taylor as a young Rhodes scholar, Oxford's legacies would have informed his sense of 'being there'. Taylor does draw links between Spain and the *decline* of Marxism in Britain, and it is a question he considers particularly in relation to his opposition to empiricism (Taylor 1966a: 228-229).<sup>28</sup> Here he links 'anti-Marxism' with the empiricist and post-positivist analytical tradition that 'got him angry', and which he saw as emanating from the seventeenth century scientific revolution of the Enlightenment (Taylor 1966a: 234). But whether or not Taylor actually embraced Marxist *praxis* as an end in itself, or simply used it as a vehicle against empiricism, his essay *Marxism and Empiricism* (1966), published only a few years after his return to Canada, gives no clear indication. But one man's quest against empiricist and post-positivist social science would hardly provide the impetus for an entire movement; even if it coloured Taylor's approach to Marx. Stuart Hall (1989) ponders why the movement should have started at Oxford, and not elsewhere (Neil Wood (1959: 77) describes the movement as not actually having *started* there as much as been *resuscitated*). Nevertheless:

How and why did this happen then – and why, of all places, partly in Oxford? In the 1950s universities were not, as they later became, centres of revolutionary activity. A minority of privileged left-wing students, debating consumer capitalism and the embourgeoisement of working class culture amidst the 'dreaming spires', may seem, in retrospect, a pretty marginal political phenomenon. Nevertheless, the debate was joined with a fierce intensity, self-consciously counterposed to the brittle, casual self-confidence of Oxford's dominant tone (Hall 1989: 18).

Hall provides a partial answer as to *why* the movement began there and not elsewhere. Balliol already had various shades of 'leftists', and he starts with "the great

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importance on the British Scene. This is all the more true if one restricts one's purview to the academic scene" (Taylor 1966a: 227).

<sup>28</sup> There seem to be no good reasons to discount Taylor's interest in (British) Marxism as merely emanating from an impulse to engage with fashionable issues and debates of the day. But while there is no mistaking Taylor's impatience with the (albeit worried) apologetic genuflections those on the Left made towards all-things-Soviet, it would be mistaken to think Taylor's inspiration came from equally doctrinaire sources.



body of ‘Labour Club’ supporters, the majority firmly attached to Fabian, Labourist and reformist positions, and a few with their eyes fixed unswervingly on their coming parliamentary careers” (Hall 1989: 19). But although Taylor too had similar parliamentary ambitions, Hall does not include him in this group – possibly because they represented most of what the New Left opposed. “The Oxford left was very diverse,” he writes, naming a few members of the “small number of CP members ... mainly in Balliol, where Christopher Hill<sup>29</sup> was the tutor in modern history” (Hall 1989: 19). Another group whom Hall calls the “Balliol Reds” were embattled by early Cold War suspicions, and propounded their views at a time “when Communists were forbidden to take part in any Labour Party activity” (Hall 1989: 19).

Finally there were a small number of ‘independents’, including some serious Labour people, intellectually aligned with neither of those two camps, who shuttled somewhat uneasily between them. The latter group attracted more than its fair share of exiles and migrants, which reinforced its cosmopolitanism (Hall 1989: 19).

Hall then names a few prominent foreigners. He recalls meeting “Chuck Taylor” as “a French-Canadian Rhodes scholar (as well as that even more perplexing phenomenon, a sort of Catholic Marxist)” (Hall 1989: 19). Taylor was no stranger to Hall; and we can surmise from Fred Inglis’s description that the two had conversed at a high level. The Jamaican Rhodes Scholar had come to Oxford in 1951, having read Marx’s *Capital* (Chen 1996: 487), but his socialist education was not to end there. Like Taylor, Hall’s entrance into British leftist politics began when he received a second scholarship and decided to stay on at Oxford. It was at this time that he met Taylor, who taught him about Hegel and the humanist side of Marx (Inglis 1993: 154).<sup>30</sup> In an interview with Kuan-Hsing Chan, Hall (1996a: 497) recalls (after considering the ‘older generation of Raymond Williams) Taylor’s influence on him:

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<sup>29</sup> Christopher Hill (1958) was the first to review the English translation of Antonio Gramsci’s, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (1957). As Taylor had read history at McGill before going to Oxford, it is entirely likely that he would have found much reason to engage in conversation with the famous Oxford historian. An editor note in the first edition of *Universities and Left Review* has the following:

“CHARLES TAYLOR, 27, Canadian Rhodes Scholar, graduated with Firsts in History (McGill University) and Politics, Philosophy and Economics (Balliol College, Oxford); John Locke Prize in philosophy, Oxford 1956; completed a thesis on the theory of alienation, from Hegel to the Existentialists; Elected Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, 1956.”

<sup>30</sup> Fred Inglis (1993) writes: “At the same moment, four exceedingly bright young leftists linked up at Oxford, and set themselves to found a rather different kind of political mag. Stuart Hall ... joined Al Alvarez’ and Graham Martin’s Critical Society, the first group ever to invite Leavis to Oxford, and he was taught by Bateson. He palled up with a Scotsman reading Classical Greats from Keele, another Hall called Alan, as well as with an enormously tall, craggy, friendly, antic kind of Canadian Christian-Marxist called Charles Taylor who always repudiated the more concrete-headed Marxists, and taught

Then there was the younger generation, Charles Taylor, myself, Raphael Samuel. Raphael was the dynamo and inspiration, absolutely indispensable, full of ideas.... By 1958 ... Charles Taylor had already gone to Paris to study with Merleau-Ponty. Charles was very important to me, personally. I remember the first discussions of Marx's *1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, which he brought back from Paris, and the discussions about alienation, humanism and class (Hall 1996a: 497).

Hall suggests that this 'learning' took place in the context of a wider forum of political activism when he says elsewhere that the "locus of our debate was the Socialist Club, a moribund organization left more or less abandoned since its thirties 'Popular Front' days, which we resuscitated" (Hall 1989: 20). However, it does seem that discussion between the two was not limited to the anonymous mediations of a crowd. The new grouping launched its journal, *Universities and Left Review (ULR)*, whose first editors included Hall and Taylor (Hall 1989: 20). Hall recounts the events then, which Fred Inglis (1993: 154) quotes at length:

We appointed ourselves keepers of the Left conscience. There was Chuck Taylor; Raphael, Graham Martin and Gabriel Pearson then still CP, Alan and me. To begin with, Alan and I resurrected the Socialist Society in Oxford, which had been going strong in the 1930s. We found it still had a bank account with a decent credit; some of the Old Left had kept their subscriptions going!

At the end of the summer of 1956 Chuck went off to Paris to work with Merleau-Ponty and I went to London to teach English in a Secondary Modern school near the Oval, as well as some extra-mural classes down at Bexleyheath. We had set up *Universities and Left Review* just before then. [The grandly stylish title indicated the University origin of its editors and their hoped-for link with the pre-war Left Review] (sic.) We had no money for U and LR, but the first issue sold 8,000 [three times as many as *New Reasoner*] (sic.). There was obviously something on the move out there.

We first met in Chuck's room in All Souls. We were full of barmy schemes; Ralph and I were raising money to fly Sartre to England at the height of the Algerian crisis. It would have been quite easy.

Positions taken in the New Left movement were expressively accomplished as much in conversation as they were through *debate* in their articles in the forum constituted by their journals. *ULR* co-editor Ralph (Raphael) Samuel<sup>31</sup> (1989) describes the "new frontiers" they were exploring. "We championed sociology as a new learning which would introduce the breath of life into the universities and make traditional subjects more 'relevant'" (Samuel 1989: 42). The sociological attraction

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Stuart Hall the humanist side of the prophet, and about Hegel. They heard Christopher Hill lecture on the class-revolutionary meaning of the English Civil War, where they were joined by a nomad from the London School of Economics, Raphael -- known as Ralph -- Samuel, child of an ardently Jewish-communist family" (Inglis 1993: 154).

<sup>31</sup> In the list of editors found in the first edition of *ULR*, Samuel's first name is given as Ralph. But in *Out of Apathy* (1989) it is given as Raphael.

may well have come from reading C. Wright Mills; but reading the following as (at least partly) Taylor's (1958a) lead is hard to dismiss:

In philosophy we argued for a more phenomenological understanding of reality, contrasting the urgencies of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre with the frivolities of Oxford philosophy.... A later discovery, which can be dated fairly precisely to the summer of 1957, was alienation theory and the young Marx. It gave us a 'humanist' Marx – the Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 – to counterpose to the 'determinist' Marx of later years. This early Marx was in some sense, so far as Britain was concerned, our very own, since the Manuscripts were not translated into English until 1960.... 'If there is one word which the Labour Party lacks,' wrote Perry Anderson – anticipating, as an undergraduate, one of the themes he was later to develop as editor of *New Left Review* – 'it is alienation.' (Samuel 1989: 42, 43).

The year after Samuel says the *Manuscripts* – translated by Taylor (Dworkin 1997: 62)<sup>32</sup> – were made available to their group, Taylor and Michael Kullman<sup>33</sup> published an article in *The Review of Metaphysics* explaining Merleau-Ponty's concept of the "pre-objective world" (Kullman and Taylor 1958). Two years later, Taylor published an article with the rationalist philosopher Alfred Jules Ayer, *Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis* (1959) – the same year Taylor published *Ontology* (1959).<sup>34</sup>

Samuel notes that the "ULR had presented itself from the first as a movement of young people and offered itself as a forum where 'the generation of the thirties' and the 'generation of the fifties' could meet" (Samuel 1989: 45). Helen Davis (2004: 8) describes the journal as "energetic and eclectic, pulling together both new and established writers and commentators," though its intention to "adopt and adapt new and existing models in order to explore socialism's relation to contemporary culture" earned the suspicion of Edward Thompson, whose rival journal, *The New Reasoner*,

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<sup>32</sup> Stuart Hall (1958d: 27) refers to "*Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 and the *German Ideology*," from which he quotes, then provides a reference to Timothy Bottomore and Maximilian Rubel. A closer inspection finds that this translation was first published in 1956, thus calling both Dworkin's and Samuel's claim about Taylor's having translated the *Manuscripts* into question.

<sup>33</sup> As far as I have been able to ascertain, Michael Kullman's interest was architecture or art history. A note in ULR says he was 26 years old in 1958, and "graduated with a first in PPE at Balliol College. Now researching at St. Anthony's College, Oxford." There was a Michael Kullman in charge of General Studies at the Royal College of Art from about 1959 onwards.

<sup>34</sup> The Ayer article was not co-authored as such, but presented a paper by Taylor, followed by another responding to Taylor. I mention these additional articles not so as to announce their explanation. This I shall attempt in the next chapter. Here I intend only to indicate that discussions of Merleau-Ponty were integral to ULR debate. Taylor's culturalist motives seem less than opaque: he would take on board Merleau-Ponty's intentionality thesis to draw on its attempt to capture the essential structure of lived experience. He would find benefit also in Merleau-Ponty's proposition to correct the classical accounts of perception found in empiricism and Kantianism. Against empiricism, Taylor would settle accounts with positivism, and thereby build his approach to social science. His score with Kantianism would prove more difficult. Nonetheless, it is in Merleau-Ponty that he manages to combine these, as I show at the end of the next chapter.

founded by Edward and Dorothy Thompson and John Saville in April 1957 after both had resigned from the Communist Party.<sup>35</sup> *New Reasoner* “was the product of a humanist, oppositional tradition in the Communist Party of Great Britain” (Davies 1993: 118), and sought to make the existing historical materialist model ‘more ethical’ (Davis 2004: 8-9; Wood 1959: 200-201). The journal had Alasdair MacIntyre<sup>36</sup> and Raymond Williams on its editorial board. The *ULR* was established the year before, in 1956, but its first edition coincided with *New Reasoner*’s. While it was a shared stage upon which these journals played, their respective casts were of different generations: one of the thirties and the other of the fifties (Samuels 1989: 45). It was not uncommon, however, for members of one generation to publish in the journal of the other.

For various reasons (mostly financial), the two journals merged at the end of 1959 to become *New Left Review* (Hall 1989: 22-24). But until then, Taylor committed himself to writing and editing *ULR*, and in his first article he quotes with qualified approval Thompson’s criticism of (‘organic’) intellectuals in the Communist Party for their acquiescence in the Stalinist show trials. He then goes on to place a premium on the *morality* of intellectual leadership. Whether or not this quality was a reflexive one – Hall refers to the student left’s “‘moral seriousness’, as contrasted with “Oxford’s willed triviality” (Hall 1989: 18-19) – one cannot say.

Taylor and his colleagues certainly did make their voices heard in relation to their more experienced partners. And although the incisive quality of Taylor’s intervention in debate is surprising for its erudition and clarity, it would be wrong to assume the he worked out his position ‘all on his own’. The context in which he and

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<sup>35</sup> “Its editorial board included the novelists Doris Lessing and Mervyn Jones, the anthropologist Peter Worsley, the tough South African revolutionary John Rex, Randall Swingler, a well-known journalist and a dashing kind of nomadic chieftain of the Left in a mode now largely disappeared from British life; its intellectual orientation was towards the sort of economic history advocated by the doughty Communist Historians Group, Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill, Victor Kiernan, Rodney Hilton” (Inglis 1993: 153).

<sup>36</sup> MacIntyre confronted Stalinists and humanists alike in a two-part essay written for *The New Reasoner* in 1958, entitled *Notes from the Moral Wilderness*. He criticised humanists for advocating the autonomy of moral principle – a position he later came to condemn as ‘emotivism’ (MacIntyre 1984), which Taylor describes as seeing “value statements as expressions of our emotional reactions to certain objects” (Taylor 2003: 305). MacIntyre’s 1958 argument was that by cutting moral judgement off from the domains of history, anthropology and so on, the critic has no grounds but unintelligible, arbitrary choice upon which to base his judgements (MacIntyre 1958: 124). Hence, the humanist strips criticism of its authority. The Stalinist critic dismisses morality as merely epiphenomenal. The result is the same.

his fellow activist-intellectuals worked was both collegial and dialogical.<sup>37</sup> The centre of their collegiality was the New Left Clubs – membership of which “was academic-students and teachers, for sure, and pretty few workers” (Inglis 1998: 166).<sup>38</sup> But more significantly, it was in the two journals that dialogue was made actual.

Davis (2004: 9-18) describes the life of the new movement around the clubs once they had shifted to London, and to which Hall gave his energies. The shift towards the imperative of culture seems entirely logical, given the new environs; though it did create tensions within the New Left. “Hall [was] looking directly at post-war culture and situating his analysis on the edge of contemporary Marxist theory ... looking to a revision and reconstruction of a contemporary socialism fit for the present, rather than trying to resurrect a more benign version of communism” (Davis 2004: 16). British working class culture was, as the title of Hall’s 1958 article in *ULR* suggests, in the throws of “a sense of classlessness.” The Labour Party in particular, and the Left in general, was in crisis. Labour’s welfarism amounted to an endorsement of new consumer culture.

It was also not long before Hall and his colleagues turned their attention to the political role of the mass media (Davis 2004: 17-18). In the fifth issue of *ULR*, Taylor and his fellow co-editors in 1958 express their good fortune in having contributions from both Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams: “two people who have influenced our ideas [on the mass media] most deeply.” The writers provide substance to that influence, indicating traces of the ‘mass society’ debate:

This controversy, however, has taken shape through discussions which we have had, both at *ULR* Club meetings and in the group which worked at the exhibition for the Labour Party Conference on The Mass Persuaders. What concerns us here is not the more blatant vices of the new media, but their deeper and more subtle effects upon attitudes and values. We are concerned about the persuasive and manipulative effects of these new forms of communication, about the whole idea of a “mass society” itself – and about the many ways in which people are encouraged to see themselves as “the masses,” and sometimes accept and participate in their own exploitation<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> I am making this claim on the basis of the first editorial of *Universities and Left Review*; when in 1957, editors Taylor, Hall, Gabriel Pearson and Ralph Samuel wrote for the benefit of their audience: “We hope that these people will become our regular readers, contributors, and financial supporters, that if in the London Area, they will try to take part in the Left Review Club, and that they will give us that active support and assistance without which every part-time journal must collapse.”

<sup>38</sup> The role of the Left Clubs is a topic I have not considered sufficiently. For thorough and amusing discussions, see Hall (1989) and Ioan Davies (1993).

<sup>39</sup> *Universities and Left Review*, issue 5, Autumn 1958, page 3. In the same edition appear three articles on the ‘mass media’. Richard Hoggart’s paper, *BBC and ITV After Three Years*, and Raymond Williams’s *The Press the People Want*, are preceded by Stuart Hall’s paper, *A Sense of Classlessness*,

## On Taylor's rejection of orthodox Marxism

While members of the New Left were 'interested' in Marxism – Pearson and Samuel and came from staunchly Jewish Marxist families (Chen 1996: 492; Davies 1993: 118) – they kept their distance from the 'Old Left' represented by both the Communist Party and the Labour Party; the first for its Stalinism and ambiguous response to the Hungarian crisis (Wood 1959: 200), and the second for its reformist welfarist policies (Davies 1993: 117. The ULR “therefore played at the edge of Marxist theory, releasing it from the “reductionism and economism of the base-superstructure metaphor” (Hall 1989: 25).

So far I have indicated though given little substance to Taylor contributions towards debate in the New Left. In all, and possibly at the risk of putting it too simplistically, Taylor generally accepts Marx's critique of capitalism but rejects (orthodox) Marxism as an explanatory and political framework. In the second issue of *New Reasoner*, for instance, Taylor offers qualified support for Thompson's criticism of Stalinism *as a deviation from Marx*; that is, “as an incomplete, partisan, distorted view of reality” (Taylor 1957d: 92).

In the search for a new definition of humanism, Edward Thompson takes his stand as a Marxist Communist, and, by exposing the full humanist context of this tradition, gives a definite answer to the facile view which would assimilate Marxist values to the more hideous aspects of Soviet practice of the last decades.... But the question of Socialist Humanism is of too great importance for us to leave any facet of the problem unexamined. And there is one major question that seems to arise from Thompson's article, where I can't help finding myself in disagreement with him. The question can be put in the following way: If the practice known as Stalinism is not in the true Marxist tradition, and if therefore the assimilation Communism-Stalinism is false, can we go to the other extreme and brand Stalinism as a pure deviation from Communist practice? (Taylor 1957d: 92).

Taylor's opinion, given at the close of his article, is that “Marxist communism is at best an incomplete humanism,” and that “humanism without the contribution of Marx is abstract and cannot come to grips with the modern world” (Taylor 1957d: 98). This is a view Taylor has held without alteration. In an interview with Taylor

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in which he presents a class analysis of an increasingly affluent British working class. He ends his paper with direct reference to Hoggart's and Williams's papers. “[T]he sense of classlessness, which can only be engendered by a persuasive formula, must exist before people will accept their own cultural and economic exploitation. They have to be made accessories after the fact. This is the context in which we should understand the discussion about ‘the mass media’, about advertising and culture. Every form of communication which is concerned with altering attitudes, which changes or confirms opinions, which instils new images of the self, is playing its part. They are not peripheral to the ‘economic base: they are part of it’ (Hall 1958a: 31).

(1978) soon after he returned to Oxford in 1976 as Chichele professor of politics, Bryan Magee opens the discussion with a description of orthodox Marxism's contribution to modern philosophy.<sup>40</sup> "It's absolutely right, as far as it goes," Taylor says of Magee's introduction. "It gives a good picture of Marxism as an explanatory theory" (Taylor 1978b: 45). Then Taylor turns to an aspect of Marx unfamiliar to those accustomed to the Marxist tradition in Britain:

But there's also another dimension: Marxism as a theory of liberation, which I think accounts for the immense importance and excitement that this theory has generated in the last century. You can start an account of that from the same point. It is that human beings are what they are because of the way they produce the means to live, and they produce the means to live as a society, not individually. So in a way we can look at man just as another gregarious animal, like ants or bees. But what differentiates men from ants and bees, Marx holds, is that human beings have the capacity to reflect on, and change, the way they work on Nature to produce the means to life (Taylor 1978b: 45).

His call is to take account of the "inadequacies of Marxism" as it had evolved as a political programme, and to peel away those layers so as to reach Marx the critic of modernity. In this respect Taylor would have approved of Tom Rockmore's (2002) recent call to distinguish "between Marx and Marxism," had it been published then; as he certainly would of Rockmore's argument that in order to 'recover' Marx it is necessary to do so through Hegel (Rockmore 2002: 15-21). When Taylor returned to Oxford he had already published *Hegel* (1995a), and turned his efforts to reintroducing to philosophy in Britain one who was largely ignored, particularly since empiricism had taken hold there in the early twentieth century. Taylor's project was an interest he had voiced a decade earlier:

In the 1930s and 1940s [Hegelianism] was entirely swept aside by the loose-knit trend of thought known as linguistic analysis. This represented a return to an indigenous philosophical tradition, and a return which was also a reaction against Hegelianism. British philosophy since has tended not just to be non-Hegelian but to be anti-Hegelian. The form of its thought is such that it tends to find the whole language of Hegelianism meaningless, and therefore to find meaningless the language of Marxism as well. In this reaction against Hegelianism ... we can find the obstacles to an easy acceptance of Marxism on to British intellectual soil (Taylor 1966a: 230-231).

In general, Taylor and his colleagues identified Marxism as fettered by the infrastructure-superstructure model upon which the philosophy was built; but more specifically, they brought to the question a *humanist socialism* that orthodox Marxism had long dismissed as 'idealist' and 'Hegelian'. There is strong evidence that Taylor

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<sup>40</sup> Taylor did, after all, return to his alma mater with an enormous reputation of being a 'Marxist philosopher'; as the tone of Magee's introduction reveals.

was instrumental in at least *assisting* his colleagues in this Hegelian direction. I say ‘assisting’ because, although Taylor *did* produce the translation of Marx’s *Paris Manuscripts* for the benefit of his circle, there is also a sense that a parallel Hegelian influence came through reading Lukács. Raymond Williams makes mention of how, in the “mid-fifties”, he “found also, and crucially, Marxist thinking that was different, in some respects radically different, from what I and most people knew as Marxism (Williams 1977: 2, 3).

Taylor’s writings between 1957 and 1960 aimed “to contribute towards a retrieval and renewal of socialist politics” (Smith 2002: 173). Like other contributors to *ULR* and *The New Reasoner*, Taylor rejected the alternatives on offer: Labour Party welfarism and Communist Party Marxist economism. The orthodox interpretation of the model ascribed to the economic infrastructure a mechanistic determination that made agency and *human behaviour*, located in the superstructure, difficult to imagine beyond tenets of passive determinations. These difficulties in imagination were compounded by a situation where the ‘party line’ was one frozen in a perpetual genuflection towards Moscow. ‘Marxism’ was significantly determined by that orientation; but was distinguished from what Edward Thompson considered to be truer to communism than what Stalinism had engendered.<sup>41</sup>

It would be wrong to think Taylor to have been aloof to labour politics in Britain; or to have satisfied himself merely with theoretical issues in Marxism. His contributions to the issue that generally goes under the label ‘welfarism’ indicates otherwise. Here he engages with Thompson in the “Clause 4 debate” in the 1960s (Taylor 1960b: 3), which boiled down to whether the Labour Party’s commitment to common ownership was a conflation of a particular, historically contingent set of means with convenient ends (reformism), or whether its commitment abided by core values of equality and liberty (Desai 1994: 76, 104, 110-112). In what seems in the mid-1950s to have been a precursor to the Thatcherist attack on the trade unions, during this period the unions had been relegated to industrial welfare organizations

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<sup>41</sup> As Ben Agger writes: “Of course, the issue of fidelity to Marx is ambiguous .... There are passages galore where he seems to endorse a positivist conception of social theorizing, including an objectivist theory of representation that reduces the constitutional role of both theory and practice. These passages can be balanced against the places, especially in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1961), where Marx endorses a more dialectical model of the interaction between social and economic structures, on the one hand, and subjective and intersubjective agency, on the other” (Agger 1992: 42).



(Taylor 1960a: 8). Taylor's viewpoint is well-summarised in the following piece, and shows the teleological moral lynchpin of his approach:

Of course, the rise of the Labour Movement has forced more civilised and humane standards on to management. Many firms now 'take care' of part or all of their employees with everything from superannuation schemes to cheap housing, and more firms will certainly do so in the future. But there is a great danger in exaggerating this change, welcome as it is, into a supposed 'reform' of the system. For these schemes do not begin to solve the problem of providing a decent standard of welfare services for the *whole community*. They serve, on the contrary, to accentuate the double standards in welfare which are more and more in evidence in our society, a system in which workers in the less profitable industries, and non-profit making nationalised industries, not to speak of the submerged fifth, will go to the wall – and moreover where their distress remains unnoticed amid the general rejoicing over 'progressive' management. If the Labour Movement ever decided, on the plea that capitalism was 'reformed', to confine itself to a struggle within the system to make management more progressive, it would be in danger of renouncing one of the finest parts of its tradition, the struggle to establish a responsibility by the whole community for *all* its members for the provision of vital human needs (Taylor 1960a: 8-9)

Welfarism accepted 'capitalism with a human face', and interpreted the growing affluence of the average British working class member as socialist achievements (Smith 2002: 174). But Taylor rejected welfarism on grounds that the appearance of a capitalist diffusion of power was masked by the rise of the multinationals; and that *consumption* provided the means by which these organizations profited. The substantive economic changes people perceived provided the illusion that power had been distributed more equitably, but class power remained essentially unchanged (Smith 2002: 175). Taylor also rejects welfarism on grounds "that it has an emasculated conception of the good ... lacking moral imagination," and, by naturalizing popular responses to consumerism as a *normative* condition, "for having an ideologically foreshortened conception of human potentialities" (Smith 202: 176).

[T]he social critic must also rectify welfarism's failure to question the coherence and worth of the conception of the good that does happen to prevail in contemporary capitalist societies .... [C]onsumption for pleasure is not a 'viable' purpose for living' because it is not amenable to growth or development.... Taylor rebukes the welfarists for taking the diversity of life practices I capitalist society at face value. For diversity exists only at a superficial level, that is, within the paradigm of consumption.... Taylor therefore flatly rejects the welfarist model of socialism. But like other representatives of the New Left, he was even more hostile to Stalinism (Smith 2002: 177).

Perhaps the most significant influence on the development of Taylor's thinking is the temporal background against which he considered Marx: the condition of Marxism in Britain during the Stalinist era on the 1950s to which he reacted. Unlike many during that period who rejected Marx *tout court* because of the revealed sins of

Marxism, particularly after Soviet excesses in Hungary in 1956, Taylor's response was to reject *Marxism* for having 'got Marx fundamentally wrong'. It was the humanist Marx to which Taylor appealed in his earliest critique of reductionist 'political' *Marxism* in Britain, where Party members wavered on how to respond to Stalinism. The Communist Party "was characterized by a somewhat uncritical attitude towards the actions of the Soviet Union and its Communist satellites" (Smith 2002: 175). In an article titled *Socialism and the intellectuals* (1957b), Taylor writes:

For years Communist intellectuals were silent where they should have spoken because they did not wish to damage the party. Communism then seemed to be an admirable synthesis, a system without fissure. One had to accept it all or reject it utterly. Hence if one was on balance in favour, it was best to remain silent. Now the yawning gap is there: the concept of Stalinism has been brought forward and the capture of the party by a bureaucratic leadership who hold onto power at all costs, even at the expense of jettisoning one by one the ideals of Communism. Now that this contradictory element has been abstracted from the main body of Communism, considered as the *philosophy of practice*, it can again be thought of as a single unified system claiming our unqualified adherence (Taylor 1957b: 19. Italics added).<sup>42</sup>

It is easy to mistake Taylor's position as a kind of *liberal* humanist that MacIntyre dismisses in articles published in *The New Reasoner*. Instead, his recourse is to the *humanist Marx* wherein there is, he tells Bryan Magee, "almost a vision of man, social man, as a kind of artist, expressing himself in a society which has overcome alienation .... [and] all the capacities humans have to control their lives are put to the service of their expressive drives and aspirations" (Taylor 1978b: 48, 49). In the second issue of *Reasoner*, Taylor (1957) criticizes again the isolation of intellectuals from the labour movement, but having turned their loyalties instead to the *Party*.

The isolation of the intellectual from the political life of the workers, from the preoccupations of the Labour movement, which in Britain at least, most emphatically do not include ideas, is the context in which much of the behaviour, both of the intellectual and Lucky Jim, is to be understood. The former seeks to close the gap via the supposed vanguard of the working class, while the latter has a sneaking and sometimes vocal contempt for both

[ .... ]

It is not necessary to dwell on the really tragic predicament of many intellectuals in the C.P. It is however necessary to try to draw the moral. It is clear that by refusing their vocation as intellectuals to speak the truth in the name of political necessity, they

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<sup>42</sup> It may be that Taylor's reference to Communism as "the philosophy of practice" indicates a reading of Antonio Gramsci's use of the circumlocution, which he used to refer to Communism. Christopher Hill (1958: 107-113) points this out in an article on Gramsci's *The Modern Prince and other writings*, published in English translation in 1957. Hill was a tutor in Balliol.

have not succeeded at all in bridging the gap between themselves and the workers (Taylor 1957b: 18).

However, Taylor refers to “what the workers of Poland called the ‘dead language’ – a self-enclosed system of lies which had lost consciousness of itself even as a deception” (Taylor 1957b: 18).

The workers are not, at least in the long run, grateful to the intellectual who prostitutes his thought in order to serve as somebody’s propaganda mouthpiece. The “dead language” is, sooner or later, recognized for what it is. It can receive ultimately only the engineered applause of a C.P. gathering. The Socialist intellectual who “helps to publicize every foible of his industrial brethren” is not respected and perhaps least of all by the “industrial brethren” concerned .... [T]he labour movement’s comparative lack of interest in ideas does not spring entirely from Stalinist abuses. The prevailing anti-intellectualism in many Left Circles stems also from the widespread belief that ideas are of no importance. The question to end all questions is indeed “What are you going to do?” And in this context it is clear that thinking is not counted as “doing” anything. This question is a clear invitation to the intellectual to abdicate altogether (Taylor 1957b: 18).

Three decades later, Taylor underscores his views, showing the problem that underlies his political thought. In *The Diversity of Goods* (Taylor 1985b) he writes that in order to deal with problems like political fragmentation “[o]ur political thinking needs to free itself both from the dead hand of the [Cartesian] epistemological tradition, and the utopian monism of radical thought, in order to account for the real diversity of goods that we recognize” (Taylor 1985b: 247). From ‘intellectual leadership’ to ‘anti-epistemology’, the die had been cast in this article (Taylor 1957b), which he reiterates in his review of the New Left in which he rejects Marxism on ‘humanist’ grounds that the ideology suffers from “an inadequate and overly-optimistic humanism” derived from “a very deep flaw in Marx’s theory of human sociality, his theory of human beings and human social existence” (Taylor 1989b: 62, 63).

By this time Taylor has added to his critique an objection to morality (distinct from ethics as practical reason); an idea he attends to more recently in his critique of religious fundamentalism (Taylor 2007). But the seed of this recent critique is sown earlier in so far as scientific Marxism sees (humanist) moral ideas as an illusion to be explained away as superstructural reflections while at the same time hiding a morality of its own. Drawing on Nietzsche, Taylor sees instead that any Marxism “function[s] with a very strong sense of moral indignation against the existing order of things”; but he warns that an unbridled morality can be “motivated by ... hatred and contempt for all those who are identified as being part of” that capitalist order (Taylor 1989b: 61).

I think that one lesson from the long history of Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism in particular is the degree to which this kind of hatred and contempt can become a major factor driving the people who are most active and take leadership positions in this movement, and the kinds of destruction to which this can lead... That is what leads me to say ... that a conception of human potentiality is an absolutely essential part of the spiritual background or basis of any left movement (Taylor 1989b: 62).

Here we find the kernel of Taylor's ambiguous approach to Marxism, which includes his affirmation of Marx's conception of alienation. "In sum, Taylor rejects Marxism for the flaws in its conception of democratic freedom, for its reductive model of oppression, for its lack of appreciation of the conflict between goods, and for its overly subjectivist interpretation of the good" (Smith 2002: 181). But I want to propose that Smith's summation veers very closely to (if not expressing) the culturalist position taken by Raymond Williams, who generally rejects orthodox Marxism for reasons of its anti-humanism, yet retains the Romantic impulse of Marx's own humanism.

A fuller comparative examination of Taylor's 'humanist Marxism' and Williams's cultural materialism would require a dedicated study of its own, which I clearly do not have the space for here. But there is one thread that I want to explore: an anti-empiricist stance that bears a close resemblance to a similar position Taylor draws from Merleau-Ponty. Both Taylor's and Williams's critical regard for Marxism rests significantly on that rejection; both of which draw towards an affirmation of the humanist Marx (Williams 1977: 161).

Fred Inglis describes Taylor as one "who always repudiated the more concrete-headed Marxists" (Inglis 1993: 154), but he was not a 'pure theoretician' above dealing with concrete issues. In fact, if he were otherwise, he would stand askance to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in which concepts such as embodiment and practice play a central part. It is clear in his essay, *What's Wrong With Capitalism?* (Taylor 1960a), that Taylor assumes *structural* elements to be salient features of social reproduction.<sup>43</sup> But his precise understanding of 'structure' appears to be more

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<sup>43</sup> "The sense that the present priorities are *inevitable* is increased by the fact of advertising. It is not simply that advertising ensures an expansion in the demand for consumer goods. It is not even that advertising has had the effect of creating a certain image of prosperity, and even sometimes of the Good Life. It is because the bombardment of the public consciousness with a certain kind of product inculcates an unspoken belief about what the progress of our civilisation has made possible, and what we just simply have to put up with as the best of a bad job. The latest gadgets for automatic cups of early morning coffee fall in the first category: the miserable state of our hospitals falls in the second. We are rarely, if ever, told that we could have a decent education, modern hospitals, or clean and beautiful cities.

*expressive* than, what he refers to in *Political Theory and Practice* (Taylor 1983) as “economic-model theory ... [which] reconstruct(s) political behaviour according to some narrowly defined conception of rationality” (Taylor 1983: 76). He compares two types of structuralism, one with an understanding of structure drawn from linguistics positing structure as

constantly renewed and changed in action, and hence is not resistant to changes in self-understanding .... This type of structure is then confused with the unchanging resistant type, whose model is the laws of natural science, or else (in the case of Althusser) Marx’s theory of political economy (Taylor 1983: 77).

It is unlikely, for at least two reasons, that in *Capitalism* (Taylor 1960a) Taylor indexes *naturalistic* structuralism (Taylor 1983a: 77). Firstly, he was already engaged in studying Herder’s expressivist theory of language (Smith 2002: 19-26). Secondly, he was already developing from Merleau-Ponty the basis of a critique of naturalism in social science (Kullman and Taylor 1958; Taylor and Ayer 1959). It would seem more plausible that Taylor’s understanding follows Merleau-Ponty’s anti-behaviourist usage in the holistic tradition of German Gestalt psychology, in which “structure or form was an irreducible part of the experience of anything,” and constitutes the background against which “we always experience things” (Moran 2000: 393).<sup>44</sup> Taylor would have been keenly conscious of Merleau-Ponty’s attraction to structuralism, though with the understanding that language is grounded in human *perception* and is not an anonymous system as natural science would have it (Moran 2000: 405).

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“In fact, we are led to believe exactly the opposite. The public and welfare sectors are continuously associated with what is drab and uninteresting and distant. But here is the vicious circle. The drabness of the Labour Exchange, the hospital out-patients and the railway waiting room is due to the misordering of priorities, and the inevitable tendency of capitalism always to skimp on this kind of ‘unnecessary’ expenditure. To accept these conditions is to accept the society and its priorities as given. “The only way that we can really get our priorities right is to do away with the dominating influence of the profit system, and to put in its place a system primarily based on common ownership” (Taylor 1960a: 11).

<sup>44</sup> At the same time we should not take Merleau-Ponty as denying close link between linguistic and economic structures. He accepted language and symbols as constituting the human social world. Indeed, this focus on the nature of language and social institutions as expressing a deep structure brought Merleau-Ponty into close contact with structuralism” (Moran 2000: 405). He welcomed structuralism, and agreed with Heidegger that ‘language speaks man’, though with the addition that language is grounded in perception and is not an anonymous system (Moran 2000: 405). “During the late 1940s, Merleau-Ponty even became a qualified supporter of structuralism, acknowledging that there must be close links between the linguistic, economic, and social structures we inhabit .... In 1949 Merleau-Ponty began to lecture on Saussure and was generally attracted to structuralist forms of explanation, particularly to the manner in which structuralist explanation bypassed the boundaries between sociological, economic, and psychological explanation to see the deep common structures underlying these different human levels” (Moran 2000: 400).

Following Merleau-Ponty, Taylor would reject a *naturalistic* notion of structure, and espouse instead an *expressivist* one that allows for a constitutive element derived from human agency. Furthermore, a teleological aspect – oriented towards the human good – could not be occluded if one is to accept Taylor’s fuller argument. As such, when Taylor takes the stance that the “false priorities” or “maladjustments” of capitalism are *structural* and not *marginal* – marginal in so far as they will pass in time given the necessary reforms (Taylor 1960a: 7) – he would also be drawing upon the expressivist Marx rather than any dogmas of scientific Marxism. That is, when Taylor rejects the reformist hope on the grounds that “if these faults are *structural* faults in our system, it is difficult to see where the internal reform within capitalism is going to come from” (Taylor 1960a: 8), his rejection is not based on anything resembling historical materialism. But, at the same time, he makes no case for a thorough-going idealism.

The human good, he argues, is erroneously measured as a “growth of prosperity ... measured almost entirely in terms of the rise in the Gross National Product and the number of TV sets, washing machines, cars and so on” (Taylor 1960a: 5). Beneath the veneer of a working class never having ‘had it so good’, Taylor argues in *New Left Review*, is a system of cultural and social reproduction that serves a market economy shorn of public investment.

Take education. We cannot bring ourselves to spend enough public money to reduce the size of the classes to 30 – presumably because we cannot impose any greater burden of taxation. Yet we give relief to those individuals who pay for their children’s public school fees, and to the private corporations which pour tax-exempt funds into the public schools. And why, in this day and age, have the corporations come to bail out the public schools? This is not just a question of class solidarity. It is also because the public schools provide the cadres for business, the essential managerial elites: and since the priorities – even in education – are established by the needs of the private sector rather than by the needs of the community in general, a new ICI science block at Eton gets priority over the reduction of the size of classes in the Wandsworth Secondary Modern (Taylor 1960a: 5-6).

Taylor’s view is reflected in Stuart Hall’s (1959c) defense of a claim made in a previous article of his (Hall 1958d), “about the sense which many people have that they live in a more ‘open’ society, in which class consciousness tended to play a lesser role than it had done previously” (Hall 1959c: 50). E.P. Thompson and Ralph Samuel accused Hall of ‘revisionism’, with Thompson (1959) laying the charge far more thickly than Samuel (1959), in whose view Hall argues that “the traditional working-class community is being disintegrated: in the new society, by the pressures

of geographical and social mobility, and by the impact of the Mass Media and status differentiation” (Samuel 1959: 45). Thompson’s more robust response accuses the entire *Universities and Left Review* of ‘romanticising’ the working class, among other matters.

These *ULR* types ... are passionate advocates of commitment in the arts, but they evade commitment on the central issues of class power and political allegiance. They are angrier about ugly architecture than they are about the ugly poverty of old-age pensioners, angrier about the “materialism” of the Labour Movement than about the rapacity of financiers. They wear upon their sleeves a tender sensibility; but probe that tenderness, and one finds a complex of responses which the veteran recognises as “anti-working-class.” They are more at ease discussing alienation than exploitation. If they mention Marx, it is the Marx of the 1844 [*Manuscripts*], not the Marx of *Capital* or the *Eighteenth Brumaire*; they are interested in the diagnostician but not in the revolutionary surgeon of the human condition (Thompson 1959: 50).

In response, Hall begins by reiterating a number of uncontentious views; among them, “that ‘consumption’ in a capitalist and class society is a relationship based on exploitation” (Hall 1959c: 51), and that class interests were not negated by labour having changed in accordance with social conditions that favoured higher levels of consumer commodity consumption. But all the while he moves stealthily towards the economist dogma he aims to undermine. “Of course the ‘class’ interests of the secondary modern teacher and the shop steward at Morris Motors are the same .... And the point of consciousness seems to me more easily discovered if we would recognize that the class struggle for the secondary modern teacher lies in the fight for the Comprehensive School and the social principles behind that” (Hall 1959c: 51). Hall’s “ideological point,” as he puts it, is that,

[T]he superstructure of ideas (in this case, false ideas, false consciousness) *is* going to affect directly the course of events. And if the admission of this fact makes us reconsider some of the more primitive notions – still current – of how to interpret Marx’s dictum that ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness,’ I, for one, can only say, ‘Long Live the Revisionists’ (Hall 1959c: 51).

In the short extract above, Hall indicates, in addition to placing distance between himself and determinist modes of Marxism, that he is aware of the dangers of fleeing headlong into an opposite voluntarism.<sup>45</sup> Hall thus signals a beginning of the

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<sup>45</sup> Jim McGuigan points out that “[a]t one time it seemed as though structuralism had superseded culturalism, but Hall insists ... that there are strengths and weaknesses in both, seen from the perspectives of hegemony theory” (McGuigan 1992: 29). Gramsci corrects the ahistorical, highly abstract level at which structuralist theories tend to operate. To accede to the cultural pole amounts to voluntarism that dissolves power into fluid intentions; and to move in the determinist direction reduces meaning to established positions. Yet it is not beyond reproach to argue that most who engage(d) in the field resembled either voluntarists or determinists. Gramsci bridges the gap, but it is also to Levi-

structuralist paradigm which, within a decade, was to counterpose in British Cultural Studies the culturalist problematic of resistance and history. Not that I am suggesting Thompson was defending determinism in orthodox Marxism. As a culturalist and historicist author in the cause of working class resistance he could not be.

Nonetheless, the stronger culturalist sense of the power of human agency against the determinations of history and ideology (in structuralism) prefigures in this brief exchange the tenor of what was to become a ‘hallmark’ of British Cultural studies.

Hall gives no definite indication of the authority by which he restores to a transcendent and metaphysical superstructure powers which, in orthodox Marxism, belong to the physical-like mechanisms of the infrastructure. It would seem that he had Gramsci in mind here.<sup>46</sup> In the absence of any firmer indication of the sources by which Hall began rethinking Marxism – although he probably does follow Williams and Thompson – it is tempting to consider, in light of Taylor’s interest in Merleau-Ponty, that it was at least partly through Taylor’s influence that Hall eventually turned to French structuralism; and by that route, eventually to Althusserian Marxism.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter poses the question of why and how Taylor engaged in a Marxist problematic, and concludes that he both *responded* to the radical tenor of his Oxford environment and *reacted* to the positivist outlook of analytical philosophy by seeking an alternative view in continental philosophy. The chapter also situates Taylor in the web of interlocutions that constituted the nascent New Left movement. At most, the chapter focuses upon Taylor’s writing while he was engagement in the New Left debates on orthodox Marxism and welfarism; and there are good reasons to surmise that those debates framed the founding agenda of British Cultural Studies (Taylor

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Strauss’s combination of semiotics and psychoanalysis that Hall finds voluntarism and determinism most satisfactorily bridged.

<sup>46</sup> Helen Davis erroneously states that Gramsci’s “work was not published in English until the late 1960s” (Davis 2004: 46). In fact, *The Modern Prince* was published in English in 1957, Christopher Hill appears to have written the first review of it (Hill 1958), and the text must certainly have formed part of discussion in the New Left clubs. Were Davis’s claim true, it would have been too early – if the genealogy of cultural studies *per se* is to go on – to consider Hall to have been articulating a Gramscian position explored in Birmingham from the late 1960s onwards; which came about partly, though significantly, from Hall’s “great frustration at what he [saw] as the paucity of Marxist scholarship available to English readers” (Davis 2004: 73). But Hall’s knowledge of Marx begins a decade or so earlier.

<sup>47</sup> Not that Taylor will have needed to *translate* Claude Levi-Strauss’s *Anthropologie Structurale* (1958), as this was done in 1963. *Anthropologie Structurale* (Structural Anthropology) was translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grunfest Schoepf, and published in 1963.



1960a; 1960b).<sup>48</sup> While Taylor's contributions offered much to inform the New Left as a *political* movement, it must be acknowledged that it was principally an *intellectual* movement; though not to be understood in terms of any academic connotations, but instead in terms of *leadership*. The Hegelian understanding is evident, even as the movement took issue with the very concrete status of intellectuals in the Communist Party and labour movement (see Taylor 1957b; 1966a: 227-229).

There were many others who traveled a similar journey to Taylor's, and they too influenced the direction of the New Left as much as Stuart Hall implies they did for the emergence of cultural studies (see Hall 1989: 20-21). But publications of two conferences suggest that Taylor's influence may have been significantly greater than these other contributions. Ironically, his presentations at both conferences present a figure considerably more critical of Marxism than one would have expected for those occasions. But, then again, unlike his mentor Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Taylor had never held any illusions about Marxism as a political ideology. Taylor's presentation at the 1967 Slant symposium – “that strange amalgam of Catholics and socialists, gathered together by Terry Eagleton and Brian Wicker” (Higgins 1999: 110) – organized by Terry Eagleton and Brian Wicker, shows Taylor trying to put some distance between himself and Marxism as a political philosophy. Other presenters were Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton and Stuart Hall. John Higgins (1999) refers in a footnote to Taylor's (1989b)<sup>49</sup> presentation and suggests that it would be worth comparing Taylor's and Williams's similar approaches to Marx and Marxism (Higgins 1999: 193, n.15).

Williams's interpretation of Marx was ... always an interpretation. His major claim to offer a return to a lost emphasis on the 'indissoluble unity' of the 'whole social process' is an interpretation of Marx's work which offers a correction to extremes of economic or 'mechanical' Marxism.... If the unity of the social process is in reality 'indissoluble', then no causal analysis of it is possible, the flow of social process can never be grasped or articulated (Higgins 1999: 123).

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<sup>48</sup> Taylor's having co-edited the *Universities and Left Review* with Stuart Hall and others no doubt concentrated his attention on the questions that occupied and constituted the movement. Among his significant interlocutors were Edward Thompson, Alasdair MacIntyre and Christopher Hill, who were associated with the related journal, *The New Reasoner*. Raymond Williams was also a 'prime mover' in the movement, though his direction appeared more disparate than other of the 'thirties generation'. Precisely how Taylor connects with the paradigmatic compartment of Williams's work is hard to say with any certainty; although the evidence is strong that both engaged variously with the writing of Georg Lukács.

<sup>49</sup> Higgins's footnote suggests that Taylor is already introduced in the paragraph to which it refers; but there is no trace to be found there. I can only surmise that previous versions of the paragraph(s) had included Higgins's questions about Taylor's relation to Williams, and that the Taylorian aspect had been edited out for much the same reasons that the question remains a puzzle for me.

The paragraph to which Higgins's footnote refers concerns one whom Taylor calls "the brilliant Christopher Caudwell" (Taylor 1966a: 227).<sup>50</sup> Taylor's phrasing resembles that in Neal Wood's book, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (1959: 57), though it is no less likely that he used Williams's (1961) more extended treatment of the Marxist literary scholar. Higgins describes, with remarkable sleuthing, Williams's ambiguous regard for Caudwell's 'Marxist literary criticism'; but it is the passage from Williams (preceding the paragraph to which the footnote refers) that is particularly pertinent for my purposes for the way it reflects Taylor's opposition to naturalism, together with views that can be directly attributed to Merleau-Ponty – without referring to either. Williams (in Higgins 1999: 108) points out that "all human experience is an interpretation of the non-human reality," and that this "is not the duality of subject and object.... We have to think, rather, of human experience as both objective and subjective, in one inseparable process." Higgins states that Williams is here challenging *naturalism* in orthodox Marxism, "a perspective from which all disciplines, including those in the human sciences, wrongly seek to emulate the methods and methodologies of the natural sciences, often with crippling conceptual consequences" (Higgins 1999: 108).

Even more remarkably, as Higgins points out, Caudwell's posthumously published book, *Illusion and Reality* (1937), posed a direct challenge to behaviourist psychology (or what Caudwell calls 'bourgeois psychology'). Taylor does something similar in *The Explanation of Human Behaviour* (1964), though admitting that it was Merleau-Ponty, whose own book bears a similar title,<sup>51</sup> who had provided the motive idea (see Taylor 1998: 105). It does seem unlikely, however, that Taylor would have been unaware of Caudwell's book; and if so, it is difficult to explain why he makes no mention of it in *Explanation* (1964). But then again, Taylor acknowledges Merleau-Ponty in a mere three footnotes (Taylor 1964: 68-69, 95), and does not mention Wittgenstein at all. I am not (necessarily) implying an inappropriate use of sources. In

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<sup>50</sup> Christopher Caudwell is the pseudonym of the Marxist literary scholar and poet Christopher St. John Sprigg. He was a former journalist of the *Yorkshire Observer*, having followed the example of his father who was once literary editor of the *Daily Express*. Caudwell was killed in action in Spain during the opening engagement of the battle of Jarama Valley on 12 February 1937.

<sup>51</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963) was translated the year before Taylor's book. But being fluent in French and German, Taylor will no doubt have read Merleau-Ponty in the 'vernacular': *Le Structure du Comportement* (1942).

the history of ideas (and philosophy) it is exceptionally rare that any thinker might arrive at a position from nowhere.<sup>52</sup>

The other conference was organized by the Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group in 1987, and drew together, thirty years on, various figures who were formatively part of the original New Left. Taylor's presentation is published under the title, *Marxism and Socialist Humanism* (Taylor 1989).<sup>53</sup> Standing out from that small party – if the structure of a book presenting papers and presentation from the conference is anything to go by – were Taylor and Hall.<sup>54</sup> Hall's paper describes the beginning of the movement with illuminating detail. Taylor's presentation – building on themes touched on in his earlier paper – explains why Marxism could not deliver on its promises. Again, it was a claim he had argued in his very first articles on the topic (Taylor 1957b; 1957d).

Taylor's earlier Slant Symposium paper, *From Marxism to the Dialogue Society* (Taylor 1968a), ends with a call to find “a new house of theory; in the old marxist [sic] mansion, the winds break in and the roof leaks in summer. We have to move” (Taylor 1968a: 181). Taylor had probably never taken up residence in that abode; but of Marx himself, his opinion was quite different. If Taylor has truly ‘abandoned the old Marxist mansion’,<sup>55</sup> there would seem to be little point in pursuing the argument I am following. If, on the other hand, Taylor's ‘core idea’ is rooted in his reading of Marx, then one needs to inquire further into Taylor's anti-epistemology. This leads us to consider Taylor's subscription to Merleau-Ponty a little more deeply.

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<sup>52</sup> Similarities between these two titles (and a number of others) indicate a fertile period of intertextual dialogue. See Peter Winch's and Thomas Kuhn's books, which I refer to in the next chapter.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor's article is published in a book titled, *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On*, co-edited by Robin Archer and six others. Nicholas Smith (2002) provides an explanation for the title, though without referring to the actual book. “Taylor and the New Left saw apathy as one of the main obstacles to the realization of socialist purposes – indeed the movement became closely associated with the slogan ‘out of apathy’” (Smith 2002: 179). Oh, the enthusiasm of youth!

<sup>54</sup> Raymond Williams was not present at this conference, and died the following year.

<sup>55</sup> Ian Fraser (2007: 3) notes a definite shift in Taylor's allegiance to Marx and Marxism. The auspicious year in 1989, when in the same year *Sources of the Self* (1989a) was published, “Taylor was about to settle his account with Marx and Marxism” with *Marxism and Socialist Humanism* (1989b). But I think Fraser reads too much into Taylor's retrospective essay on the origins of the New Left movement. Certainly, Taylor declares the Catholic religion as his preferred framework, but that does not entail – as Fraser claims – a rejection of Marx as an important philosopher of the Romantic tradition and critic of modernity. Taylor's distinction of Marx from Marxism is not recent, though, interestingly, *Marxism and Socialist Humanism* (1989b) coincided with the end of the Cold War. This ought to be taken into account. Nonetheless, Fraser's observations do not deter him from taking Taylor's Marxist sources seriously, and doing so at book length.

## Chapter Five

# Merleau-Ponty, Taylor, Marx

The previous chapters argue that Charles Taylor was materially involved in the debates that formed the New Left Movement, and which provided the initial impetus for the formation of British Cultural Studies (Hall 1992: 16-17).<sup>1</sup> But when one considers that it was cultural Marxism that the movement first embraced, following the key (culturalist) texts of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson (Hall 1981: 19-21), and that this moment was interrupted by Stuart Hall's introduction of mainly Althusserian structural-Marxism in the late 1960s (Hall 1981: 27), the impression can be gained that the movement comprised entirely of a *French* import sitting uncomfortably opposite the cultural Marxist thinking that had a firmer claim on the title of *British* cultural studies.

While the 'turn to Gramsci' eventually articulated the culturalist and structuralist paradigms, the strong impression is that these two paradigms provided the *infrastructure* of cultural studies (Hall 1981), whereas the ethnographic, symbolic interactionist, anthropological and other elements (see Grimshaw *et al.*: 73-75; Hall 1980: 40) occupied the field's *superstructure*. The opening pages of Paul Willis's (1980: 88-90) essay arguing for a reflexive ethnography that embraces both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, "*but which is without rationalist natural-science-like pretense*" and which "remove[s] the hidden tendency [in traditional sociology] towards positivism" (Willis 1980: 91, 95), indicates that the field was not wholly determined by the culturalist-structuralist 'forces' at play. Scholars exploring what I am referring to as 'superstructural' elements in the Birmingham Centre were

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<sup>1</sup> Given Stuart Hall's (1990) description of the Centre's beginnings, the field should be understood as 'British culture' studies, rather than having a generic 'cultural studies' modified by the prefix of 'British'. But by 'British culture' the Centre did not intend anything along lines of 'defence of the British realm', but working class experiences of existing in tension with class reproductive practices that ensured the continuation of that realm's power. Following this delimitation, Richard Hoggart's project in *Uses of Literacy* can be seen as having set the initial terms of the Centre.

relatively autonomous, even if the ‘foundational’ forces were determinant (*pace* Althusser) in the *final instance*.

While these superstructural elements can be seen as theoretical epiphenomena of the duo-paradigmatic foundation of cultural studies, other elements mentioned (Hall 1980; see Davies 1993) as having briefly held the attention of the scholar-activists occupying their Birmingham Quonset hut appear as having had little more than a temporary hold on discussions. But to hold such a view amounts to denying that the culturalist and structuralist foundations were porous enough to sustain and to learn from critique. In *Cultural Studies and the Centre* (Hall 1980: 20-21), Hall notes that debate in the Centre’s mid-1960’s pre-structuralist period turned away from the structural-functionalist sociological enquiry through which they had hoped to conduct their analysis, and took interest instead in the ethnomethodological emergence that followed from a phenomenological critique of Emile Durkheim (Hall 1980: 23). The roots of this critique, Hall notes, belonged to the German idealist tradition “identified with the *Verstehen* or ‘interpretive’ hermeneutic stress which characterized early historical sociology and the *Geistwissenschaft* approach in general” (Hall 1980: 23). To dismiss Hall’s note as referring to matters of passing interest would amount to rejecting his insistence that cultural studies is not “one thing” (Hall 1990: 11) nor “every damn thing” (Hall 1992: 292), and thus to narrow its terrain to unsustainable proportions.

Imagining the relative salencies of structuralist-culturalist versus ‘other(ed)’ theory in terms of a centre-periphery model also amounts to misreading Jim McGuigan’s (1992) sense of the messier exigencies of the Centre’s history as a series of ‘mistakes’ on the way towards its final *destination*. McGuigan notes that the Centre’s genealogy (and that of cultural studies) developed by way of “false starts, dead ends, the difference between actually doing concrete research and theorising it, in a collective endeavour, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antagonistically, built around workshops rather than academic individualism” (McGuigan 1992: 31). Each “false start”, as it ought to be held, provided a locus of creative intervention, and opened out towards further interventions that may (without guarantees) have been impossible or very different without them.

[A]s well as registering the dizzying ‘impact of the structuralisms’, Hall registers the ‘impact of the feminisms’ – that is, a political rather than principally intellectual movement, in the 1970s. This leads us back to considering the relationship between

cultural studies, institution and history and, in particular, the political radicalism of the post-'68 research student generation before the Thatcherite backlash was to transform the rules of the game so dramatically in the 1980s (McGuigan 1992: 31).

Jim McGuigan points out that “[a]t one time it seemed as though structuralism had superseded culturalism, but Hall insists ... that there are strengths and weaknesses in both, seen from the perspectives of hegemony theory” (McGuigan 1992: 29).

Gramsci corrected the ahistorical, highly abstract level at which structuralist theories tend to operate. But from then on, to accede to the culturalist pole would amount to a voluntarism that would dissolve power into fluid intentions; and to move in the determinist direction would reduce meaning to established positions. Yet it is not beyond reproach to argue that most who engage(d) in the field resembled either voluntarists or determinists. Bridging that gap was possibly Hall's chosen quest, without adopting a view from nowhere. Gramsci was one solution adopted, I imagine, from Christopher Hill's work during Hall's student days (Hill 1958); but it was principally in Levi-Strauss's combination of semiology and psychoanalysis that Hall found voluntarism and determinism most satisfactorily bridged.<sup>2</sup>

[By] way of the Freudian concepts of the unconscious and the Lacanian concepts of how subjects are constituted in language ... Levi-Strauss restores the decentered subject, the contradictory subject, as a set of positions in language and knowledge, from which culture can appear to be enunciated (Hall 1994: 536).

But cultural studies was never intended as a purely academic enterprise, though certainly an (organic) intellectual one. Thus it was to Gramsci that Hall and his colleagues turned to understand their roles as organic intellectuals called “to engage with some real problem out there in the dirty world, and to use the enormous advantage given to a tiny handful of us in the British educational system who had the opportunity to go to universities and reflect on those problems, to spend that time usefully to try to understand how the world worked” (Hall 1990: 17). As an

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Kearney (1994: 395-396) provides this eye-raising note: “[Philosophy professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris] Louis Marin (1931-92) used to comment that when he was a young man in the early 1950s, he and his wife Françoise were invited to the apartment of M. and Mme Maurice Merleau-Ponty for what was then described as a ‘dîner intime’. When he and his wife arrived, he discovered that it was indeed a small dinner party: M. and Mme Merleau-Ponty, M. and Mme Lévi-Strauss, and M. and Mme Lacan. That these three were all friends indicates a certain collaboration and dialogue that was highly charged in the early period in which structuralism was gaining hold. Although Merleau-Ponty is known for his groundbreaking work as a phenomenologist of perception (Merleau-Ponty 1945), only a year later he was lecturing on de Saussure at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Merleau-Ponty's turn to semiology as a topic of interest began to blend with his commitment to the achievements of Gestalt psychology, but even more with those of phenomenology which he saw as superior even to the Gestalt theories of Köhler and Koffka, Gelb and Goldstein. Yet with his growing interest in language, Merleau-Ponty found real value in the Saussurian theory of the sign.”

*educational* project, cultural studies was first and foremost an extension of the workers' Educational Association, university extra-mural departments, and the Left Book Club (Davies 1993: 145, n.4). "Some of us – me, especially – had always planned never to return to the university, indeed, never to darken its doors again," says Hall (1990: 12). But perhaps a more telling indication that Taylor may have played *some* role in the formation of the field can be found in Hall's (1990) situating the beginnings of the field at a particularly crucial point in the post-war period:

For me, cultural studies really begins with the debate about the nature of social and cultural change in postwar Britain. An attempt to address the manifest break-up of traditional culture, especially traditional class cultures, it set about registering the impact of the new forms of affluence and consumer society on the very hierarchical and pyramidal structure of British society ....

The attempt to describe and understand how British society was changing was at the centre of the political debate in the 1950s, and cultural studies was at this time identified with the first New Left. The first New Left dated not 1968 but 1956 (Hall 1990: 12).

Orthodox Marxism in Britain was moribund at the time the New Left began to take shape, and its condition was made so not least by its economism. It was therefore not unreasonable for Taylor and his companions to look across the Channel for fresh thinking. It was in the existentialist branch of continental philosophy that Taylor found in French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty a schema that directed his opposition to behaviourism, empiricism and Cartesian epistemology – that is, *contra* the claim that all knowledge about the world is related to sensory experience or observation (Smith 2004: 31-34). Merleau-Ponty, in Taylor's view, offered what he had found lacking in analytical philosophy as it was taught at Oxford in his day.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter teases out the extent and implications of Merleau-Ponty's influence on Taylor. While this chapter focuses on Taylor's 'Marxism', and the following chapter turns the attention to his rejection of Cartesian epistemology, it remains important to bear in mind that the two strands are deeply intertwined. Taylor's rejection of behaviourism, Cartesian epistemology and naturalism in the social sciences derives significantly from Merleau-Ponty, who derived his own position against Cartesianism from within his humanist and Husserlian phenomenological

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<sup>3</sup> Ironically, Dermot Moran (2000) writes: "As a student, Merleau-Ponty reacted against the rather arid academic philosophy taught in France in the 1920s, rejecting both neo-Kantianism and various forms of idealism. Instead he was drawn to the philosophy of the concrete, living experience as emphasised by Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and by the Christian existentialist Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973)" (Moran 2000: 406).

interpretation of Marx; drawn heavily on Georg Lukács who also read Husserl. At the same time, however, both Lukács and Merleau-Ponty relied significantly on Max Weber. As Taylor, in turn, drew on Merleau-Ponty for his core idea, it is not unlikely that he modeled his interpretation of Marx's thinking along lines influenced by his mentor. In short, the two connected influences are Merleau-Ponty's rejection of Cartesianism and his 'Weberian Marxism'.<sup>4</sup> Taylor's rejection of the Cartesian epistemological construal begins from both. But even in his acknowledgement of Merleau-Ponty as having provided him with his 'core idea', Taylor's use of these sources remain in the service of his own questions.

### **A 'close reading' of Taylor's writing: 1957-1959**

A number of key events in Taylor's student life coincided in 1956. Stuart Hall mentions that "the end of the summer of 1956" (Inglis 1993: 154) – possibly in August – Taylor went to Paris to work with Merleau-Ponty. The Hungarian revolt broke out towards two months later. A note in *Universities and Left Review* states that "from November 1956 to April 1957 Charles Taylor was World University Service representative with Hungarian student refugees in Austria" (Taylor 1957c: 75).

Upon Taylor's return from France and Austria, the first edition of ULR was published – about a year after Stuart Hall says it was established (Inglis 1993: 154). For purposes of getting a sense of his overall concerns during this period, I shall provide a short description of each of the eight articles Taylor published from the spring of 1957 to 1959. His first article, *Can Political Philosophy be Neutral* (1957a)<sup>5</sup>, takes aim at linguistic analysis in analytical philosophy and the fact/value distinction. He picks out its Cartesian character for special mention; as he does any sociology that excludes the agency of moral subjects. Many of the themes Taylor's later work is best known for appear more than merely 'prefigured' in this article. For example, in the following extract we see a semblance of a concept Taylor draws from Harry Frankfurt's essay, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person* (Frankfurt 1988) – being Taylor's concept of moral agents as "strong evaluators".<sup>6</sup> In addition,

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Löwy (1996: 431) begins his paper on "Weberian Marxism" with the observation that Merleau-Ponty invented the term to define "the Western Marxist thinkers who systematically used certain key ideas of Max Weber – in particular Georg Lukács and some of his followers."

<sup>5</sup> *Universities and Left Review*, Spring 1957, Volume 1, Number 1.

<sup>6</sup> The main targets of Taylor's concept of 'strong evaluation' (Taylor 1985a: 15-44) are the sociobiological, utilitarian and emotivist attempts to reduce morality to mere desires. Taylor



Taylor indexes Marx's philosophical anthropology in the Romantic, as opposed to the empiricist, tradition; and so aligns linguistic philosophy with the philosophical background to empiricism:

But how about those who believe that our moral and political views are the merest caprice if they are not grounded in some objective reality? Is it really possible, e.g. for a Marxist or a Christian to squeeze his morality into this framework, and admit simply that he holds the views he does in fundamentally the same way as his preference for stout over bitter?<sup>7</sup> One of the principal claims of Marxism is that the political action it endorses is, in its general lines, established by a study of man in society – in particular of Capital or men as they are in the economic and social relations of capitalist society. The linguistic analysis cannot be applied to this theory without destroying it. Similarly: "This is God's will" is meant as a factual statement, but it can hardly be said to be devoid of moral implications. It is "neutral" only to non-believers. To believers it is even decisive (Taylor 1957a: 69).

In *Socialism and the Intellectuals* (Taylor 1957b), Taylor applies an understanding of the 'organic' philosopher, which he appears to derive from Merleau-Ponty, to a critique of the anti-intellectualism he found in the British Communist Party. It is not unreasonable to consider that Taylor links this understanding of the intellectual as a 'Party underlabourer' to the same sources by which Peter Winch (1958: 3-5) rejected philosophy's "underlabourer" status in relation to science. These sources extend to John Locke, and had A.J. Ayer as one among a number of proponents in the 1950s.

*The Politics of Emigration* (Taylor 1957c) concerns Taylor's experiences with Hungarian refugees in Austria; and it is this article that he expresses the antipathy of Marxism with human well-being. This is followed by *Marxism and Humanism* (Taylor 1957a), where he generally agrees with Edward Thompson's distinction of Marx from Marxism, that "vulgar Marxist amorality or moral relativism is not inconsistent with Marxism" (Taylor 1957a: 96). Taylor goes on prefigure an explanation he was to put forward later, where he explains the Rousseauian roots whereby Marx had made Stalinism an expected outcome (Taylor 1966a: 242-243). But the Marx to whom Taylor appeals is one whom Georg Lukács and Merleau-Ponty accepted as the centre of their respective 'Marxisms'.

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makes a distinction between strong and weak evaluations, which is a further development of Harry Frankfurt's (1988: 10-11) distinction between first- and second-order desires. The strong evaluations concern *the moral worth* of the first-order desires, whereas the weak evaluations are morally neutral orderings of desires (Taylor 1985a: 16). Taylor reaches this revision of Frankfurt's concepts by joining it to Elizabeth Anscombe's notion of "desirability-characterization" (Taylor 1985a: 16).

<sup>7</sup> See footnote n.6 above.

I agree with Thompson that the most fruitful way in which to consider Stalinism is an ideology, i.e. as an incomplete, partisan, distorted view of reality. But on a theoretical level, I don't think that this ideology is adequately characterized as a kind of "economic automatism." Granted, theories of this kind, quite incompatible with the early writings of Marx were produced by Stalin and his cohorts, as Thompson clearly shows, but it seems to me that the nub of the question lies elsewhere (Taylor 1957a: 92).

Taylor argues that Stalinism "elaborated something like a Marxist conception of historical responsibility," and in the expression of this concept in the infamous show trials "put forward some important truths in Marxism, but in a strangely twisted fashion" (Taylor 1957a: 92). That is, Stalinism denied individuals any historical responsibility with respect to their intentions and conceptions. The Party subverted Marx's understanding of ordinary man as both conditioned and creative; as the centre of objective limits and the ability to transcend those limits – man's *historical role*. The practice of Stalinism has shown the "limits of the concept of class morality, not just in its mechanistic form, but in its true form as the postulate of a new moral life, borne forward by a class, in virtue of its historical role" (Taylor 1957a: 97). Stalinism effected out of Marx's articulation of objective limitation and subjective creativity a radical dualism that afforded limitation to ordinary living conditions and prospects, and to the Party bureaucracy the 'privileges' of unbridled creativity. That is, the Party bureaucracy lived in unbridled voluntarism. The mass of humanity lived under conditions of extreme economic determinism. "The extreme economic determinism and the unbridled voluntarism which are the two components of the Stalinist dialectic are equally foreign to Marxism" (Taylor 1957a: 93).

The creative intelligent response of man to his social conditions was concentrated in the party bureaucracy, while the rest of humanity struggled within the objective limits of this condition, conceived as very narrow ones .... The subjective, creative side of man was gradually located in the Communist Party, in the Central Committee, and finally in Stalin himself. Building the human society was conceived as engineering .... Since the greatness and humanity of man, for Marx, lies in his ability to remake his world and his own nature into a human world and nature, humanity became almost the preserve of the party bureaucrat (Taylor 1957a: 92, 94).

Taylor does not repudiate 'class morality', but sees it as essential to Marxist Communism. "Marx sees Communist society as the return of man to himself, his appropriation of alienated labour, and thus the unfettering of the creative powers and potentialities stored in the human nature by human labour" (Taylor 1957a: 97). Taylor sees the 'collective' as needing to be "completed by the assertion that man is of value as man, irrespective of the part he plays or fails to play in the development of human potentialities," and cites Marx's dictum of the proletariat being unable to "free itself

without freeing all members of society” (Taylor 1957a: 97). These two developments were inseparable: a return to self entailing also a return to community. But the historical context of Marxism admittedly favoured a bias towards the collective, hence negating the individual; “to build the new human nature by social labour, even if it involves trampling underfoot for a time the brotherhood of man” (Taylor 1957a: 98). Taylor absolves Marx himself for this outcome, as it was not a problem to which he had to attend; but for the Bolsheviks it was a very real challenge. “The conflict between the value of Promethean man, whose creative forces must be liberated for the domination of things, and social man in need of fellowship was decided in favour of the former” (Taylor 1957a: 98). The humanism of Marx was the cost for a *scientific* Marxism that alienated man as the means towards social ends.

Marxist Communism is at best an incomplete humanism. This is not to say that it has nothing to teach us – the opposite is patently true. A humanism without the contribution of Marx is abstract and cannot come to grips with the conditions of the modern world. But socialist Humanism cannot be based on Marxist Communism alone (Taylor 1957a: 98).

In *Alienation and Community* (Taylor 1958a) Taylor returns to the question of “one of the main features of Stalinist ideology” as evident in the objectivist logic behind the Moscow show trials (1958a: 93). After explaining alienation in Marx’s *1844 Manuscripts*, Taylor goes on to apply the theory to an analysis of the ideology of consumerism; taking into his sweep the utilitarian ethic by which he finds alienation most effectively induced. Important elements of Taylor’s later writing<sup>8</sup> are prefigured here: his attribution of atomism, alienation and anomie as outcomes of utilitarian modern social imaginaries, and the ways in which these are indexed historically. Ralph Samuel’s (1989: 42) note about the New Left championing “sociology as a new learning” is amplified in Taylor’s article. But, published between *Marxism* (1957a) and *Alienation* (1958a), Taylor’s withering attack on Karl Popper, *The Poverty of the Poverty of Historicism* (Taylor 1958b) – the “Poverty of Historicism” referring to the title of Popper’s book (Popper 1957) rejecting historicism. Taylor notes that Popper’s method is first to erect a ‘historicist’ straw man before annihilating it in the final two chapters. But “nothing like a single coherent doctrine emerges” (Taylor 1958b: 77).

On page 45, however, we are brought to the “very heart of the body of argument” which is to be called historicism: “Social science is nothing but history: this is the thesis.” The whole mountain of moral and philosophical error is thus to be built on a

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Taylor’s *Ethics of Authenticity* (1991a) is a sustained critique of utilitarian moralities, as is his later *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004b).

methodological mistake, on an incorrect view of the nature of scientific method and the logical relation between the proportions of science (Taylor 1958b: 77)

It is in this article that we find the first clear expression of Taylor's approach to the philosophy of social science; and, in many respects, the similarities between his approach and Winch's (1958) critique of 'neutral social science' seem evident. But unlike Winch's use of Wittgenstein in analytical philosophy, Taylor's critique has very clear Hegelian traces of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.<sup>9</sup> But the Marxist sources in Taylor's attack are also clearly evident:

"Historicism" thus emerges from Professor Popper's book as a vaguely mischaracterized straw-man, a compendium of simple logical errors and complex impermissible desires. This is not to say that the issues in the book are unreal. On the contrary. Popper is giving a statement of a widely held political view, or rather of the methodology which presupposes this view. It is the view of liberal non-interventionism, the apology for an utterly negative view of freedom. It is important that this view can appear to so many as being objective, neutral, as though a plea for neutrality on the issues that seem vital to others, puts one somehow above the struggle (Taylor 1958b: 78)

Also in 1958, Taylor co-authored a paper with Michael Kullman, *The Pre-Objective World* (Kullman and Taylor 1958), in which they explore Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (1945).<sup>10</sup> The paper makes no specific argument as per any contending position on any topic, but does pointedly present an outline of the gist of Merleau-Ponty's book to an audience groomed on the type of analytic philosophy Taylor objects to. The first *critical* response to the article came four years later, from Hubert Dreyfus and Samuel Todes (Dreyfus and Todes 1962).<sup>11</sup>

In Taylor's (and Oxford linguistic philosopher A.J. Ayer's) following paper, *Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis* (1959),<sup>12</sup> he makes the point more strongly; and suggests a reason for the generality of the previous paper: "the obvious reason

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<sup>9</sup> I shall be discussing this matter in the next chapter, and so shall not add any more than to point out that although Taylor's and Winch's work attacks the same target in naturalistic social science, their lines of attack are quite different.

<sup>10</sup> The English edition, *Phenomenology of Perception*, was first published in 1962, although the imprint lists 1958 as the translation. The authors, however, refer to the original 1945 edition.

<sup>11</sup> From a note on the cover of Samuel Todes's *Body and World* (2001), we are told that it was published from his 1963 Harvard doctoral dissertation, *The Human Body as Material Subject of the World*. On page xxviii of the introduction, philosopher Piotr Hoffman writes: "Had [Todes' dissertation] been published at the time it was written, it would have been recognized as one of the most valuable contributions to philosophy in the postwar period and as the most significant contribution to the field of existential phenomenology since the work of Merleau-Ponty." Dreyfus has remained one of Taylor's supportive commentators; and I shall return to his discussion of Taylor's rejection of Cartesian epistemology in the next chapter.

<sup>12</sup> The paper is not strict co-authored, but is written as a seventeen-page essay by Taylor, followed by a thirteen-page response from A.J. Ayer. This co-operation may indicate the prestige Taylor may possibly have acquired as an exponent of French philosophy.

[phenomenology] is less familiar [in Britain]” (Taylor and Ayer 1959: 93). Taylor argues that phenomenology and linguistic philosophy are compatible, and that difficulties between Husserlian idealism and the empiricist analytical thesis “arise from mistakes about language” (Taylor 1959a: 109).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the third section of Taylor’s *Phenomenology* (Taylor and Ayer 1959: 104-108), he takes up at length in his paper, *Ontology* (Taylor 1959), where he brings to bear arguments offered in Gilbert Ryle’s *The Concept of Mind* (1959) as to distinctions between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ actions – or the inner/outer sorting inherent in Cartesian thought (see Taylor 1987a; 2002a) – that attends to “classical empiricist account(s) of perception ... fitted into the categories of contemporary natural science or reasonable facsimile(s) thereof” (Taylor 1959: 103).<sup>14</sup> However, Taylor is not above criticizing Ryle’s “crass” understanding of Cartesianism, for it is evident that Descartes never actually claimed as a *dogma* that mind was in fact separate from the body.

Descartes said certainly that a person had both a body and a mind, but this was certainly an incidental error. The original error is to be found in the thesis that the body is to be spoken of as a kind of machine. Once this is accepted, the soul has to be invented to avoid absurdity (Taylor 1959: 135).

Characteristically, Taylor is not one for simple rejections; and although he remains opposed to *Cartesianism*, he is equally opposed to getting *Descartes* wrong. A summary of Taylor’s stance towards linguistic philosophy of the British empiricist tradition may also serve to indicate that he does not reject the empiricist tradition *tout court*. That tradition divided human enquiry into empirical and conceptual branches, where the former branch concerns ‘matters of fact’, and the conceptual branch concerning the meanings that thoughts and sentences must have in order to be able to convey facts at all (Smith 2002: 18-19). J.L. Austin, whom Taylor cites quite sympathetically, represented that empirical branch. In that vein, logical positivists held that all propositions had to be empirically verifiable or else they were nonsensical (see Smith 1997: 10-12). By revealing the complexity of ordinary

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<sup>13</sup> Again, the resemblance to Winch’s (1958) argument is quite noticeable; but the difference is that Taylor refers to Merleau-Ponty, whereas Winch’s source is Wittgenstein. Taylor’s fullest exploration of his argument, his first book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964), also draws from Wittgenstein.

<sup>14</sup> The primary goal of Ryle’s *The Concept of Mind* (1949) – one of the classic texts of the linguistic movement – was to dispel a long-standing philosophical myth about the nature of the mind by showing how it arises from confusion over the function of mental concepts. The myth in question was mind-body dualism: the idea that the mind is an entity, distinct from the body, which somehow resides invisibly within the body like a ‘ghost in a machine’. According to Ryle, the myth was one of the main legacies of Descartes; hence ‘Cartesian dualism’.

language, the linguistic philosophers helped to uncover deep problems facing reductionist theories of meaning, such as the one advanced by logical positivism. This “approach took a feature of one type of discourse – in this case natural science – and generalized it into a theory of meaning that rode roughshod over the particularities of ordinary language use” (Smith 2002: 20).

Taylor emphatically concurs with Ryle that the Cartesian theory of the mind is an implausible philosophical theory gone wrong. That is, the ‘ghost in a machine model’ is popular yet implausible, and the way to tackle it is to expose, through a kind of therapeutic reflection, the source of the error that makes us vulnerable to it (Smith 2002: 23). Taylor has at best a sanguine view of what the linguistic method alone could achieve. Taylor observed that if linguistic analysis were to deliver a genuine alternative to metaphysics, it would have to proceed in a manner that was free from metaphysical presuppositions itself. It might meet this requirement in one of two ways: either by being neutral with respect to substantive conceptions of the world, or by justifying – and not just leaving to dogma – the view of the world it does favour. It was clear to Taylor that linguistic analysis was not free from metaphysics in the former sense, as Ryle’s account of the mind demonstrated.

Common sense is not a repository of neutral or ‘natural’ beliefs and practices. It is a historically contingent way of interpreting and dealing with the world. The fact that it is a contingent product of history does not of course make it false. But it does make it metaphysically partial. Taylor concluded that the linguistic method was not free of presuppositions as the Oxford philosophers claimed (Smith 2002: 23).

The linguistic method was thus hardly suited for Taylor’s project. First, it made the questions of human subjectivity accessible only indirectly through what we are entitled to say about it in ordinary language. It therefore imposed arbitrary limits on how the constitution of human subjectivity could be explored. Second, it failed to think historically. This flaw is evident in the naturalization of common sense. Third, its model of argumentation was insufficiently precise.

### **On Merleau-Ponty’s influence on Taylor**

While commentators readily acknowledge the *phenomenological* and *philosophical hermeneutic* dimensions of Taylor’s philosophical anthropology (Abbey 2004: 2-5; Redhead 2003: 8-10; Smith 1997: 36-39; 2002: 120), and unproblematically attribute these dimensions to influences in Merleau-Ponty, there remains by and large a surprising reticence to explore parallel influences in Taylor,

particularly his interest in Marx's philosophical legacy. But there is an added complexity here. That is, Merleau-Ponty's own sources in Marx may not have become an irrelevant and repudiated past from which he *himself* had 'moved on', but may have played a part in influencing his later work as well as the uses *Taylor* came to make of Marx.

As I point out in the previous chapter, the Marxist aspects of Taylor's thought are seldom considered more than of autobiographical interest; thus treating Taylor in a manner similar to what orthodox Marxist scholarship has done to Marx – separating the 'young Taylor' (the New Left 'Marxist') from the 'mature Taylor' (the 'civic democrat').<sup>15</sup> Compared, Marx could be read more perspicuously as straddling the decline of (Hegelian) German idealism and the resurgence of empiricism when, in collaboration with Engels, the scientific turn was to be produced; and to become authoritative. What became hidden from view was Marx's earlier studies of ancient Greek philosophy, particularly that of Aristotle.<sup>16</sup> One effect was to subvert philosophy to the exigencies of a political movement as happened with Bolshevism. Taylor makes clear that the practical human cost of such a reduction puts the entire 'socialist ideology' into question as a theory (Taylor 1974: 45-47; 1983a: 64-65). Here he might as well take sides with Merleau-Ponty completely – and he probably

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<sup>15</sup> As Marx is purported to have rejected his Hegelian roots, so too the silence on Taylor's earlier work leaves the impression that his New Left background was a mere nursery for his doctoral studies, and that in returning to Canada he had left his 'Marxist youth' behind. It is for this reason mainly that recovering the 'Marxist' Taylor has become Ian Fraser's (2004, 2007) work, as recovering the 'young (Hegelian) Marx' from the debris of collapsed Marxism has become the focus of Tom Rockmore's work. But Rockmore follows in a *tradition* of Hegelian scholarship that has Georg Lukács, Merleau-Ponty and Taylor (among others) as its recent proponents. Not that their achievements were necessarily a 'done thing' like a work of art. The questions and contexts that framed their research were quite different – Leninism for Lukács, pre-war France for Merleau-Ponty, and post-Stalinist Britain for Taylor. The post-Marxist period elicits its own questions. However, common to these three thinkers was a view of Marx in the *1844 Manuscripts* that sat quite at variance to the principles of orthodox Marxism. The *Manuscripts* were released by researchers in the Soviet Union in 1932 (Poster 1975: 42, 44-45, 49-51).

<sup>16</sup> Studies of Marx's academic quest are extensive enough, though they appear to have become ascendant in the intellectual *Perestroika* that has allowed scholars to inquire beyond the Leninist boundary without risking the academic semblance of a 'show trial'. One may consider the current period post-Althusserian in so far as Althusser's position towards Marx was one driven "irresistibly to the *radical* abandonment of every shade of Hegelian influence" (Althusser 1977: 90). But in an atmosphere within which Hegel's rehabilitation could be effected, a sample of scholars such as Tony Burns (2000), Sean Sayers and Tom Rockmore may be seen to write no longer in the provinces, but in the very metropole of Marxist scholarship. Evidence of this sea change is found not least in Robert Jessop's recent migration towards questions that were once considered outrageous and heretical, if not unimaginable. Burns sets out to "explain why Marx took such a great interest in Aristotle's *De Anima* both during and shortly after doing the preparatory work for his doctoral dissertation – the subject matter of which, of course, is precisely the materialist philosophy of the ancient Greek atomists Democritus and Epicurus" (Burns 2000: 3-4).

does – in so far as Merleau-Ponty accused Sartre of “attributing importance only to objective history, while showing no genuine concern for man’s freedom” (Hyppolite 1955: 101). The issue of freedom was uppermost in Taylor’s mind when, following an observation he made in 1956 while assisting Hungarian student refugees in Vienna, he wrote in *Universities and Left Review*: “As for Marxism, they are neither for or against it. A series of formulae they disliked having to learn, but as a body of doctrine, it’s dead for them” (Taylor 1957c: 75). He repeated this view about thirty years later, when he noted, with admitted exaggeration, “the fact that between the Elbe and the Mekong Delta, Marxism is utterly spiritually dead .... [and] somehow manages to live only where Marxist regimes do not” (Taylor 1989b: 67).

There is a whole range of exploration going on in modern culture of the most important, fascinating and humanly meaningful kind, but it cannot survive in an atmosphere in which this whole dimension is negated by the wrong model of freedom. That is what I think you find in strictly orthodox Marxism, which is confident and dismissive of this dimension and therefore sterile. What I describe here as orthodox Marxism has really nothing to say about death, finitude, our relation to nature, and only shallow things to say about human distance or sin or moral transformation. That is why, as I said, from the Elbe to the Mekong Delta it is dead behind the eyes (Taylor 1989b: 70).

The distinction Taylor makes between Marx the philosopher of modernity and the political ideology wrought in his name, accords with how Merleau-Ponty ended his decade-long association with Marxism in collaboration with Jean-Paul Sartre. That does not mean Merleau-Ponty rejected Marx the thinker; but like Taylor, formative strands of Marx’s thought continued to inform his phenomenology, not least his view that “[t]rue philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world, and in this sense a historical account can give meaning to the world quite as ‘deeply’ as a philosophical treatise” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xxiii). Certainly he would have drawn this insight significantly from Edmund Husserl’s writings. However, at around the time he was reading Husserl, Merleau-Ponty had begun reading the 1844 Manuscripts; soon after their 1937 translation into French. He then came to the conclusion that “Hegel and the young Marx were phenomenologists of concrete social life, not purveyors of closed and arid intellectual systems” (Moran 2000: 393). In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), Merleau-Ponty writes:

The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being. Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing, truth into being. One may well ask how this creation is possible, and if it does not recapture in things a pre-existing Reason. The answer is that the only pre-existent Logos is the world itself, and that the



philosophy which brings it into visible existence does not begin by being possible; it is actual or real like the world of which it is a part, and no explanatory hypothesis is clearer than the act whereby we take up this unfinished world in an effort to complete and conceive it (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xxi-xxii).

Dermot Moran's (2000) comment on a fragment of this quote is instructive; about Merleau-Ponty's scholarship on art, where he notes the Heideggerian impression of Merleau-Ponty's view. "Though its sounds like Heidegger's views on art and truth, it is more likely that Merleau-Ponty is here thinking of Marx and Feuerbach's view of the role of philosophy to bring about the new world rather than merely to understand it" (Moran 2000: 406). Taylor would adapt Merleau-Ponty's view to a similarly *expressivist* one drawn from Herder (Taylor 1995: 79f). But it is Marx's debt to Feuerbach that Taylor appreciates also<sup>17</sup> – thus indicating his sense that it is not Marx *per se* that is as important as the background tradition to which he belongs.

I want to return to Feuerbach a little later in this chapter; but here to take a slightly less obvious approach to what I have been describing as Taylor's identification of Marxism's 'weak link' in empiricism. Taylor (1989b) makes no secret of his having discovered and extracted his anti-epistemological 'core idea' from Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology, a set of procedures aimed at reaching an undistorted description of experience. Taylor found in Merleau-Ponty's work an approach through which he "sketched an approach to the theory of human subjectivity, or philosophical anthropology, that would go on to serve him throughout his writings" (Smith 2002: 26). I have suggested that Taylor's interest in Marx preceded his 'later' phenomenological interest in Merleau-Ponty; but his paper, *Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis* (1959), clearly indicates that he was reading phenomenology and Marx during the same period, and that he turned both against the empiricist tradition. For that reason there are good grounds, though by no means conclusive ones, to argue that Taylor's use of Marx was guided by similar uses found in Merleau-Ponty.

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<sup>17</sup> It seems very likely that Taylor gained this insight from his doctoral supervisor, Sir Isaiah Berlin. for whom Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Johann Georg Hamann (Berlin 2000) all appear in a tradition that anticipates Marx, Hegel and Feuerbach. Taylor (1974) recognizes this link, though, as I have posed earlier, appears to little recognise the place of Vico in this lineage.

## Organic intellectuals

Both Taylor and Merleau-Ponty had a particularly heightened idea of what it entailed to be a philosopher; and it is plausible that Taylor drew his own notions of the intellectual's *political* role from that mutual understanding. That is, the understanding of the intellectual "as a situated philosopher" (Goehr 2005: 327) speaks of them both.<sup>18</sup> It is the philosopher's duty, Merleau-Ponty argues in *Humanism and Terror*, to explore the myth of a totalitarian identification of "the peoples' thought with party dictates, made possible through a false promise by the party to the people that their thought is divergent and free" (in Goehr 2005: 327). In summarising Merleau-Ponty's ideas on this matter, Lydia Goehr (2005) writes:

[T]he philosopher works with the ambiguity and reflective doubt that constitutes the core of humanistic Marxism deliberately to counter the insupportable Stalinist reification or objectification that enables the party to impose its rule on society in a totalitarian or ideological manner.... It is the philosopher's duty to expose the contradiction, to dissipate the myth. This is the sort of action or engagement that genuine revolutionary consciousness requires of the engaged philosopher. It is then up to the heroes (among the people) to show how true revolutionary consciousness works itself out in practice (Goehr 2005: 327).

Taylor was integrally part of the intellectual movement that began at Oxford soon after institutional Marxism's 1956 *annus horribilis*, and from which the New Left emerged. He considered the role of the intellectual seriously, and appeared to follow Merleau-Ponty's example as a modus of his activism. After Merleau-Ponty's "religious crisis"<sup>19</sup> which led him in the 1930s in the direction of Marxism" (Moran 2000: 393), and after his readings of Husserl and Marx, and even after the war, he, together with Sartre, helped found the left-wing journal *Les Temps modernes*. Merleau-Ponty was "spurred by the conviction that philosophy had to become engaged in the real world" (Moran 2000: 397).<sup>20</sup> Questions concerning theoretical

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to distinguish here between the 'intellectualism' that Merleau-Ponty rejected, and a position he derives from Max Scheler whereby any cognitive knowledge 'of the world' is dependent on one's experience of embodiment. Basically, this advocates a philosophy of engagement as opposed to the Cartesian models Merleau-Ponty attacks in *Primacy of Perception* (see Mirvish 1983).

<sup>19</sup> This crisis had far more to do with matters of the institutional Church's affiliations in global politics than to do with matters of faith *per se*. Until 1935, Merleau-Ponty's outlook was Christian socialist. "He was associated with left-wing Catholic intellectual journals such as *Sept* and *Esprit*, edited by the Christian philosopher Emmanuel Mounier. His first publications were reviews, in the French journal *La Vie Intellectuelle*, of books by two philosophers who combined existentialism with Catholicism: the French translation of Max Scheler's *Ressentiment in der Moral* and Gabriel Marcel's *Être et avoir*" (Moran 2000: 392-393).

<sup>20</sup> Merleau-Ponty resigned from the editorial board of *Les Temps modernes* over a disagreement "with Sartre over the latter's uncritical support of the Soviet Union's role in the Korean War" (Dermot 2000: 398).

problems of orthodox Marxism that occupied the movement were not new; but that year thrust the philosophy into the light of a crisis, and brought to those questions added saliency. As Edward Thompson put it in *Universities and Left Review*:

The conflicts which matured within world Communism in 1956 are surely sufficient to have shattered the old simplified picture. It is no longer any good whatsoever to lump together all the contradictory phenomena of Communist-led societies as a Good Thing or a Bad Thing. But it seems to me that intellectuals in this country have been slow to grasp the inner significance of these events (Thompson 1957a: 31).

Thompson's article deals with the question of the purposes and ostensive functions of unappreciated intellectuals in parties of the left. The period saw the crushing of the worker revolt in Hungary, and the arrest of Lukács. Yet, "in a period of such significance for socialist theory as this, [intellectuals] can no longer waste time and energy in the toils of a bureaucracy which demands everything from them, from stamp licking to *Daily Worker* selling, *except* honest intellectual work" (Thompson 1957a: 34). Taylor's explanation for the anti-intellectual malaise was "the widespread belief that ideas are of no importance" (Taylor 1957b: 18), and the concomitant attitude that intellectuals ought to abdicate to the expediencies of direct action. But Taylor and his companions were going to have none of it.

## **Marxist versus Marxism**

There appears from discussion so far that the core of Taylor's project began *from within* his critique of British Marxism during his days in the emergent New Left movement. That is, Taylor did not appear to argue his position from *within* a Marxist framework in a manner resembling the way in which a dyed-in-the-wool Party member might do. He offered a critique of Marxism in Britain from a position that drew from the *Manuscripts* Marx's concept of alienation (Taylor 1957a). It was a move that influenced Taylor from then on, even if that source was to become increasingly opaque in its many subsequent rearticulations. But it would be entirely mistaken to think that Taylor's motivation was drawn from a parochial stage. Taylor was no less attuned to developments in France, and he seems to have approached the British condition from the (French) existentialist viewpoint in particular, and from continental philosophy in general.

It is worth adding some substance to the claim I am making here, for there may be a misconception that Merleau-Ponty was peripheral to French philosophy in general, and even to the existentialist movement. Jean Hyppolite's (1955) brief

“chronology of French existentialism” serves well to illustrate the point. He distinguishes between four periods of French existentialism: (1) the years preceding 1939, (2) the period immediately following the war, (3) “Existentialism’s period of decadence [which] began a few years ago and is now, I believe, nearing its end” (Hyppolite 1955: 101), and (4) a fourth period he thought the movement was entering in 1955. Hyppolite identifies Merleau-Ponty as a leading figure in all but the first period. Taylor enters the picture the year after Hyppolite’s article was published. The period marks Merleau-Ponty’s break with Sartre over his continuing accommodation of “ultra-Bolshevism”, and towards questions of the relations between history and philosophy (Hyppolite 1955: 101). In addition to Hyppolite’s schema, the areas in philosophy surrounding existentialism’s emergence must include analytic philosophy, which, as the dominant tendency in English-speaking countries, emerged not least as a struggle against British idealism. Hence we find Taylor (1959: 95-96; 1964: 47, 52) drawing from Merleau-Ponty’s method<sup>21</sup> in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) his anti-dualistic attack on both empiricism and idealism entailed a ‘return to history’. History is *the* hinge around which Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Marxism and empiricism articulate. As Moran (2000) argues:

Following Hegel, Bergson, Husserl, and Heidegger, who all emphasise the temporality and historicity of human existence, Merleau-Ponty’s commitment to the phenomenology of concrete lived experience and embodiment also require him to rethink the meaning of human historicity and temporality .... History can never be understood as a single stream of meanings; there is no perspective from which we can view the course of history from the outside, anymore than we can achieve a perceptual view of a house as ‘seen from nowhere’ .... All thought, like all perception, is situated and perspectival. This insight led Merleau-Ponty to develop a critique both of Hegel’s conception of absolute knowledge and also, in political terms, of the Marxist and French communist approach to history, which tended to explain the living course of history in static and *a priori* terms (Moran 2000: 404-405).

Taking a more conventional understanding of history, and to return to Taylor’s Oxford and the New Left movement that emerged there. We can be certain that Taylor, traveling to Paris where he met with Merleau-Ponty, and returning to Oxford and the economist condition of orthodox Marxist in Britain of the 1950s, must have had difficulty in squaring the two ‘Marxisms’. Given Mark Poster’s (1975)

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<sup>21</sup> The chapter, ‘The Phenomenological Field’ in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology* (1962) presents the methodology he uses to evoke an alliance between science and perception, or between empiricism and idealism (or intellectualism), thus collapsing the polarisation of the subject-object dichotomy. Both, he argues, “assume a world in itself to which consciousness has to be accommodated” (Macann 1993: 168).

description of post-war Marxism in France, the British Communist Party must surely have cut a curiously anachronistic figure in Taylor's imagination:

After World War II, the Communist Party of France was shaken by a threat it could not have anticipated. The CPF had dealt, in its fashion, with numerous enemies in its short history: Trotskyists, Socialists, liberals, fascists, conservatives, Catholics, monarchists, all sorts of intellectuals, academics, and journalists who derived fame or pleasure from polemicizing against Marx.... But now, after 1945, something more sinister was happening: intellectuals of every conceivable stripe were proclaiming allegiance to Marx's thought, or, at the very least, paying homage to the power and fertility of his ideas. To the same extent that the French reading public was fascinated by existentialism, Marx's ideas triumphantly paraded through Paris to enthusiastic approval. To the chagrin of CP theorists, petty bourgeois intellectuals had successfully advertised Marxism as a philosophy of alienation. France was astir with chatter about alienation, bandying the name of *Karl Marx* in a manner entirely unsatisfactory to the official Marxists of the CP (Poster 1975: 49-50).

This much shows Taylor to have been far less unconventional than he may have appeared to have been to his New Left colleagues. He was French-speaking, after all; and Paris had loomed large in his worldview since childhood. With his base in Oxford, he was afforded the opportunity to mediate between debates in French Marxism and the agenda pursued by the British New Left. Perhaps reassured by Merleau-Ponty's similar experience, Taylor was able to critique the different ways in which people came to distinguish Marx from Marxism. He found E.P. Thompson's (1957a; 1957b) acceptance of Marxism and rejection of Stalinism flawed, though understandable. Lukács too had tried unsuccessfully to recover the Hegelian Marx and to remain at the same time loyal to the communist movement (Anchor 1980: 280; Resnick and Wolff 1982: 42).<sup>22</sup>

If the practice known as Stalinism is not in the true Marxist tradition, and if therefore the assimilation Communism-Stalinism is false, can we go to the other extreme and brand Stalinism as a pure deviation from Communist practice? Can Communists repudiate Stalinism without also repudiating something of Communism? The answer may not be simply the unqualified "yes" of Edward Thompson or the unqualified "no" of classical anticommunists. There may be a more nuanced solution which will bring us closer to the truth (Taylor 1957a: 92).

Taylor's position differs from both Thompson and Lukács; although he is closer to Lukács (via Merleau-Ponty) for acknowledging the Hegelian and Romantic roots of

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<sup>22</sup> Tom Rockmore (2000: 99) succinctly sums up Lukács's dilemma and eventual failure in trying to be faithful to both Marx and Marxism. "Lukács's impossible effort to be true both to Marx and to Marxism creates an insuperable difficulty, which affects, weakens, constantly undermines and finally defeats him throughout the long Marxist phase of his even longer intellectual career. Like so many before and after him, he was unable to serve two masters. If his writings now seem dated to us, it is not because he was a deeply informed, brilliant Marxist theoretician; rather it is because he was also deeply interested in and cognizant about Marx that he tried, but finally failed, to be faithful both to Marx and Marxism."

Marx's earlier work. While Taylor was unequivocally critical of the orthodox Marxism that he and many of his New Left contemporaries found in Britain, his view was that "it is possible to reject Marxism as a global explanation, to have less than the degree of faith in it which an orthodox communist has, and yet to appreciate the importance and validity of its approach" (Taylor 1966a: 230). What Taylor sought, he found in a recovery of the Hegelian Marx built around the concept of alienation. The durability of this view in Taylor's philosophy is evident in his *Ethics of Authenticity* (Taylor 1991a).

The simple binary of Marx and Marxism can be misleading when considering Taylor's approach. Certainly he rejected the economism of *classical* Marxism, and certainly he found convincing the humanism of Marx's earlier work.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, he found Hegelian historicism<sup>24</sup> more plausible than the *reductive* materialism for which Marx is generally known. These are generalizations that serve to situate Taylor in debates at that time, but only go so far. One of the more glaring generalizations concerns the concept of *materialism*. Taylor separates from this term its constituent *empiricist* and *holist* ingredients (Taylor 1966a: 237), together which hinge upon a deeper articulation found in Aristotle (see Taylor 2002b: 284). Taylor's objection, therefore, was certainly not the assertion of economic causality *per se*, according to overtly materialist attributions to (or descriptions of) Marx's work. His objections lie *primarily* in the ways in which Marx's work had been calibrated in accordance with the epistemological requirements of seventeenth century science (Taylor 1974: 51). That is, while the (Hegelian) holist ingredient asserts man as a social being, and draws much from the Romantic tradition for this sense, the empiricist ingredient draws upon a tradition that asserts an atomistic individualism (Taylor 1966a: 238-239; 1974: 46). A deep contradiction, therefore, lies at the philosophical base of Marxism in so far as there lies a rejection of the Romantic-holistic root in favour of the empiricist-materialist (hence a 'deterministic') one. Taylor explains:

The nub of the concept for our purposes here is perhaps this: since the seventeenth century men – first in 'Atlantic' countries, then elsewhere – have tended more and

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<sup>23</sup> See Tony Burns's (2000) discussion on the central place of ancient Greek philosophy to Marx's understanding of materiality.

<sup>24</sup> In *The Poverty of the Poverty of Historicism* (Taylor 1958b), Taylor takes issue with Karl Popper's attack on historicism. Taylor returns to the basis of his objection in *Marxism and Empiricism* (Taylor 1966a: 235-242), which I shall discuss shortly.

more to define themselves as agents who derive their purposes from themselves. Philosophically speaking, most earlier notions of man defined his 'normal' or optimal condition at least partly in terms of his relation to a larger cosmic order, with which he had to be in tune. The 'modern' view sees him rather as an agent who optimally would use the surrounding world as a set of instruments and enabling conditions with which to effect the purposes which he either found within himself (as 'drives' or desires) or chose freely.... The best minds of the Romantic period recognized that one could not go back, and should not want to. What they protested against was the atomistic, manipulative bent of the Enlightenment (Taylor 1974: 49).

There are equally good grounds to argue that what Taylor found and rejected in British Marxism derived from Engels's interpretation of Marx (Taylor 1974: 51), which constituted a scientific or 'materialist Marxism' (Rockmore 1980: 29-30); and that what he accepted was the humanist Marx of the *1844 Manuscripts*, from which he extracted Marx's theory of alienation.<sup>25</sup> As Taylor points out, Marxism tries to combine the rationalist, Enlightenment concern for the unhindered development of the autonomous individual with the Romantic yearning for the discovery of meaning in communion with all humanity, nature, and the cosmos (Taylor 1974: 49-51).

The evolution of Marx, on one interpretation at any rate, and certainly the evolution of Marxism under the impetus of Engels, illustrates the tension and ambivalence in the socialist tradition which is implicit in its attitude to modernization from the beginning. On the one hand many socialists have found profound sympathy with the Romantic experience of modern society as a desert in which everything has been levelled, and all beauty has been stamped out to create a mundane, serviceable world of use-objects. On the other, socialists have been among the most uncompromising modernizers, tearing asunder traditional societies, institutions, customs with a savage dedication unmatched by the great nineteenth-century utilitarians (Taylor 1974: 51).

A position similar to Taylor's – though more specifically directed at divorcing Engels from Marx – is found in Tom Rockmore's range of work hammering out the anti-Engelsian line. He argues that Engels assumed that by expunging all semblances of Hegel, he was ridding Marx of (German) *idealism* (Rockmore 2002: 15-21). The impression thus gained from the tradition derived from Engels was that Hegel was an unremitting idealist (Rockmore 2000: 103; 2001: 340-341). Rockmore elsewhere wastes no time in describing Engels – “who has clearly anti-idealist, positivist leanings” (Rockmore 2000: 97) – as rejecting Hegel for being “pre-scientific”, and promoting materialism as scientific (Rockmore 2002: 15); hence making Marx at least a 'proto-positivist' convinced that philosophy had been entirely superseded by

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor writes: “I do not believe anyone can doubt the debt of Marx, certainly the young Marx, to Romanticism in general, and what I have called expressivism in particular. The picture which one finds in the young Marx of liberated man, who has made himself over by labour, and whose work ceases to be a travail and becomes free creativity, this surely is a quintessentially expressivist picture. And even those who hold the most hard-nosed interpretation of the evolution of the mature Marx can hardly believe that this quite disappeared from the purview of the author of *Capital*” (Taylor 1974: 51).

science. As we see above, Taylor (1974: 51) does not accept that ‘Engelsian’ position – thus ‘unintentionally’ prefiguring Rockmore’s work – and does not accept the corresponding notion that Marx was as assiduously a materialist; a view that, as Rockmore (2000) points out in an historical note,<sup>26</sup> derives primarily from a tradition traveling through Engels and Lenin.

While both Hegel and Marx are considerably more nuanced than the reductionist descriptions ascribed to each, it is significantly to Lukács that Merleau-Ponty looked for having, so soon after the Russian Revolution, set about recovering Marx’s Hegelian roots. The efforts of Lukács (and Lucien Goldmann after him) to free Marxism from an economistic straitjacket both constituted a major upheaval within orthodox Marxism as it responded to the crisis it possibly thereby exacerbated. In the previous chapter I mentioned Lukács as having had an influence on Raymond Williams (1977), but this came in the seventies after Williams met Goldmann on a visit to Cambridge; and what Williams had discovered was the remarkable congruence between his thinking and that of Lukács and Goldmann (Higgins 1999: 111-112).

Space does not allow for a discussion on this aspect of Williams’s work; nor on how Lukács’s ‘cultural Marxism’ prefigures his own. The simplest and barest point must do: that both attempted to win for culture a realm of theoretical and political autonomy denied it by ‘economizing’ Marx; and that Lukács set about recovering Hegel so as to understand Marx in a way that ran counter to the economistic (and positivistic) Marxism that proceeded through the pragmatic interpretations of Engels and Lenin. Furthermore, his move was to separate Marx from the Leninist configuration of Marxism, nonetheless attempting to retain Marx together with a revised form of ‘Marxism’. In this, Lukács’s ‘cultural turn’ anticipated debates that were to follow in Britain and on the continent in the 1950s.

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<sup>26</sup> “Marx died in 1883 in a moment when the future of the movement based on his theories was far from clear. When Engels died a mere dozen years later in 1895, the political movement that was to lead to the Russian Revolution was already beginning to take shape. The group of men who carried out the revolution were certainly more interested in practical politics than in careful scrutiny of Marx’s writings. It is not surprising that Lenin, who decisively influenced Marxism during the Bolshevik period, mainly relied on Engels, not on Marx, in his authoritative writings. For the most part, Soviet Marxists, including politicians like Stalin, and representatives of ‘official’ Soviet philosophy ... developed and elaborated, but did not substantially deviate from, the official Marxist line based on Lenin’s interpretation and adaptation of Engels to the Russian situation” (Rockmore 2000: 96-97).



## Merleau-Ponty's Marx

The fact that Taylor's overall philosophy shows a certain ambivalence towards Marx ought not to be surprising given that Taylor subscribes as closely as he does to Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology. James Miller (1976) describes "the French philosopher [as cutting] a curiously contradictory figure, torn between phenomenology and a neo-Hegelian account of the meaning of history" (Miller 1976: 109). But this contradiction is an advantage in so far as it allowed Merleau-Ponty to explore the problematic area of human subjectivity in orthodox Marxist theory up until the time Taylor was completing his doctoral studies (Edie 1971: 299; 1964: 57-59; Miller 1976: 109). Merleau-Ponty died suddenly in 1961.

In the 1930s Merleau-Ponty began to deepen his study of Marx, especially the writings of the young Marx as exemplified in the *Manuscripts* (Miller 1976: 109-110). In 1935 he attended Alexander Kojève's lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The year the world war broke out was particularly momentous for Merleau-Ponty. Firstly, he was the first to visit the Husserl Archive after it had been taken to Louvain in Belgium for safekeeping. "These brief encounters undoubtedly had a decisive influence on the way in which Merleau-Ponty appropriated the later thought of Husserl and incorporated it into the heart of his own philosophy" (Kearney 1994: 107). Secondly, it was in 1939 that he finally decided against joining the French Communist Party, motivated by news in 1939 of the Moscow show trials and Nikolai Bukharin's execution (Goehr 2005: 329-330; Kearney 1994: 106). Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the significance of the trials wavered between 'explanation', on the one hand, and a declining estimation of Marxism as a philosophy and as a movement (Miller 1976: 122). Merleau-Ponty attempted in the immediate postwar period "to accommodate Marxism to his own thought, in the process producing several rather disingenuous restatements on orthodoxy's deterministic prejudices" (Miller 1976: 125), hence blurring his critique of determinism in the social sciences.

Whereas in 1947 [Merleau-Ponty] had advocated a kind of critical adhesion to the Communist Party, in 1955 Merleau-Ponty denounced the obsolescence of Communist practice. The apparent cause of this new-found skepticism lay in the Korean War. But Merleau-Ponty's turnabout had significant implications for his broader understanding of Marxism. Increasingly, he refuses to take Marxist philosophical categories at face value (Miller 1976: 122).

The tendency, following Lukács, to distinguish Marx from (Leninist) Marxism was gaining ground. But by 1955, Merleau-Ponty took this further by exploring in Marx's earlier theory an equivocation between a 'materialist' determination and a dialectic that steered "clear of abstract alternatives such as 'idealism' and 'materialism'" (Miller 1976: 125). This equivocation is crystallized in Marx's concept of society as *second nature*,<sup>27</sup> "the unreflective arena of habit, custom, convention, and style" (Miller 1976: 131), which accounts for "Marx's original understanding of social and historical laws" (Miller 1976: 132). Mark Poster (1975) notes that,

As Lukács said, the economy, a system of tools, was a "second nature." The economy was indeed a second nature because it reproduced the unconsciousness of nature itself within the creations of man, the economy would not become human until it was shorn of its naturalness and reflected human desire (Poster 1975: 219).

Merleau-Ponty felt that this equivocation justified social relations being treated through technical domination as if it were *first nature* – the objective natural world *per se*. It is this equivocation Taylor noted, that allowed for the essentialist notion of the proletariat that "Stalinism has built much on" (Taylor 1957a: 97). In *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Merleau-Ponty argued that "[t]echnical action would replace meaningful comprehension; in Marxist practice, the professional revolutionary would displace the self-conscious proletariat, and guiding historical development would become the prerogative of a party elite" (Merleau-Ponty in Miller 1976: 125). Orthodox Marxism had already reduced the proletariat to a tool-object in forces of production (Dallmayr 1976: 73).

It has created a kind of metaphysical gap between those who are "of the proletariat," and those who are not, so that at the limit, the latter are barely part of mankind at all. The practice of Stalinism has shown the limits of the concept of class morality, not just in its mechanistic form, but in its true form as the postulate of a new moral life, borne forward by a class, in virtue of its historical role. This concept is essential to Marxist Communism (Taylor 1957a: 97).

It is here that Taylor eventually declares that "Marxist Communism is at best an incomplete humanism" on the basis that the practice of the party in "trampling underfoot for a time the brotherhood of man ... in creating the new society .... [was] at least a possible reading of Marx" (Taylor 1957a: 98). Taylor's position draws, so it

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<sup>27</sup> In the *Ninth Thesis on Feuerbach*, Marx uses this concept. Cyril Smith (2005) represents the view in a paragraph: "When society no longer appears as an alien "second nature," whose laws seem to be immutable, we shall get to grips with the problems of living as part of "first nature," that is, of nature. Natural necessity would remain, of course, to be studied by natural science, to be the collaborator with technology in satisfying human needs. But historical necessity would gradually be overcome and transformed. If this is "materialism," it is certainly not the "old materialism," whose standpoint was that of "single individuals and of 'civil society'" (Smith 2005: 21).

appears, quite directly from Merleau-Ponty. Events in the post-war period led Merleau-Ponty to abandon the essentialist conception of the proletariat. He rejected the Marxist ‘assumption of rationality in human action, and its program for a deterministic ‘science’ of society” (Miller 1976: 110). “It was the proletariat that unified subject and object, theory and practice, the ideal and real; it was the proletariat that embodied a universal meaning of history in potential” (Miller 1976: 122).

Not until the Frankfurt School did Left theory develop a sufficiently independent theory of culture that, in its own right, reconnected with political economy to forge a powerful new analytical apparatus for analyzing emerging monopoly-capitalist contradictions; and for those who made use of his work, Lukács became instrumental in their achievements. Taylor was one of many indebted to Lukács (Fraser 2007: 26, 28), though perhaps only indirectly through Merleau-Ponty, who “elaborated a form of Marxism derived from Lukács, Hegel, and the young Marx – the Marx who ... portrayed the proletariat as a material force for ‘the total redemption of humanity’” (Miller 1976: 109-110).<sup>28</sup>

From Lukács, [Merleau-Ponty] added an understanding of the proletariat as history’s (potentially) unified subject-object, the demiurge of Absolute Knowledge appearing within human pre-history and transcending the fractured conditions of capitalism toward the future of communism; while from Hegel, he borrowed the dialectic of mutual recognition, and placed its resolution at the end of history. When wed to Marx’s original depiction of the proletariat as the heart of human emancipation, these convergent strands in Merleau-Ponty’s thought encouraged him to identify the proletariat with man’s alienated essence, and to seek in proletarian politics a virtually apocalyptic class consciousness aiming at a more humane society, where men might treat each other as ends rather than means (Miller 1976: 110).

The heavily Hegelian subscription is clearly evident from Miller’s description; but he also shows Merleau-Ponty as having found himself suspended between a Hegelian portrayal of the “proletariat as the potential vessel of an absolute human meaning” and a phenomenology in which the proletariat took the form of “an inchoate yet coherent conjunction of individuals” (Miller 1976: 111). Elsewhere Miller

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<sup>28</sup> The operative concept in Taylor’s use of Marx was centrally his conception of alienation, drawn from the *Paris Manuscripts* (Taylor 1958a) Given to whom Taylor refers in his essay, *Alienation and Community* (Taylor 1958), it is unlikely that he derives his ideas from Lukács. His references to the humanist psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (Taylor 1958: 12, 14, 15) may indicate Taylor’s interest in the Frankfurt School; though it may as well indicate his a formative influence leading to his critical work against behaviourist psychology (Taylor 1964). On the other hand, his references to Richard Hoggart’s *Uses of Literacy* (Taylor 1958: 14), discussed within an overall rejection of utilitarianism, suggests an on-going dialogue with Hoggart and Williams on the matter of the cultural practices of media use. Short of an incisive exegesis, finding Lukács in Taylor’s early work remains speculative. An exegesis may reveal little more. However, there are no grounds to indicate any antipathy between Taylor and Lukács.

describes Merleau-Ponty's Marxism as an "idiosyncratic fusion of Lukács's 1923 view of class with Husserl's later notion of history's *telos*" (Miller 1976: 128), thus indicating an intention perhaps less idiosyncratic than an attempt to link both at their respective Hegelian cores. To this view we can add Taylor's. While his understanding is that the core of Marx is Hegelian, hence his at once critical approach to Enlightenment thinking, and his attempt to laud its achievements (Taylor 1968a: 150-151), Merleau-Ponty tries to connect the Hegelian-Marx thread (proceeding from Lukács) to a further (phenomenological) Hegelian thread that arrives from Edmund Husserl (Kullman and Taylor 1958: 108, 110-112; Priest 1998: 13-35; Taylor 1967b: 114-116). The purpose for this combination, as Kullman and Taylor (1958: 112) argue, is both to critique the empiricist theories of perception found in orthodox Marxism in a way that recovers the historical dimension of human experience, and to do so through a "genetic phenomenology" (Kullman and Taylor 1958: 113; see Priest 1998: 23).

The goal of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is therefore to take us back to the beginning, to reveal the path we have taken. This sets the direction of his subsequent philosophical work after 1945. What had to be done was to give a plausible account of the higher forms, and first of that most essential of all higher forms for man – language (Taylor 1967b: 116).

In the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) we see Merleau-Ponty describing man as 'condemned to meaning': "Because we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning, and we cannot do or say anything without its acquiring a name in history" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xxii). By that he means, among other things, that the world man inhabits is one that is meaningfully formed not only by perception and behaviour, but also by language and symbols (Priest 1998: 206). But Merleau-Ponty here does not have a representationalist symbolic theory in mind. As Taylor continues from the above quote, "The crucial problem became that of accounting for expression, for the – seemingly miraculous – creation of a new form of thought or way of behaving or way of knowing or treating the world through the evolution of (in the broadest sense of the word) a new language" (Taylor 1967: 116). Stephen Priest (1998: 171) cites Merleau-Ponty's refuting that 'to express' means 'to represent' in interpretation. "[T]he reason he gives is that thought in its expression 'in' speech 'does not expressly posit objects or relations' (Priest 1998: 171).

Merleau-Ponty used this image of man, in large part derived from Heidegger, to criticize rationalist accounts of consciousness as "constituting". More than a

perpetually renewed constitutive act, the “me” of personhood has to be viewed as a relatively durable institution, “the field of my becoming” with a history of its own (Miller 1976: 113).

We can now refer back to Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the proletariat as a vehicle of history; and how he seeks to preserve within Marxism the intersection of history within the personal. For Merleau-Ponty the subject of history is not simply a factor in production, “but the whole man, man engaged in symbolic activities as well as manual labour” (Miller 1976: 113). “What makes me a proletariat is not the economic system or society considered as systems of impersonal forces, but these institutions as I carry them within me and experience them; nor is it an intellectual operation devoid of motive, but my way of being in the world within this institutional framework” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 515). When an individual finds himself ‘a worker’, this is a decision already “prepared by some molecular process, it matures in co-existence before bursting forth into words and being related to objective ends” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 518). You find yourself having become a worker. To be a worker is not only to be aware of being one. More crucially,

it is to identify oneself as worker or bourgeois through an implicit or existential project which merges into our way of patterning the world and co-existing with other people. My decision draws together a spontaneous meaning of my life which it may confirm or repudiate, but not annul. Both idealism and objective thinking fail to pin down the coming into being of class consciousness, the former because it deduces actual existence from consciousness, the latter because it derives consciousness from *de facto* existence, and both because they overlook the relationship of motivation (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 520).

In *Sources of the Self* (1989a: 464), Taylor takes up the issue of instrumentalism and reification in capitalist society, to which he refers in earlier writing (Taylor 1966), and positively cites Lukács’s work in this regard. Ian Fraser (2007) points out that in aligning himself with Lukács’s linking of instrumentalism with alienation, he comes closest to endorsing Marx’s critique of capitalist society, “because [Marx] also recognizes that there is a loss of meaning attached to instrumental understanding of society,” a loss which Taylor himself wants to win back (Fraser 2007: 26). Fraser underscores Taylor’s endorsement of “writers such as Lukács, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse in relation to their critiques of fetishism and alienation” (Fraser 2007: 28), and does so fittingly (for purpose I am leading to) in his chapter entitled “The Self.”

Since Marxist interpretations of Marx’s relation to Hegel reaches its high point in Lukács, any effort to recover Marx must indicate the limitations of Lukács’s reading of Marx’s relation to Hegel .... [A]mong all the many talented Marxist writers,

Lukács stands out as perhaps the single most important Marxist philosopher. During the long period of ‘official’ Marxism, there were many interesting Marxist writers.... [Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao] very obviously [have] no real philosophical standing when compared with someone like Lukács.... It has been well said that Hegel was a modern Aristotle. Like Hegel, although to a lesser degree, Lukács was also a rare polymath (Rockmore 2000: 97, 98).

## **Feuerbach**

To this point I have argued that the resources of Taylor’s subscription to the humanist and Hegelian Marx, as well as his critique of Marxist economism, derived principally from Merleau-Ponty. Furthermore, I have indicated that Taylor derives the core of his agenda from Merleau-Ponty, who took over from Hegel and Marx the understanding of our relation to the world as dialectical, but reworked that dialectic according to an anthropology that was significantly more humanist than the orthodox schema posited. In this respect, we can assume that Merleau-Ponty follows a path closer to “Feuerbach who, as early as 1839, had begun to criticize Hegel’s dialectic from a humanist point of view” (Burns 2000: 26). For Marx, who followed Feuerbach more directly than he did Hegel, he subscribed to the Aristotelian dialectic in that “the *relationship between mind and body* within a particular human being might be described as a dialectical one” (Burns 2000: 34) based on the principle of “identity in difference” (Sayers 1980: 36).

The immediate source for the young Marx’s idea that there is a need for a synthesis of the German ‘dialectical’ philosophy of Hegel with the French ‘materialism’ of the eighteenth century does appear to be the work of Feuerbach (Burns 2000: 34).

This is a view Taylor (1978a) takes when he argues that “Feuerbach is a Hegelian, in the sense at least, that he has absorbed” Hegel’s ‘immanent critique’ of “the French materialists [who] start with a mechanistic conception of human nature and human needs” (Taylor 1978a: 419, 418). Feuerbach did not return to an Enlightenment human subject, but recognized “that an adequate account of the human subject has to recognize that men form conceptions of themselves, and that they are partly shaped by these conceptions” (Taylor 1978a: 419).

[Feuerbach] also sees that the subject who so understands himself cannot simply be individual, that it is only in relation to others, in a community of speech, that we make and develop these understandings by which we live. All this emerges in the rich and still obscure Feuerbachian concept of the ‘species being’ .... one of the terms that Marx took over from Feuerbach, using it extensively in his unpublished manuscripts of 1844 (Taylor 1978a: 419).

The paragraph following that from which I have extracted the above quote contains a kernel of Taylor's philosophical anthropology. That is, we can see one source from which Taylor derives his notion of man as a "self-interpreting animal" (Taylor 1985a: 27, 45-76).

Now we can think of animals as living this life with others unconsciously, unreflectingly. But in the case of man, this common life is something of which we have a notion, or at least a picture. We relate ourselves to some such notions or images of what we are as men .... Feuerbach has, it would seem, incorporated an understanding of man both as a self-interpreting being and an inescapably social being. Marx took over both these dimensions when he borrowed the term (Taylor 1978a: 419).

For Feuerbach, "human self-understanding and therefore human development is inescapably dialectical," thus presenting by way of "debunking Hegel's Spirit and making man the centre of his" philosophy a humanism amenable to Marx (Taylor 1978a: 420, 419). Merleau-Ponty achieves a similar position in his own phenomenology, though doing so through reading Lukács's recovery of the humanist Marx; to whose influence Merleau-Ponty added the Husserlian root that allowed him to recover the humanist dimension of Hegel's phenomenology. In all, what we see is Taylor tapping into a strand of Romanticism founded in the philosophical movement of German idealism. It is here that we find (the humanist) Marx having begun. Marx's 'scientific' work takes shape in the later 1800s at a time when Enlightenment thinking was returning to ascendancy in modern history as *empiricism*. Thus Marx encompasses in the historical development of his thought both the Romantic and empiricist strands of modernity.

By stating that Taylor 'derived' Hegel and Marx from Merleau-Ponty is not to mean that he used Merleau-Ponty as a 'secondary source'. That much flies in the face of Taylor's own arguments (derived from Merleau-Ponty) concerning philosophy being coterminous with its own history (Taylor 1984a). Merleau-Ponty does not stand on his own feet, as it were, but on the shoulders of those giants arrayed in the Romantic tradition of modernity; which extends to the antiquity of Greece.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, and to tie up some loose ends in this chapter, we can be reasonably certain that Taylor's motives for studying the *Manuscripts* were bound up rather more with an interest in Merleau-Ponty's Marxism than they had to do with sorting out

problems of economism in British Marxism. In this respect we see that Taylor follows in a line instituted by Lukács who, together with Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School theorists, opposed the economic view that Marx had “discovered the truth, namely, that the economic aspect of social reality determined the non-economic” (Resnick and Wolff 1982: 32). Again, this opposition opened a way for a humanistic Marxism built upon a critique of Marxist economism. But perhaps more significantly, it recalibrated Marxism as a neo-Romantic rejection of the mechanistic picture derived from seventeenth century science. Central here is a recovery of the historical subject in the Hegelian problematic that Lukács, and Merleau-Ponty after him, locate in “the proletariat, the human essence in revolt against its radical negation,” affirming “the human essence;” a proletariat as “philosophy in deed and in political practice philosophy itself” (Williams 2001: 61).

Taylor’s interest did not amount to recovering Marx as if he were a revelation hidden in the corruptions of successive interpretations. Instead, his interest lay in “getting right” the fact that the historical matter is something upon which philosophy converges without expecting to find there an *essence*. To consider Marx’s philosophy entails sensitivity to the ‘genetic’ structure Hegel bequeathed to Marx’s own thought. In the *Manuscripts*, therefore, what Taylor found was a convergence of ‘getting right’ a world that in its experience remains quintessentially historical; and what Merleau-Ponty offered him was a recent convergence upon its historical constitution. Connecting history and philosophy this way accords with Taylor’s (1984a) view that allows him to see Merleau-Ponty not only as a successor in the Romantic tradition, but also as an ‘embodied’ convergence of that tradition.

It should not be surprising to see the convergence with Hegel and Marx which is evident in Merleau-Ponty’s work. For the ambition to overcome the dualism of mind and nature, the attempt to do this by a conception of mind which is inseparable from its incarnation in matter, the resultant preoccupation with problems of genesis : these are all Hegelian ideas; indeed, one might consider them *the* Hegelian bequest to philosophy. This tends to be the view of Merleau-Ponty’s generation of French thinkers who were introduced to Hegel via Wahl and Kojève (Taylor 1967b: 117).

While there is little doubt that Taylor’s self-description as an intellectual takes its measure from Merleau-Ponty, the question still remains whether Taylor can be considered a Marxist *thinker* rather than as a *critic of Marxism*. The question can be put differently. Following the certainty that it is within the Romantic tradition of continental philosophy that Taylor situates his philosophy, we can ask whether he



takes his lead from the Hegelian-Marxist strand of that tradition, or whether his appropriation of Marx follows from a broader subscription to the tradition in which Marx is a part – that is, German Romanticism generally. We can surmise from comparing Taylor’s contention that Marxism was an “incomplete humanism” (Taylor 1957a), with his conviction that the *Manuscripts* expressed the humanist Marx, that the ‘young Marx’ belonged to the Romantic tradition whereas the Marx of *homo economicus* that informed orthodox Marxism was equally informed by the Enlightenment tradition of modernity. This distinction establishes the framework of Taylor’s *Sources of the Self* (1989a); yet short of accepting one aspect of the equivocation as ‘good’, and brand the other as its ‘evil twin’, and leaving it at that, such provides insufficient reasons both for Taylor’s prognosis of modernity and for the value he accords to Marx. The anti-humanist impulse is not the sole possession of positivistic Marxism, with all else given to alternative perspectives; empiricism included.

By humanism I mean some kind of doctrine about human potentialities which can command our moral admiration. The question is whether a socialist movement needs such a doctrine at all. This issue is raised today in a way it was not thirty years ago, in the writings of Michel Foucault and by post-structuralists. There is a movement on the left which thinks that humanist doctrines are an obstacle rather than a help, so the first issue I have to come to terms with is whether this kind of view about human beings is necessary at all or plays any role. I very strongly think that it does (Taylor 1989b: 61).

In *Marxism and Empiricism* (Taylor 1966a), Taylor addresses the question “why Marxism and the Marxist tradition has had so little impact on Britain and British philosophy” (1966a: 227). By referring to the philosophy as ‘having little impact’, Taylor does not imply that Marxism was a neglected topic there, but that it was considered from outside the empiricist paradigm as an intellectual curiosity. The highest point in British Marxism had been in the 1930s, but the “post-war period has seen a decline in the importance of Marxism, both intellectually and politically, to the status quo of the 1920s”. But “even at its apogee in the 1930s Marxism was not important in the academic world” (Taylor 1966a: 228), with the exception of history, “a discipline into which Marxist ideas and a Marxist approach have already penetrated very deeply” (Taylor 1966a: 229).<sup>29</sup> Despite the significant impact British neo-

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<sup>29</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Taylor was academically predisposed towards historiography; and not least for his association with Christopher Hill, it is hard to imagine Taylor not having brought to their discussions the particular contributions Merleau-Ponty made towards connecting history with identity. But this much is *speculative* rather more than it *explains* his overall view.

Marxists have had on social theory, not least in the institution of British Cultural Studies, Taylor notes that

Many students of political thought have written on this subject.... But the characteristic of this writing is that it represents a study of Marxism from the outside.... [A]t its best, it can only approach the sympathetic and detached study normally accorded to Oriental religions. Marxism may be of burning interest for all sorts of reasons, but never because it might be *true* (Taylor 1966a: 229).

Taylor thus implies a distinction between writing *about* Marx and Marxism and writing within a Marxist framework; though that latter does not entail being a committed Party member, or even a communist. Nor does the adoption of such a framework demand one assume a forgiving stance towards ‘mistakes’ of the Soviet and Leninist world. Taylor refers to MacIntyre<sup>30</sup> as “the rare non-Communist Marxist thinker,” and adds “the work that recommends him to his colleagues is not specifically Marxist” (Taylor 1966a: 228); but it would seem that in this accolade Taylor betrays a self-description in so far as he acknowledges the value of Marx, yet calls for a rejection of Marxism as a political philosophy (Taylor 1968a: 180-181; 1989b: 69-70). Puzzling still is the negative response (Taylor 1995b) he gives to Isaiah Berlin’s description of his being a Marxist (Berlin 1995: 1-2). Taylor alludes to his earlier arguments concerning the debilitating effects Leninism has had on human well-being.

Even without Leninism, it would be very difficult to get some kind of decentralized self-rule going in Russia again. Russia is a very difficult case because the catastrophe of Leninism occurred in a history in which there was previously the catastrophe of Ivan the Terrible, and it is probably not an accident that this history helped to lay the basis for Russian Leninism. Maybe, therefore, things are worse in Russia than they would be in the countries of Eastern Europe if this weight were lifted. Nevertheless, in the long term, it has a catastrophic effect on self-rule. It is a great engine of despotism. To sum up this second point against Marxism: in so far as this kind of humanism is built on the Rousseauian model, as against the Tocquevillean model, it is disastrous in the long run for democracy (Taylor 1989b: 67).

In distinguishing between the Rousseauian and Tocquevillean models, Taylor means that the Marxist alignment with the former posited a model of human liberation based on “a picture of human beings as having this tremendous potential to re-create themselves from out of themselves” (Taylor 1989b: 68). The result is both a power to destroy existing structures, but in its place provides a potentially empty kind of freedom that Hegel rejected for not giving “a model for what human life would be like to make it worthwhile” (Taylor 1989b: 68). This happens despite Marx’s post-

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<sup>30</sup> MacIntyre, alongside E.P. Thompson, abandoned the British Communist Party in 1956.

Romantic conception of humans freed from productive labour given thereafter to artistic creation. It is a conception in 1956 which, Taylor says, “was part of the original New Left which made us look at the whole range of human culture in terms of its political dimension” (Taylor 1989b: 68).

Now in the post-Romantic – I like to call it ‘expressive’ – age in which we have lived since 1800, artistic creation and artistic expression have been conceived in two different ways. There are conceptions of artistic creation as self-expression and all sorts of people think of it in those terms .... It is that interpretation of artistic creation that moves it towards the model of self-determining freedom. On the other hand, there is a set of models in which what we are struggling to express is not ourselves, but something beyond ourselves .... [a]n indication to go beyond subjectivism. My critique of Marxism is that it once more slides towards the self-expressive model, which I think is radically imperfect (Taylor 1989b: 68-69).

Taylor’s interest in Marx is primarily philosophical in so far as Marx provides both a source and an impression of the Romantic tradition of modernity. However, there remains a deep ambiguity in both Marx and (especially) in Marxism that accedes to the rival tradition stemming from the seventeenth century scientific revolution. Taylor opposes this tradition for reasons mainly to do with the inadequate and mechanistic image of the human person that is constituted within it. Taylor rejects orthodox Marxism mainly for the way it *institutes* that image, to which its tragic historical record attests. For this and similar reasons, Taylor finds in Marx’s theory of alienation a resource for his own agenda, and one in which his project must certainly be indexed if Taylor is to see himself as following in the Romantic tradition. His opposing target indexes the Enlightenment, and it was in British analytical thought and empiricism that he found its expression most firmly entrenched. That is, British Marxism and the empiricist tradition shared a common source in the Enlightenment.

## Chapter Six

# Taylor's anti-epistemology

At the centre of Taylor's argument lies a 'core' conception of human agency that he is intent on restoring to the social sciences. In Taylor's way lies a Lockean disengaged subject construed from a theory of mind imagined as an 'inner realm' where ideas derive from sense impressions, or 'sensory data'. This 'knowing' subject ideally given to philosophical-scientific reflection concurs with the Cartesian intellectualist theory of mind, furnished with ideas rendered as discrete, self-contained, representations. In the Cartesian-Lockean frame: from an 'inner' reflection of an 'outer' world we derive experience *of that world*. Our knowledge is only representational, and the motivation for the inner-outer sorting by which representation is mediated is epistemological.

To this picture of reified 'ideas' Taylor brings the existential phenomenological critique of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in whose theory perception is our primary access to the world; that is, we perceive *pre-objectively* before we reflect *objectively* (Smith 2004: 33). Thus the epistemological model is reversed such that *what it is to perceive* (primitive) is imposed on *what it is to know*, which becomes derivative. But perception is not a mental faculty abstracted from embodiment. Perception is inseparable from coping and engagement with things in-the-world. The "content of perception is non-contingently related to the world in which the perceiving, knowing subject is embodied. And since perception is our primary mode of access to the world, the predicament of knowing subjects is never entirely free of its agent structure" (Smith 2004: 33). A phenomenology must describe how things appear to the subject prior to reflection; to attend to the perceptual, *pre-objective* world, which signifies in a way that relates to the desires and purposes of the perceiver. Perceptual knowledge is agent's knowledge (Kullman and Taylor 1958; Taylor 1995a: 10). "[T]he hermeneutic attempt to rehabilitate meaning as an indispensable category for understanding what it is to be human is to identify and dismantle the motivations for

carving up the world” into an outer realm of physical facts and an inner realm of mental ones. (Smith 2004: 32).

The argument of this chapter follows this *foundational* strand in Taylor’s philosophical anthropology, which he developed most poignantly in his first book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (Taylor 1964), but which has continued to inform his philosophy in the many directions in which it has been expressed. Taylor’s essays, *Interpretation and the Sciences of Man* (Taylor 1971a) followed by *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987a) are perhaps the best examples where his anti-epistemology is explained. Taylor’s *magnum opus*, *Sources of the Self* (1989a), is the most famous and widest-ranging expression of all. The core he explains in *Foundationalism and the Inner-Outer Distinction* (Taylor 2002), and *Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture* (2005); and I shall end this chapter with a discussion focusing on those two essays. The anti-Cartesian theme that I shall discuss, however, is not exclusive to these texts, but stands out in all his work – his post-Marxism included; and I shall return to the question of Feuerbach towards the end of this chapter.

The theme of this chapter, in short, argues that epistemology, as a foundationalist theory of knowledge – understood as a ‘correct’ *representation* (in ‘mind’) of an independent reality (‘out there’) – is outdated. The term *representation*, for Taylor, includes the notion that reality is ‘mind-independent’, and by extension assumes a punctual and disengaged self, together with an atomistic construal of society. Descartes’s formulation of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution fits well with mechanistic science, and continues to inform computer-based models of mind, but it misconstrues human life to which it is applied in *naturalistic* social science.

## **Hermeneutics and the epistemological construal**

Three themes emerge in Taylor’s work: his affiliation to the humanist Marx, his objection to Cartesian models of identity and agency, and the rejection of empiricist assumptions in social science. While Taylor’s philosophical anthropology is formed at an intersection of these three concerns, it is important to note also that this intersection represents his reading of Merleau-Ponty; not least *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 1962). But one difficulty that transpires from this

recognition is that *Phenomenology* does not directly address problems of epistemology, but tends to read instead as an idealist metaphysical exercise in transcendental philosophy,<sup>1</sup> and hence appears to leave incomplete phenomenology's aim to "overcome the idealism-realism antinomy," and does so possibly, as Gary Madison argues, by harbouring an ambivalent relation towards Edmund Husserl's idealism (See Madison 1981: 32, 189, 205, 213-214).<sup>2</sup>

In the framework of Husserl's notion of intentionality, being is being-for-a-subject. Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty reacted against Husserl's idealism and his notion of a transcendental Ego as the constituting source of everything which appears to consciousness. But he had not for all that – at the time of the *Phenomenology* – called into question the notion of intentionality itself. He wanted in fact to hold on to this Husserlian notion while rejecting its idealist implications. This may have been an impossible project; it is in any event the source of all the ambiguity in Merleau-Ponty's work (Madison 2001: 32).

This much is evident in Merleau-Ponty's central conception of the situated subject who, being embodied, is found nonetheless in-the-world *it perceives*. The subject of perception in Husserl retains the subject/object ontology that Cartesianism introduced, and it is not least for this reason that Taylor departs here from Merleau-Ponty (Dreyfus 2004: 52). Taylor finds, instead, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology exemplified in Hegel, in whose philosophy of mind the 'mental' "is the inward reflection of what was originally external activity" (Taylor 1985a: 85). That is, mental life and self-perception do not consist of representations of something outside, but are

the fruit of an activity of formulating how things are with us, what we desire, think, and so on. In this way, grasping what we desire or feel is something we can altogether fail to do, or do in a distorting or partial or censored fashion. If we think through the consequences of this, I believe we see that it requires that we conceive self-understanding as something that is brought off in a medium, through symbols or concepts, and formulating things in this medium as one of our fundamental activities (Taylor 1985a: 85).

Taylor traces Hegel's expressivism to Johan Gottfried Herder's philosophy of language (Taylor 1995a: 79ff). "On the expressivist model ... human beings are rational animals in the sense that they strive to realize goals and purposes which provide a standard or measure for what it is to be a fully realized human being"

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Madison (1981: 5, 16, 19, *passim*) makes this point extensively in various places of his book on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. But opinions do differ. Remy Kwant (1963: 117-119)

<sup>2</sup> Remy Kwant (1963: 118) describes this ambivalence in that, while Husserl argued that the ultimacy of the phenomenal field corresponded to an equally ultimate subject to which everything appears – "[t]his subject would be the thinking 'I' and this 'I' would determine the structure of the phenomenal through the way in which it makes reality appear" – Merleau-Ponty argued instead that the phenomenal field "does not reveal itself to a subject outside the field but encompasses also the subject, for this subject is essentially a dialog(ue) with the other" (Kwant 1963: 118)

(Smith 2002: 65). Other influences on Taylor's philosophical anthropology include the existentialists Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer in the *continental tradition*, and in *analytical philosophy*, Gilbert Ryle and Ludwig Wittgenstein. While Taylor's thought comprises an articulation of those two traditions, they hinge on a *philosophical hermeneutic* conception of the human person in so far as interpretation is the very condition of being human. In this sense at least, Taylor challenges Cartesian conceptions of persons imagined merely as 'objective' and uninvolved observers. He hereby follows Gadamer (1970), for whom *understanding* is not

an isolated activity of human beings but a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something *as* something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate (Gadamer 1970: 87).

This much is provided not to indicate that Taylor dismisses Merleau-Ponty; far from it. Like Taylor, it can be argued that Merleau-Ponty straddles both the continental and analytic traditions at least in so far as he claims that "language is the entry point for a more profound understanding of human interrelationships" (Cullen and Godin 1994: 114). Christopher Macann (1993) states that there are "the beginnings of a revival of interest in Merleau-Ponty, especially among those interested in phenomenology's answers to questions currently being posed in analytic philosophy of mind" (Macann 1993: 433). Merleau-Ponty offers a key to unlocking the *core* of the Cartesian problematic that drove Taylor's early thinking – what Hubert Dreyfus (2004) calls Taylor's "anti-epistemology" – that emerged in an interface between the continental and analytic traditions.<sup>3</sup> This consists principally in Taylor's critique of empiricism, positivism and behaviourism in the social sciences, drawn mainly (though not exclusively) from Merleau-Ponty. By means of the same source, idealist and constructivist paradigms are rendered no less vulnerable. Both assume an implausible model of the self, as Merleau-Ponty's method of collapsing empiricism and intellectualism attests (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 39-41, 61).

Merleau-Ponty's method is the key to Taylor's anti-epistemology which, as I have argued from the start, can be used to critique the representational and mediational picture of agency and identity inherent in Windschuttle's empiricist rejection of cultural studies. At the same time, however, in so far as Windschuttle's

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the latter tradition, Taylor is generally credited (along with Alasdair MacIntyre, Richard Bernstein, Richard Rorty, and others) with having made analytic philosophy interesting through a rehabilitation of Hegelian thought (see Redding 2007: 13, 149).

label of the field as a form of ‘linguistic idealism’ fits Merleau-Ponty’s description of intellectualism (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 28-29), Windschuttle faces the situation of the cap fitting him as perfectly as he sees it fitting his relativist opponents.

That does not necessarily mean, however, that the details of his objections are entirely without merit. What it does show, however, is that while many of the structuralist conceptions, postmodern theories of identity, and even literary styles that he criticizes are no less contentious for many scholars in the field, the *empiricist* assumptions that he brings to his critique remain as problematic as the ‘idealist’ and relativist conceptions to which he *reduces* cultural studies (see Turner 2000). Furthermore, as I pointed out (at the start of the previous chapter) about Paul Willis’s (1980) paper, the resources upon which scholars in Birmingham drew in the *process* of their debates ranged far more widely than can be assumed from reading papers on *outcomes* of these debates.

In so far as it is possible to neatly separate the analytic from the continental influences in Taylor’s thought, the criticism of Windschuttle’s empiricism given in this chapter applies principally to Taylor’s analytic thought. But even here, however, we find the anthropological implications of his arguments drawn from the continental tradition are more than patently clear.

As Windschuttle does not declare his empiricist outlook quite so forthrightly and provocatively as does David Stove (1982), whom he follows,<sup>4</sup> his normally uncontentious references to *empirical* practice might be easily overlooked (even by constructivists) were it not for how he positions the term *empirical* in a binary relation to the widest range of interpretive methodologies preferred by cultural studies scholars (Windschuttle 1997a). That is, the sheer range of methodologies and perspectives that he rejects (see Windschuttle 1997b: chs. 1, 7) indicates that by ‘empirical’ (that is, *method*) he means *empiricist* (as ontology and methodology). In another respect it is not the case that Windschuttle’s empiricism tends to prefer *quantitative* research methods as opposed to *qualitative* ways of rendering reality.<sup>5</sup> It

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<sup>4</sup> Windschuttle, in *The Killing of History* (1996: 220-222, 232-233, 236-238), cites David Stove (1982) as the “most incisive critic of the Popper-Kuhn-Lakatos-Feyerabend position” (Windschuttle 1996: 220). I do not wish to contest Windschuttle’s acceptance of Stove’s argument, except to point out here that Stove addresses their collective relativist views as ostensibly confronting the philosophy of science, but in fact drawing their views from a reading of the *history* of science (Windschuttle 1996: 221).

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Three, footnote n.4 on pages 54-55.



appears doubtful that Windschuttle would aver on the side of an exclusively *Erklären* (causal explanation) compartment of empiricism and logical-positivism as opposed to the *Verstehen* (understanding) position given in the *proceduralist* mould of Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics (see Harrington 2000; 2001) of "objectified life" (Schatzki 2003: 302-305). "Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation," Windschuttle (1997b: 205) points out, after opening a section on the topic with:

There has been a distinction in the humanities and social sciences between studying the actions of human beings and the meanings of human conduct. There have been times when one side of the division has been favoured at the expense of the other .... In the period between the Second World War and the late 1960s, action-based perspectives were very much in vogue. This was the heyday of behaviourism in psychology and sociology. Behaviourists argued that the meanings that people gave to what they did could be vague, contradictory and often difficult to either interpret or articulate. They thought it impossible to build a rigorous social science on such soggy foundations. Human actions, however, could be counted, measured and tested with precision and so appeared to provide the primary data from which a proper science of society could emerge (Windschuttle 1997b: 204).

But before leaping to the conclusion that Windschuttle throws his lot in with social science of that period, he adds the criticism that "[i]t is clearly impossible to portray the richness of society and the reality of life once meaning is set aside" (Windschuttle 1997b: 205). He thus articulates *Erklären* (action) and *Verstehen* (meaning). But the pendulum did not stay there.

In recent years, however, the balance has not only swung away from the side of action but has gone right over the edge in the opposite direction. For we now have cultural and literary theorists insisting that it is only meaning that matters. Just like the behaviourists of the 1950s and 1960s, they have produced an orthodoxy with its own badges of identity and in-crowd terminology. One of the banners under which they are marching is called hermeneutics (Windschuttle 1997b: 205).

Windschuttle does not reject hermeneutics *in toto*. The point where he does begin to draw back from hermeneutics lies along a differential between a (Dilthian) *proceduralist* hermeneutics and the *substantive* hermeneutics he attributes to Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger (Windschuttle 1997b: 205).<sup>6</sup> Taylor (1985a: 3; 1989a: 168; 1994: 217) subscribes to the Gadamerian and Heideggerian variety in so far as their theory speaks of the structure of the subject being hermeneutic – hence Taylor's thesis that human beings are self-interpreting animals, presupposing the more fundamental "that human existence is constituted by the meanings things have for it, meanings determined more or less explicitly by self-interpretations" (Smith 2004: 31).

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<sup>6</sup> Here I wish to underscore discussion on pages 67 to 69 in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

This is a widely echoing theme of contemporary philosophy. It is central to a thesis about the sciences of man, and what differentiates them from the sciences of nature, which passes through Dilthey and is very strong in the late twentieth century. It is one of the ideas basic to Heidegger's philosophy, early and late. Partly through his influence, it has been made the starting point for a new skein of connected conceptions of man, self-understanding and history, of which the most prominent protagonist has been Gadamer (Taylor 1985a: 45).

But as the "hermeneutic philosophy of social science demarcates the social sciences from the natural sciences because of their interpretative procedure," and since "it disclaims the kind of *objectivity* attained in the natural sciences, hermeneutics is routinely associated with relativism in the social sciences" (Smith 2004: 29. Emphasis added). Windschuttle (1997b: 205) appears to misrepresent Heideggerian hermeneutics as fleeing to the side of 'meaning'. Instead, existential hermeneutics underlines *intentionality* in the moniker of "meaning and *being*" (Smith 2004: 30. Emphasis added), thus emphasizing contextuality and *embodiment* of interpretive activity. It is the embodiment of self-interpretation that Taylor derives from Merleau-Ponty. For this reason Nicholas Smith says:

Merleau-Ponty is a key influence on Taylor – certainly more important than Dilthey and probably more so than Gadamer (the names most often associated with hermeneutics) – and it is important, when locating Taylor in the hermeneutic tradition, to bear this in mind (Smith 2004: 31-32).

What I am claiming here is that, while Windschuttle certainly does not deny that journalists *interpret* what they find in-the-world, his understanding of the human person rests on certain assumptions belonging to natural science, and therefore his anthropology is not so dissimilar to one found in the compunction of structuralism to erase human agency from its social enquiry.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, if Windschuttle does pin to his sleeve the colours he hoists against cultural studies, he provides more than circumstantial evidence that he favours the scientific methodologies of causal explanation as opposed to the preferred interpretive and *Verstehen* methodologies that are largely shared between the contending paradigms in cultural studies. On the other hand, what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "intellectualism" (see Macann 1993: 168), together with its Cartesian subject, is evident in the *representationalist* thinking that is dominant in much of cultural studies scholarship (see du Guy 1997), which becomes

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<sup>7</sup> Ironically, Windschuttle's naturalism is not incompatible, or even far removed, from the anthropological implications of structuralism.

no less vulnerable to arguments leveled by Taylor's critique of Cartesian epistemology than do Windschuttle's empiricist conceptions.<sup>8</sup>

Taylor (1980a) uses Merleau-Ponty (and Wittgenstein) to reject, on the one hand, empiricist and Cartesian epistemology in the social sciences, and on the other hand, the idealist paradigms that emerged *as a residue* of the empiricist and rationalist *absolute* worldview that the seventeenth century scientific revolution extracted from the Aristotelian holistic corpus (Smith 2002: 35-37). The absolute that science requires eschews all subject-related properties on grounds that they are secondary to those properties deemed independent of human perception, and to which logical-empiricism and deductive-nomological models of knowledge attend (Taylor 1980a: 32).

The above sections serve to contextualize my claim that the intentionality (or *aboutness*) of Taylor's philosophy is the critique of epistemology. But the principal problem for him is its misconstrual of human *being*. The point I am driving at is that Taylor's critique of the epistemological construal that proceeds from the rational Enlightenment is not a problem to which his philosophical anthropology is intended, but instead, his anthropology derives from the direction of that critique. Consequently, in so far as my claim is true, it would be incorrect to argue that Taylor actually *assumes* any of the qualities about persons that are regularly ascribed to his views. Instead, Taylor's assumptions lie in his critique of Cartesianism; and his philosophical anthropology proceeds from these assumptions *as an argued case*. This clarification makes the difference between averring to a relativistic comparison between, on the one hand, rival conceptions of the self, and on the other hand, of establishing that one conception acquires a measure of *coherence* or "epistemic gain" over rival claims (Taylor 1989a: 72), if not a once-and-for-all certainty of its being true.<sup>9</sup>

The notion of "epistemic gain" in Taylor's usage provides a further example of why he refuses to be a 'knocker' or a 'booster' of modernity (Smith 2002; and

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<sup>8</sup> A clear distinction must be made between representationalist models of the self, and theories of representation. Taylor rejects the former but not the latter. Through Hegel, Taylor (1985a:78f) argues that representation is an achievement that subjects work towards, rather than something transparently given to the self in perception. This point is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

<sup>9</sup> "Typical ways of achieving [epistemic gain] are through identifying and resolving a contradiction in the original interpretation, pointing to a confusion that interpretation relied on, or by acknowledging the importance of some factor which it screened out. The nerve of the rational proof", Taylor writes, consists in showing that a particular transition is 'an error-reducing one. The argument turns on rival interpretations of possible transitions'" (Smith 1997: 61-62. See Levy 2000).

illustrates the case closer to the topic of this chapter – the question of epistemology in relation to the stand-off between realists (or materialists and empiricists) and relativists (or idealists and constructivists). That is, the issue behind the notion of epistemic gain is one found typically between realist advocates of the inferential supremacy of science, and “social constructivist arguments that scientific knowledge has no privileged claim to truth and has thus placed all knowledges, in theory, on a common epistemological footing” (Muller 2000: 149). The relativist stance is made up of a wide range of positions,<sup>10</sup> but share a family resemblance in claims that “there is no reality beyond constructive description, that there is nothing ‘outside the text’ (nothing that is not a product of representation) and therefore [that] science takes its place as a human activity next to other activities” (Muller 2000: 151). Taylor tends not to ‘throw in his lot’ with either camp, but steps back to take into view a broader issue. The assertion of there being an ‘epistemic gain’ in advances of knowledge rejects the neo-Nietzscheans who argue that the knowledge science produces is only one kind equal to others on at least one basis, that ‘the world’ is only made and never discovered. But the notion of ‘epistemic gain’ also ‘brings to earth’, as it were, scientific claims to absolute knowledge; hence drawing closer to positions found in *critical realism*.<sup>11</sup>

## Merleau-Ponty contra Descartes

Popular notions of Descartes hold up a caricatured figure of a philosopher who made a virtue out of skepticism by choosing to doubt all that his sense told him, even suspecting that he was being deceived about what he *thought* he knew of himself and the world.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is precisely at these intersections of philosophical doubt that

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<sup>10</sup> Johan Muller (2000: 151) lists “constructionists, constructivists, deconstructionists, pragmatists, postmodernists, epistemological relativists, subjectivists, sceptics, interpretivists, and reflexivists.”

<sup>11</sup> This is a topic all in itself: the appearance of a close correspondence between Taylor and critical realism: “an alternative to positivism that does not lead to the relativism and anti-realism characteristic of post-positivism,” and that cannot be “easily dismissed by critical realists: Kant, Hilary Putnam ... Charles Taylor” (Groff 2004: 22).

<sup>12</sup> In the *Second Meditation*, Descartes concluded that he was a ‘thinking thing’, the indubitable foundation of all knowledge from which he derived the only certainty of his existence (Descartes 1986: 12). But ‘out there’ beyond the perspective of the *Cogito* remained uncertain. While the unreliable senses and imagination were “special modes of thinking,” they could not exist “without an intellectual substance to inhere in” (Descartes 1986: 54). Any knowledge we may have of ‘the world’ *belongs* to mind alone, and “not to the combination of mind and body” (Descartes 1986: 57). In the *Third Meditation* he perceives a piece of wax, a ‘corporeal thing’ that he touches, and of which he forms a picture in his imagination. Descartes thus separates mind (intellect) and body. It is the intellect that ultimately provides the means he has of knowing not just objects in the world, but also himself (Secada 2000: 41-42). Jorge Secada (2000) describes Descartes’s logic:

Merleau-Ponty identifies not only the core of Descartes's philosophy, but also the hinge of his own conception of embodiment. In sum, in Descartes there is a split between subject and object, between the 'I' and things outside the 'I' that can have no direct access to the 'outside' world. And since the intellect can only 'know' what is 'in the mind', it would be reasonable to remain skeptical of what is 'out there' as our experience is only an epiphenomenon of our brain functions. The mind derives *representations* of things in the world, and all we can know is whatever is contained 'in mind' existing as a ghost trapped in the machine of our bodies. So begins, in Descartes modern scepticism about the existence of the external world; and that most famous proposition in the history of philosophy, *Cogito ergo sum*, has echoed as the master slogan of modernity (Scruton 1995: 40).

Merleau-Ponty points out that even in the case of doubting, as Descartes performs it, to doubt is to doubt something; the very experiencing of doubting brings a certainty – the certainty of doubting. If Descartes tried to verify the reality of his doubt, he would be launched into an infinite regress – what is doubted is the thought about doubting, then the thought about that thought and so on. Descartes is not simply *thinking* he is doubting, but is *performing the act* of doubting. “[H]ence it is not *because* I think I am that I am certain of my existence ... my love, hatred and will are not certain as mere thoughts about loving, hating and willing... I am quite sure because I *perform* them” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 445). In this way, he says we accomplish our own existence. He goes on to say,

[H]e who doubts cannot, while doubting, doubt that he doubts. Doubt ... is not an abolition of my thought but a pseudo-nothingness, for I cannot extricate myself from my being; my act of doubting creates the possibility of certainty ... it occupies me and I am committed to it (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 465).

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“Next Descartes shows that it is the pure intellect and not the senses which knows and recognizes corporeal things. At the end of the Meditation he writes: ‘I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of imagination but by the intellect alone, and that this perception derives not from their being touched or seen but from their being understood (AT, VII, 34). After the reflection on the wax, his readers will be ready to exercise, as he put it later, the intellectual vision which nature gave them, in the pure form which it attains when freed from the senses; for sensory appearances generally interfere with it and darken it to a very great extent’ (AT, VII, 163)” (Secada 2000: 143).

Descartes gives primacy to the intellect, recognising it as having no direct access to the world. In the Sixth Meditation he faces his lingering doubts about corporeal objects, and concludes that material things are at least capable of existing in that they are “the subject matter of pure mathematics” (Descartes in Ariew and Watkins 1998: 50). As for his own body, it too is “simply an extended, non-thinking thing.” The mind is “simply a thinking, non-extended thing” and that “it is certain that I am really distinct from my body and can exist without it” (Descartes in Ariew and Watkins 1998: 54).

In the main, Descartes's view is popularly attributed to the mindset of the reductionist mathematician (even if only because he *was* one) (Scruton 1995: 28, 43; Tiles and Tiles 1999). Although the move he made (traceable to Augustine)<sup>13</sup> is generally acknowledged as having been foundational for the *success* of the seventeenth century scientific revolution, it is less often acknowledged that his intention was to *protect* the specifically human subject from being contained under the mechanistic rubric of the "new science" of the Enlightenment. It was the Jansenist<sup>14</sup> movement in France, partly through its revival of Augustinian theology, that made possible the split between subject and object, between the *cogito* and things 'outside' of it, that characterized his "new philosophy" of disengagement (Schmaltz 1999: 37-38).

Cartesianism demanded a very radical departure from existing methods of cognition which it is difficult for us to understand fully, committed as we have been for the past two hundred years to taking Descartes's assumptions about the role of philosophy for granted. As Charles Taylor has pointed out, only when we have understood why Descartes demanded that his readers spend an entire month considering the first Meditation will we understand just how startling both Descartes's sceptical methodology and mind/body dualism were to the seventeenth-century mind (Pagden 1988: 126).

Against Descartes' self-possessed *Cogito* standing against an outside world which it *represents* 'inside itself', any attempt to constitute the world as an object of knowledge is always derived in relation to our primary access to the world that Merleau-Ponty locates *in the body*. For Merleau-Ponty we know ourselves and the world through perception. The principle of *intentionality* comes into play, thus calling into question Descartes's contention that perception cannot be doubted, but the thing perceived can. Here the principle of *intentionality* is at its strongest; the essence of vision is our *seeing something*, and not something such as having an experience of an abstract quality of something. "To see is to see something," thus it would make no sense "to revert with Descartes from things to thought about things" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 436, 432). To doubt the presence of something seen entails uncertainty about

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<sup>13</sup> Rick Kennedy (1990: 552) cites a statement from the young Jansenist priest Arnauld that St. Augustine realized "that in order to arrive at the truth [of our existence] we cannot begin with anything more certain than this proposition: I think, therefore, I am." Michael Hanby (2003: 166) points out, however, that Descartes's contribution was indeed original, and that the similarities between his first principle and Augustine's corpus was pointed out to him before he added the rider concerning God's guarantee against the mind being given to error.

<sup>14</sup> Jansenism was a "repressed minority movement within the French Roman Catholic Church," and its members, centred around Paris in the seventeenth century, "believed they held to the true Roman Catholicism of St. Augustine while the hierarchy of the church was being led astray by Jesuits and sceptics advocating a lazy-thinking, human-centred Christianity.

thought itself. To grasp a thought with certainty assumes the existence of the thing intended. But the world is not an object, Merleau-Ponty counters, but the situation in which we embodied beings find ourselves and towards which our efforts *intend*. Explaining transcendence, he says “we do not possess [things]... I blindly exert their bare existence” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 430). That we can doubt the presence of something, yet trust our doubting is the untenable position he ascribes to Descartes’ doubting of his capacity to know things. Thus Descartes’ *doubting* his capacity to know things becomes untenable.

In contrast to Descartes, Merleau-Ponty gives *primacy to perception* as the way to know ourselves and our world. “Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xi). We must not “wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive.” Later he sums up by saying “[t]he world is not what I think, but what I live through” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xviii).

When Descartes tells us that the existence of visible things is doubtful, but that our vision, when considered as a mere thought of seeing is not in doubt, he takes up an untenable position. For thought about seeing can have two meanings. It can in the first place be understood in the restricted sense of alleged vision, or ‘the impression of seeing’, in which case it offers only the certainty of a possibility or a probability, and the ‘thought of seeing’ implies that we have had, in certain cases, the experience of genuine or actual vision to which the idea of seeing bears a resemblance and in which the certainty of the thing was, on those occasions, involved. The certainty of a possibility is no more than the possibility of a certainty, the thought of seeing is no more than seeing mentally, and we could not have any such thought unless we had on other occasions really seen (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 346-347).

For Merleau-Ponty it would make no sense to say that the perception could not be doubted but the thing perceived can (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 432). Instead, “the certainty of some external thing is involved in the very way in which the sensation is articulated and unfolded before me. I do not just have pain, but I have a pain *in the leg*” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 436-437). Likewise the body is not an object ‘in mind’, but an original intentionality, a manner of relating to ‘objects of knowledge’. We do not have an *idea* about the body, but experience it and through it we experience the world. “I have no means of knowing [my body] except by living it, losing myself in it” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 231).

True knowledge for Descartes came ‘through the mind alone’. But for Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is neither a ‘passive noting’ of an event that leaves me in doubt

of what I perceive nor a 'constituting power' that links up with the object without leaving its inner world. On the contrary, I "reassure myself that I see by seeing this or that" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 438). This is because, in essence, our existence is 'open to the world' *because* we are embodied. For Merleau-Ponty there is no subject-object divide, no mind body separation and there is no doubt but that we are beings-in-the-world. For Merleau-Ponty, unlike for Descartes, truth does not inhabit the 'inner man' for "man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xii). The *cogito* "must reveal me in a situation". As sentient subjects, things exist not *in* consciousness but *for* consciousness (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 249).

Continuing his theme of certainty and doubt, Merleau-Ponty says that the very foundations of certainty arise in intuitive thought. "[F]ormal relations are first presented to us crystallized in some particular thing" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 448). The thing exists for me in a space considered to be 'up' or 'down', 'right' or 'left', and so has meaning in so far as I place myself at a point and so on (see Taylor 1993a: 318; 1995a: 62). I am situated; experience is always a becoming, not a fixed 'having'. This 'uncertainty' is not necessarily a problem for Merleau-Ponty; we first and foremost live our lives without reflection; the latter is, so to speak, added on. The object (a triangle, in his discussion) is not then a collection of objective characteristics but expresses a 'certain modality of my hold upon the world'. The triangle is not, as Descartes asserts in the *Fifth Meditation*, "a form... which is immutable and eternal and not invented by me or dependent on my mind" (Descartes in Ariew and Watkins 1998: 45). It is through this kind of perceptual consciousness that we arrive at the essence or *eidos* of things; the thing displays itself to me, and I perceive it through my body and in projecting myself towards the thing. There is "a completed synthesis in terms of which we have defined the thing" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 451).

For Merleau-Ponty we do not know the world and ourselves as empiricism would have it through observation, nor as rationalism would have it from *a priori* knowledge, but through "direct contact with our existence. Self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 432). What the *Cogito* 'retrieves' he says, is not a coordinated pulling together of the separate events of my experience, but

the one single experience inseparable from myself... which is engaged in making itself progressively explicit... The primary truth is indeed 'I think', but only provided that



we understand thereby 'I belong to myself' while belonging to the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 474).

Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodiment is often misunderstood as about 'bodies-in-the-world' that are given due consideration. But when such 'embodiment' is understood from an idealist and representationalist philosophy of mind, the dualism from which the problem first emerged remains intact. Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodiment is directed at Cartesian separations of body and mind, and so necessitates a collapsing of other kinds of dualism also: body and self, body and society, body and symbolic order, and so on. One can think of, for instance, certain materialist conceptions that prevail in cognitive science, "where one is left with a world of pure physical determinations and no possibility of any thing resembling thought, meaning, symbolism or social life" (Crossley 1995: 44).

On the other hand there are perspectives that aim exclusively at Descartes's philosophy of mind, but leave the body unaccounted for. These "have the potential to dissociate and externalize the body and the social world, reifying both and, thereby, constituting a dualism and reductionist approach to social analysis" (Crossley 1995: 43). The problem, therefore, is not one where embodiment or the 'ideational mind' is neglected in analysis, but where both are detached, as happened in seventeenth century science. And while that revolution brought forth an age of scientific discovery and invention, the reductionism that it inspired produced a mechanistic anthropology.

Merleau-Ponty challenges the mechanistic, Cartesian view of the body. He argues for an understanding of the body as an effective agent and, thereby, as the very basis of human subjectivity. Moreover, he understands embodied subjectivity to be intersubjective and he understands intersubjectivity to be an institutional and historical order. His 'body-subject' is always-already situated and decentred in relation to a historical world (Crossley 1995: 45).

There is a stark contrast then between Descartes' 'thinking thing' (*Cogito*) and Merleau-Ponty's 'embodied being', or *phenomenal self*, which is not just a 'thing' but an *ongoing process* (see Zahavi and Parnas 1998). It is the difference between understanding and engagement, between clear and distinct ideas and ideas that are ambiguous and shifting, between the life of disembodied mind and the life of the embodied mind, between 'I think' and 'I am', between doubt and certainty, between what we know and what we experience, between immanence and transcendence: these are some of the main issues that Merleau-Ponty points to and wrestles with in his critique of Descartes's *cogito* in his work, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

## On self-interpreting animals

Considering that Taylor's critique of behaviourist psychology was published in the 1960s, it remains astonishing, as Jeff Sugarman (2005) points out in a paper on Taylor's work, that despite "lavish ... attentions on the study of personality, [psychologists] devote surprisingly little to the question of what is a person" (Sugarman 2005: 793). Yet, reducing persons to an aspect such as personality accords entirely with the abstracting impulse of scientific naturalism ordered toward studying the nature of *objects* in the world. In naturalism, only those aspects of human being that are ostensibly part of *nature* are recognized (Taylor 1964: 72ff).<sup>15</sup> Subjectivity is treated as incidental. Such is the Cartesian (and empiricist) view, dividing mind from body, where the latter is identified as in the realm of external, objective *reality*, whereas all else is internal and therefore subjective, incidental, and beyond research (Taylor 1980a: 32; Thompson *et al.* 1986: 134-135). The implications for studying persons are significant.

If we try to study persons in the manner prescribed by naturalism, we shrink the vocabulary and reach of psychological discourse in ways that exclude human values, and the extent to which what we value is constitutive of what we are. Emptying people of what matters to them is to reduce them in ways that render them distorted or malformed, if not wholly alien (Sugarman 2005: 794).

Merleau-Ponty puts it that we are "condemned to meaning" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xxii). But our thoughts, motives, values, attitudes, and so on – beyond naturalism's *objectivist* purview – are considered therefore to be *subjective* projections cast onto a value-free world. Subject-related phenomena, therefore, are discounted as real; and if they are explained at all, they are couched in a language that makes no reference to human subjectivity and experience. From Merleau-Ponty, Taylor discounts the Cartesian view that values are 'in our heads' and do not exist *in-the-world*.<sup>16</sup>

The great problem for naturalism, Taylor admits, is that it fails to reconcile phenomenology and ontology. On one hand, many naturalists would agree that

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<sup>15</sup> Taylor writes in *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964: 73): "It is assumed that the data language must contain only concepts which are part of that was called by Logical Empiricists the 'physical thing language'. For it is held that terms involving consciousness, or psychological terms, as we might call them, are such that propositions containing them are, without special interpretation, untestable. This is believed to be virtually a self-evident truth by many thinkers."

<sup>16</sup> To claim that values and meanings are 'in the head' amounts to saying that there is no music in the world, but only sounds that are perceived through our brain functions representing 'out there' as something 'in here'. Instead, "[m]usic is made and exists in the world, and it is only because of this that we are able to have subjective experience of it" (Sugarman 2005: 795).

imports and values are experienced, and that they may even be necessary for us to get on with one another; but, on the other hand, they insist this is not what the objective world is really like. According to Taylor, the naturalistic ideal that the world can be experienced and explained in absolute terms is peculiar, and excludes all that is crucially unique to human life. Human beings simply could not think, act and experience in the ways they do if meanings, interests and values were not accepted as part of the world (Sugarman 2005: 795-796).

Taylor examines specifically those features of human life that are accepted as definitive of self-interpretation, by which natural science rejects as not being being *natural* phenomena – given in absolute terms without human experience. Taylor thus develops points initiated by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1962), that is, the notions that the world is imbued with (*embodied*) meanings, and that we care about the kind of beings we are (see Taylor 1993a: 328; 1995a: 63-67, 100ff). Taylor’s concept of “self-interpreting animals” stands metonymically to his long-standing campaign to polemize “against disengaged views of human agency at play in mainstream social science .... [A]gainst a form of thought predicated upon an atomistic understanding of man as an entity that can be defined independently of (and thus disengaged from) its social and cultural context” (Redhead 2002: 144).

With respect to Windschuttle’s objections to cultural studies, we may immediately jump to its defense by pointing out the field’s article of faith that *text* is necessarily and hermeneutically embedded in *context*. However, the *representationalist* logic within which that dictum is dominantly read destabilizes it.<sup>17</sup> “[T]he dominant rationalist view ... has given us a model of ourselves as disengaged thinkers .... [offering] us a picture of an agent who in perceiving the world takes in ‘bits’ of information from his or her surroundings and then ‘processes’ them in some fashion, in order to emerge with the ‘picture’ of the world he or she has; who then acts on the basis of this picture to fulfill his or her goals, through a ‘calculus’ of means and ends” (Taylor 1992: 319). Taylor does not reject this view so much as to see it as a reduction from a disarticulation wrought from the Aristotelian understanding. As I have argued, Taylor’s concern reaches back to his earliest work on the question of human behaviour, which focuses on the question of

whether all purposive behaviour can be explained on a more basic level mechanistically, or whether on the other hand, different aspects of the stream of behaviour must be seen as taking place at different levels, albeit not rigidly separated,

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<sup>17</sup> In the Cartesian intellectualist theory of mind, mind is furnished with ideas (building blocks of knowledge). Knowledge has its basis in discrete representations, which are self-contained (Anton 1999; Smith 2004: 32-34).

from some of which the most basic explanation remains psychological and hence in terms of purpose (Taylor 1970a: 75).

That is, Taylor seeks to collapse the Cartesian dualism wherein the ‘self’ retreats to an inward realm safe from the reaches of science, and where *interpretation* thereby becomes an entirely mentalistic exercise (Taylor 1995a: 10). Following Wilhelm Dilthey (see Gadamer 1975: xiii), while interpreting a text is seen as a judgment of what the background affords it, the Cartesian image of the perceiver insists that the interpretation achieved can never be more than a ‘mental’ operation. Meaning becomes an epiphenomenon of brain functions ‘in the head’, and nowhere else. The idea of an *identity* becomes, concomitantly, something in which the bearer has no responsibility other than to ‘dig out’ what is already there; that is, simply to *represent* it. As Anthony Appiah (2005) puts it:

[N]either the picture in which there is just an authentic nugget of selfhood, the core that is distinctively me, waiting to be dug out, nor the notion that I can simply make up any self I choose, should tempt us.... [W]e make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we don’t, individually, determine the options among which we choose. To neglect this fact is to ignore Taylor’s “webs of interlocution,” to fail to recognize the dialogical construction of the self, and thus to commit what Taylor calls the “monological” fallacy (Appiah 2005: 107).

Taylor’s central concept of persons being “self-interpreting animals” is thus directly leveled at “monological consciousness” – the term drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin, who sees it as opposed to the *dialogical constitution of self*, and which Taylor uses to refer to “the movement of interiorisation, which suppressed altogether the sense that we are persons only as interlocutors” (Taylor 1985c: 278; 1991b: 313)<sup>18</sup> – of what Merleau-Ponty calls the ‘intellectualist perspective’. The Cartesian conception of the subject, and the tradition of *inwardness* that it founded (Hanby 2003: 8; Taylor 1992a), has been attacked for decades, yet, as Heideggerian scholar Frederick Olafson (2001) writes, “it is still widely regarded as the only serious alternative to the naturalistic reduction of human beings to the status of physical systems” (Olafson 2001: 62). The difference between the one discredited and the one

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<sup>18</sup> From Wittgenstein, Taylor develops from the sense that there can be no ‘private language’ the understanding that there can be no such thing as a *monological* self, but instead an *expressivist* self. “Language originally comes to us from others, from a community.... Once I learn language can I just continue to use it, even extend it, quite monologically, talking and writing only for myself? Once again, the designative view tends to make us see this as perfectly possible” (Taylor 1985a: 237). The expressivist view accepts as part of a whole what the monological view reduces to it. Taylor refers to Heidegger, for whom “[m]an behaves as if he were the creator and master of language, whereas on the contrary, it is language which is and remains his sovereign” (Taylor 1985a: 238).

proposed, is the difference between ‘mind’ (from Descartes) and ‘human being’ (from Heidegger).

Cartesian assumptions were problematic because, as a result of the very sharp contrast between ‘subject’ and ‘object’, everything ‘subjective’ (and thus almost everything distinctively human) was denied any real cognitive value for purposes other than those of psychology. This meant that the quintessentially human was identified with the inwardness of a private experience (Olafson 2001: 60).

Together with Wittgenstein, Heidegger stands in relation to twentieth century philosophy the way Kant stood in the nineteenth century. No one then could do philosophy without reading Kant (Edwards 1989; Fultner 2005; Guignon 1990: 649; Sheehan 1984). Taylor (1987) claims that Wittgenstein and Heidegger open the way to a new type of inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of intentionality. In his view, he writes in *Overcoming Epistemology*, what they offer is a “critique of epistemology in which we discover something deeper and more valid about ourselves [as agents] ... something of our deep or authentic nature as selves” (Taylor 1987: 482-483).

## **The Structure of Behaviour**

While *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987a) is among Taylor’s most cited essays, the groundwork was already completed in *The Explanation of Behaviour* (Taylor 1964). Merleau-Ponty’s similarly titled book, *The Structure of Behaviour* (1942), may lead one to suspect that Taylor’s book is merely an English ‘translation’ of it; and in a material sense that might not be too far off the mark.<sup>19</sup> However, the success of any philosophy is not measured by its originality rather than its capacity to address questions of the age. For instance, Stuart Hall’s introduction of Althusserian structuralist Marxism to British Cultural Studies was driven partly to remedy what Hall saw “as the paucity of Marxist scholarship available to English readers” (Davis 2004: 73). But Hall was not merely *trafficking* in French philosophy, nor was it that he had discovered a philosophical ‘niche’ to stake out. One reason for that “paucity”, as Taylor (1966) diagnoses it, was the long tradition of empiricism that, as a theory of knowledge, was entrenched in Britain. Due to the hold of empiricism, Marxism was incomprehensible to British philosophy, he argues, and partly explains why Cartesian

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<sup>19</sup> Taylor (1970a: 76-77) refers to similarly titled books to which he was directing his argument: *Plans and the Structure of Behaviour* (1960), by George Miller, Eugene Galanter and Karl Pribram; and Donald Hebb’s *Organization of Behaviour* (1949). Taylor’s (1964, 1970a) argument is more pointedly directed at their shared mechanistic psychology.

thought and its concomitantly ‘punctual’ conception of the self held sway there, whereas phenomenology was seen to be more ‘exotic’.

Empiricism was the lynchpin keeping British philosophical edifice intact; and striking it was tantamount to weakening the one impediment to introducing Marxist thought (properly) to British philosophy. Whether or not this figured anywhere in Hall’s intention to adopt Althusserian structuralism is hard to say.<sup>20</sup> He does regret “the permanent oscillations between abstraction/anti-abstraction and the false dichotomies of Theoretical vs. Empiricism which have both marked and disfigured the structuralism/culturalism encounter to date” (Hall 1981: 31). He discusses the relative virtues of the field’s constituent paradigms in such a way as to suggest a far more phenomenological understanding than commentaries usually concede (Hall 1981: 32).

The observation that empiricism shares the mantle of British philosophy with Hegelian-inspired British idealism is instructive given Merleau-Ponty’s dismissal of both on grounds that they both take the objective world for granted, and hence perform a similar reduction of experience. That is, while both present themselves as nominal adversaries of each other, Merleau-Ponty argues that both “assume a world in itself to which consciousness has to be accommodated” (Macann 1993: 168). The operation upon which both founder is *perception*; which is understood not along Cartesian lines, but closer to the Heideggerian concept of being-in-the-world.

According to this [classical empiricist] theory the basis of human knowledge consists in the impressions received on the human mind from the outside world. This particular theory of knowledge was, of course, revived in this century with the return to the empiricist tradition. It has lost its popularity today. But it is still useful to refer back to it, because it is the cradle of a number of other views which have retained some currency, even when people have ceased to discuss the philosophical problems of perception in these terms (Taylor 1966a: 233).

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<sup>20</sup> In *Cultural Studies and the Centre* (Hall 1980a: 33), Hall concedes that ‘Althusserianism’ never held an entirely hegemonic position in the Centre; but nonetheless the rupture achieved with attempts “to reduce the specificity of the ‘ideological instance’ to the simple effect of the economic base” (Hall 1980a: 34) was important in allowing for the cultural a relative autonomy denied by earlier orthodox Marxisms. “Like the structuralists, Gramsci steadfastly resists any attempt neatly to align cultural and ideological questions with class and economic ones. His work stands as a prolonged repudiation of any form of reductionism-especially that of ‘economism’: ‘It is the problem of the relations between structure and superstructure which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in the history of a particular period are to be correctly analysed and the relation between them determined’” (Hall 1980a: 35). By the time Hall writes *Signification, Representation, Ideology* (Hall 1996), Althusser offers Hall a response to an entirely different problem in cultural studies: the postmodern tendency to reduce problematics to single texts.

It is here that I want to consider the implications of Windschuttle's subscription to an empiricist understanding of journalism practice – empiricist, that is, in so far as he derives the philosophical authority for his views from philosopher of science David Stove (1982). Again, I do not wish to contest Stove's argument against the combined thesis he constructs from Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Paul Feyerabend and Karl Popper. Nor do I wish to contest Windschuttle's (1997b) *reading* of Stove; at least, not beyond the fact that he accepts his *empiricist* views uncritically. To recap, Windschuttle rejects cultural studies as a basis for studying journalism principally on grounds of what he asserts to be its (hyper)constructivist view of reality. Windschuttle points to various postmodern sources in his rejection of cultural studies – which, again, I shall not discuss beyond the fact that he reduces cultural studies to the sum of them.

Certainly even Stuart Hall objected more than once to the field having undergone a metamorphosis from being a 'site of critical practice' to a disarticulated 'critical discourse', amounting to what he calls "theoreticism" (Hall 1980a: 25, 33, 42).<sup>21</sup> Cultural Studies for Hall was always an *empirical practice*. Windschuttle does not acknowledge this, but asserts (without saying as much) that natural scientific method offers a framework that is more appropriate for the study of journalism than the relativist framework that he rejects. Whether or not Windschuttle intends it so, by counterposing an *empiricist* model of news gathering activities to an *idealist* – or an *intellectualist* one, to use Merleau-Ponty's (1962) term – construction of cultural studies, he establishes a binary that denies all manner of *interpretation* in journalistic practice as much as it posits its opposite as reducing all facticity to a figment of the imagination.

Again, to bring the concept of *truth* into the discussion, it may be accurate enough to describe Windschuttle's position as aligned rather more towards coherence and correspondence theories (of truth) than it is towards pragmatist ones. But, following Wittgenstein, the first two groups of theory apply correctly to science, and ought to be accepted as legitimate there; but where they are applied to "all our everyday (and professional) communicative activities" (Shotter 2006: 280), they

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<sup>21</sup> In a footnote (Hall 1980a: 287, n. 103) draws a conclusion similar to one I am making: "In the highly charged sectarian atmosphere which has sometimes disfigured these debates critical distinctions were frequently lost: for example, on one side the distinction between the 'empirical' moment in an analysis and 'Empiricism': on the other side that between the 'theoretical' and 'Theoreticism'. These have turned out to be mirror-images of one another. But it has not always proved easy to get beyond them."

would only make sense where a mechanistic picture of human being remains also in attendance. But to reject such a picture does not entail a radical swing to the ‘skeptical camp’, as it seems Windschuttle would believe. One does not need to assert a coherence or correspondence theory of truth before one is able to accept the reality of a concrete world that is plainly evident.

The reality of contact with the real world is the inescapable fact of human (or animal) life and can only be imagined away by erroneous philosophical argument.... It is in virtue of this contact with a common world that we always have something to say to each other, something to point to in disputes about reality. So the view of the agent as being-in-the-world has room for a distinction every time we knowingly correct our view of things (Taylor 2005: 40).

In cultural studies it is generally accepted that the field’s opposition to the kind of dualism that Taylor has in his sights is articulated in its insistence on grounding the ‘representative text’ in a ‘constitutive context’, and that this stems deliberately from a critique of Cartesianism. Hall’s (1980) seminal encoding/decoding model of representation saves traces of the *Cogito* even as it demolishes positivist sender-receiver models of ‘communication’. But in observing in one place how Hall explains this as semiotic or discursive struggle (see Hall 1982), our attention is inevitably drawn to the circularity of the model itself, leading to the suspicion that such conversational maneuvers rest on a reality of what Hubert Dreyfus refers to as “interpretation all the way down” (Dreyfus 1991: 25).

### **On Merleau-Ponty’s method**

By taking note of Windschuttle’s (1997) subscription to the rationalist conceptions of David Stove, and considering Windschuttle’s empiricist views in terms of the well-known critique of naturalist social science by one of Taylor’s early contemporaries, Peter Winch (1958),<sup>22</sup> we can begin to suspect that Windschuttle’s journalists are not thoroughly human at all. That is, while he says that “[j]ournalists construct news bulletins but ... don’t usually construct the events they write or broadcast about” (Windschuttle 1998: 8), the strong impression is left that reporters only *represent* things in a world but play no *co-constitutive* roles in their

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<sup>22</sup> Taylor must certainly have considered Peter Winch’s book, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (1958), in compiling his own not too dissimilar book (Taylor 1964). Taylor (1998) admits that Wittgenstein, together with Merleau-Ponty, were the main influences in *The Explanation of Behaviour* (Taylor 1964). Peter Winch’s (1958) book draws more transparently on Wittgenstein. But Taylor’s and Winch’s books have as their object of critique naturalistic approaches to social science.



intersubjective and interpretive interactions with it. On the other hand, while Windschuttle's rejection of strong internalist (idealist and constructivist) conceptions of journalistic practice – whereby it becomes impossible to know the world except as 'text' – seems to advocate a *realist* ontology, its concomitant image of the human becomes a malformed Cartesian subject. In other words, while the imaginaries of natural science might go some way towards *explaining* journalistic 'regularities', its methodologies becomes particularly blunt when confronted with the task of *understanding* the interpretive work journalists actually do (Altschull 1995; Bensman and Lilienfeld 1969: 107-108; Zelizer 1993a; 1993b).<sup>23</sup> Windschuttle's empiricism accedes to the same Cartesian reductionism that he recognizes in his constructivist adversaries. The subjects of both paradigms are reduced to agents of representation who are denied any 'worlding' capacity (Olafson 2001: 60).<sup>24</sup>

[H]uman beings are not simply the spectators of a world process that is radically independent of them. They are, instead, the beings that constitute the world as a world. This is not to say that they create or produce it. What it means is that the self and world – the latter has to be distinguished from nature – go together in a peculiarly intimate way that cannot be rendered by any idea of the mind as a distinct substance or of the brain as an organ inside our skulls. We are, in other words, beings that cannot be conceived in isolation from the world in which we are, as being conceived according to the Cartesian notion of the mind (Olafson 2001: 60).

Taylor analyses this conception shared by empiricist and relativist paradigms by means of a methodology he draws from Merleau-Ponty, from whom he draws part of the core of his philosophical anthropology. The other part – in which Taylor's anti-epistemology finds its strongest support – he draws from Wittgenstein; that is, his philosophy contra naturalistic claims that all knowledge about the world is related to sensory experience or observation (Dreyfus 2004; Pinkard 2004; Taylor 2002a). Wittgenstein's notion of ourselves being smitten by a dualistic 'picture' of mind

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<sup>23</sup> In common with each of these four sources is the idea that journalists form an interpretive group that performs within a professional paradigm (Altschull 1995), belong to "interpretive communities" (Zelizer 1993a), and are adept at taking an innovation and turning it into a public vogue (Bensman and Lilienfeld 1969: 107-108). That is, journalistic practice appears to operate from the Cartesian assumption that reality is there to be discovered, but show a more than average capacity to constitute significances that were not previously (self)evident in the material reported. A milder yet no less pertinent version of the journalistic work I am referring to is found in the idea of "journalism as transformative *praxis*" (Wasserman 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Reminiscent of Marshal McLuhan's idea that *we first create things and then they change us*, Martin Heidegger's (1962) concept of worlding holds that the world determines what we can do, and what we do determines our world. A "double hermeneutic" is at play here in a way not dissimilar to the conception coined by Anthony Giddens, who notes that such a double hermeneutic exchanges ideas back and forth between "the meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors and the metalanguages invented by social scientists" (Giddens 1984: 384).

conceived in a Cartesian inner/outer sorting (Taylor 2002a: 106) resonates with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological critique of the "mediational epistemology" that was derived from empiricist post-Galilean science (Taylor 2002a: 108, 111; 2005: 40-41). The epistemological construal derived from Cartesianism is evident in both empiricist and constructivist models of the self. In this respect, Taylor uses Merleau-Ponty's (1962) methodology<sup>25</sup> to evoke an alliance between science and perception, or between empiricism and idealism (or intellectualism), thus collapsing the polarisation of the subject-object dichotomy (Matthews 2002: 7). As Christopher Macann puts it:

If in the case both of empiricism and intellectualism the objective world has already been presupposed, then it becomes the primary task of a properly phenomenological reflection to conduct us back into a pre-objective realm.... [I]t is the task of a phenomenology of perception not so much to mediate between empiricism and intellectualism but, on the ground of their mutual and reciprocal destruction, to enforce a departure from that which both take for granted, namely, the objective world (Macann 1993: 168).

While Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project aims to reassert the necessity of the "pre-objective world" prior to representations of that world, Taylor articulates his own critique of Cartesianism through an attack, instead, on the atomistic view of the disengaged subject of scientism (see Taylor 1989a: Ch. 2). It is basically by rearticulating *representation* with *constitution* as per the Aristotelian conception that Taylor fashions a philosophical anthropology of engagement that addresses this epistemological construal.

Our understanding of the world is holistic from the start. There is no such thing as the single, independent percept. Something has this status only within a wider context which is understood, taken for granted, but for the most part not focused on. Moreover, it couldn't all be focused on, not just because it is very widely ramifying, but because it doesn't consist of some definite number of pieces (Taylor 2002: 113).

The matter for Taylor, says to Fergus Kerr (2004), is that "[r]eductionist accounts of human behaviour foster inhumane policies in society" seen as composed of disconnected individuals, and whose sole function is to protect these bearers of rights, while at the same time "denying premodern assumptions about the primacy of our obligation as human beings to society" (Kerr 2004: 87, 88). These theories put forward, Taylor writes in his essay *Atomism* (1985b), "a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfillment of ends which were primarily

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<sup>25</sup> Merleau-Ponty's methodology is described in the chapter, 'The Phenomenological Field', found in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962).

individual” (Taylor 1985b: 187). ‘Atomism’ here refers to the Enlightenment doctrine of the autonomous and self-sufficient individual (Taylor 1985b: 210). In *Explanation* (1964: 11), Taylor argues that atomism is part of the background of the liberal-empiricist tradition wherein the ‘representational’ construal is grounded in the experience of the individual subject of consciousness (see Redhead 2002: 143ff).

These theories put forward, Taylor writes in his essay *Atomism* (1985b), “a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfillment of ends which were primarily individual” (Taylor 1985b: 187). ‘Atomism’ here refers to the Enlightenment doctrine of the autonomous and self-sufficient individual (Taylor 1985b: 210). Atomism, Taylor argues in *Explanation* (1964: 11), is part of the background of the liberal-empiricist tradition. His understanding of communitarianism, too, is indicated in his attack on atomistic views of society, seen as composed of disconnected individuals, and whose sole function is to protect these bearers of rights, while at the same time “denying premodern assumptions about the primacy of our obligation as human beings to society” (Kerr 2004: 88). This ‘representational’ construal is grounded in the experience of the individual subject of consciousness.

As his philosophical work unfolds, from the attack on nonteleological theories of human behaviour in *The Explanation of Behaviour* through the rejection of doctrines that emphasise individual self-sufficiency (atomism) in social and political theory, Taylor touches on ethics all the time; but it is above all in *Sources of the Self* that he deals with the issue centrally and most extensively (Kerr 2004: 89).

### **Taylor’s ‘robust realism’**

In *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987a), Taylor argues that positivism and constructivism are *separations* from within the Aristotelian view. What became ‘positivism’<sup>26</sup> emerged as the first extraction from the Aristotelian corpus via the seventeenth century scientific revolution; though strictly it ought to be referred to as *empiricism*. Constructivism emerged as a critical extraction from *within* positivism, but belongs also to a Nietzschean outgrowth to the lineage extending from the Kantian critique of Descartes. I shall not digress into a genealogy of either of these ‘separations’, except to indicate Taylor’s concern with the original Aristotelian viewpoint. Taylor (1987a) points out that, within the Aristotelian view, ‘mind’ both *represents* objects in the world as well as participates in the *constitution* of those

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<sup>26</sup> The term ‘positivism’ was strictly invented by constructionists to indicate their object of critique.

objects. Hence empiricism, and later positivism, requires that the ‘scientific gaze’ separates the representative and constitutive activities of mind; bracketing the latter “in order to create an objective true representation of reality” (Muller 2000: 150).

Truth then is the degree of correspondence between the representation and the reality. The degree of correspondence is measured by evidence, by which certainty about the correspondence is generated. This operation depends in turn upon a certain self-reflexivity, a certain self-transparency’, enabling the scientist to interrogate the representation methodically (Muller 2000: 150).

This ‘scientific viewpoint’ is one of *disengagement*; a requirement corresponding to the notion of truth as representation, or the objective viewpoint of the Lockean “punctual self” (Taylor 1989a: 49). Unlike constructivists, who reject this view, Taylor accepts its validity but insists in line with the Aristotelian view, that the objective perspective is not primary, but secondary to *intuition* and, by extension, to *experience* (Taylor 1987a: 476). From Kant’s critique of Humean empiricism, Taylor says “we couldn’t have experience of the world at all if we had to start with a swirl of uninterpreted data” (Taylor 1987a: 475). The capacity for representation depends therefore upon a pre-predicative (or *pre-objective*) being-in-the-world, “that condition of our forming disengaged representations of reality is that we must be already engaged in coping with our world, dealing with the things in it, at grips with them” (Taylor 1987: 476). Towards the conclusion of *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987), he writes:

Certainly the Nietzschean conception has brought important insights: no construal is quite innocent, something is always suppressed; and what is more, some interlocutors are always advantaged relative to others, for any language. But the issue is whether this settles the matter of truth between construals. Does it mean that there can be no talk of epistemic gain in passing from one construal to another? That there is such a gain is the claim of those exploring the conditions of intentionality. This claim doesn’t stand and fall with a naive, angelic conception of philosophical construals as utterly uninvolved with power. Where is the argument that will show the more radical Nietzschean claim to be true and the thesis of critical reason untenable? (Taylor 1987a: 484).

The closing phrase refers to a fundamental split in social theory which, in Johan Muller’s (2000: 151) description of Taylor’s terms, has become reorganized into neo-Nietzscheans and “defenders of critical reason”; though, again, Taylor subscribes to neither camp. Instead, what Taylor is *about*, as I have been arguing, concerns a more fundamental recovery that follows Merleau-Ponty and “[t]he tremendous contribution of Heidegger [who], like that of Kant, consists in having focuses the issue properly” (Taylor 1987: 476). That issue, as Johan Muller (2000: 150) correctly puts it, is far

from controversial even to constructivists. “It only becomes controversial *when the conclusion is drawn* that there can be no objectivity, truth, evidence or warrant simply because, by not being able to step outside worldly implicatedness, all talk of truth is for ever after fatally compromised” (Muller 2000: 150. Italics added). The ‘flip side’ of that position, held by positivists, but extended to social theory, Michael Shapiro (1986: 311) refers to as having produced a naturalistic “conceit” within the human and social sciences that renders within them an implausible model of human agency. Articulating these two errors, Shapiro summarises what Taylor’s project against epistemology is *about*:

If, paraphrasing Heidegger, we note that Kant changed the question, “What is a thing” into “Who is man,” we can locate the origin of the epistemological concern Taylor has adopted, the place of the human subject in the problem of knowledge. And we can locate his Heideggerian, ontological concern with illuminating the background conditions (what Heidegger called the “ground plan”) within which knowing functions. These concerns, when deployed on the human sciences, yield both a thoroughgoing critique of naturalistic approaches to human conduct and the systematic articulation of an expressivist/hermeneutic alternative. Within this orientation, Taylor emphasizes not only how a grasp of the intersubjective and common meanings within which human action takes place is necessary for the recovery of the meaning of that action but also how it allows us to articulate successfully the issues of rationality, human agency, and various political concepts (Shapiro 1986: 311).

It does not seem far-fetched to see Taylor’s intention as reflected in the way in which he seeks to *hermeneutically* collapse the dualism characterized by the empiricist and idealist strands of modernity (Taylor 2002). Here I wish to concur with Gary Kitchen’s (1999) observation that, although Taylor is inclined to reject the truth claims of natural science as having exclusive or superior truth claims with respect to human experience, “it seems clear from the consistency principle that theories about the natural world which we hold to be true are extremely relevant to what we hold true in human affairs” (Kitchen 1999: 45).

Human phenomenology does not make natural science wrong, merely reductive insofar as it disparages the terms in which we live our lives; but the answer to this is not to think that the terms of our lives transcend science, for they must still be ultimately consistent with it if we are genuinely to accept its claims as true (Kitchen 1999: 45).

But the direction in which Kitchen takes his argument gets mired in much of the same inconsistencies “symptomatic of the difficulties facing [Taylor’s] project” (Kitchen 1999: 48). That is the direction in which Taylor’s “moral realism” leans; though the *inconclusiveness* of Kitchen’s argument lies, I suspect, in his reliance on a

*contemporaneous* (hence ahistorical) analytic frame. Taylor (1984a) remains highly critical of tendencies (mainly among analytic philosophers) to treat sources as if they were contemporaneous. I want to take a different route to that taken by Kitchen (1999), and which I have outlined in the previous section, and instead to take seriously Taylor's method in *Sources* (1989a) whereby he operationalizes his Merleau-Pontean adjunct that to study philosophy amounts *also* to a genealogical exercise of tracing sources. Doing so, we see, for instance, that in his recognition of Weber, Merleau-Ponty's debt to Lukács becomes more transparent. Extended to Taylor, this genealogy of Merleau-Ponty's sociological slant is evidence in the way Taylor appropriates Marx in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Taylor 1991a). There he refers to Marx *and* Weber as both converging upon a common social object of explanation (Taylor 1991a: 6-9).

If Taylor's sources in Marx are Hegelian, read through the lens of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, then the question of where Taylor lies along a materialist-idealist continuum becomes pertinent given his objection to positivistic models of the self in the human and social sciences (see Taylor 1991b). Certainly Taylor is a realist – a 'robust realist', as Hubert Dreyfus (2002: 64) calls him – in so far as he "advances a sort of realism when it comes to scientific knowledge, believing that science can lead us towards a true understanding of the way the natural world really is" (Abbey 2002: 7). This position does open Taylor to Richard Rorty's Nietzschean-inspired charge – that our knowledge of the world is only 'knowledge for us' – that Taylor becomes as ensnared in the very same Cartesian inner/outer sorting that he critiques (Rorty 1998: 86, 93-94).

The belief that there is a difference between the world as it is and the world as it is for us seems particularly problematic for Taylor given his whole phenomenological insistence that we know the world through involved coping. This seems to privilege, if not claim exclusivity for, knowledge about the world as it is for us.... Taylor, however, subscribes to a more robust and traditional realism, believing that it is possible to know the world as it is in itself, or at least to get closer to this sort of knowledge. Modern science is the vehicle that makes this increasing proximity possible. Its mechanisms make it possible for us to strive for a view from nowhere that allows us to see an independent reality in a disengaged way (Abbey 2002: 7).

But Taylor avoids choosing between the world as a reality independent of our coping, and its 'sense' as understood in the frames of our coping. When coping with the world, we sense a deeper reality independent of the meanings we accord to it. But this does not put Taylor in the empiricist camp, as he explains in his essay, *Hegel's*

*Philosophy of Mind* (1985a). Even the causal view recognizes two kinds of knowledge, being the agent's standpoint and the absolute standpoint (Taylor 1985a: 81). The latter, Taylor suggests, sets limits on the ways in which we cope with it.

When it comes to coping with the world, it is not a case that anything goes or thinking makes it so. There are structural realities to which we accommodate ourselves, not vice versa. And the more responsive to those realities we are, the better able are we to cope with the universe (Abbey 2002: 7).

I want to consider a possibility that Taylor indexes his anthropology (and anti-epistemology) in an earlier source; one to which Marx is perhaps *as much* indebted as he is to Hegel. That source is Ludwig Feuerbach, whom Taylor would have to acknowledge if the implications of his Merleau-Pontian view that philosophy is coterminous with its history are to be taken seriously (Taylor 1984a). However, I want to trace this source on what might seem to be a 'queered pitch' made so by an allusion to British idealism that many find more illuminating in understanding what the social sciences do.

### **Feuerbach again, and the promise of Vico**

To simply state and even to demonstrate Taylor's opposition to Cartesian epistemology would say very little, as he is certainly not the first to have made that move. Antirealists do as much in their flight into intellectualism. But while antirealists draw on the modern 'strand' indexed in the Kantian critique of Humean empiricism and Descartes – upon which positivistic science continues to draw – Taylor, as a 'robust realist', finds himself positioned *not against* the constructionists *per se*, but intent on rearticulating the *representational* element in their social theory with a conception of the *constitutive* drive in human agency. His intention is to restore an Aristotelian philosophical anthropology in which *Erklären* (causal explanation) is grounded in *Verstehen* (understanding).

Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) was the first to offer a sustained critique of Descartes, "the first to question the applicability of the Cartesian mentality, which had been associated with the great scientific achievements of the previous century" (Olafson 2001: 60), though he remained obscure in his day (Dallmayr 1977: 60). Vico's "new science" made little headway against the seventeenth century scientific revolution that was carried forward by Descartes's "new philosophy" (Barnouw 1980: 609-610; Dallmayr 1977: 68; Levin 1991: 55, 57).

Giorgio Tagliacozzo (1982) describes Vico as “an oddity among the thinkers of his century ... [which] explains why he has been neglected or misunderstood for so long and why he is important in our time” (Tagliacozzo 1982: 93).<sup>27</sup> Robert Miner (1998) notes that “Vico criticizes Cartesian method in terms that remind us of Aristotle, or at least the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics*” (Miner 1998: 53). But it is perhaps his thought on the embeddedness of reason in practical action that resonates with current philosophical themes, not least those found in American pragmatism (see Shotter 1986: 203-204), but no less with themes found in Taylor and Merleau-Ponty.

The question remains, why Taylor appears not to acknowledge Vico, at least not until very recently as “one of the leaders of the reaction against a shallowly rationalist explanation of human action” (Taylor 2007: 335). Vico sought to collapse the mind-body dualism that Cartesian thought accomplished to enable the epistemological certainties required by emerging modern science. That is, in the Cartesian frame science needed to know truth *certainly*. Vico did not object to this ambition, but pointed out that our ability to know the objects of mathematics derives not from properties *discovered* ‘in mathematics’, but from properties our activities *invented in and as* mathematics (Miner 1998: 59, 65-66). “[O]ur mind has a perfect grasp of its objects because it has made them” (Tanesi and Tanesi 1998: 426). That is, what we ‘discover’ amounts to our own *invention* that has become, using a term from Viktor Shklovsky, *defamiliarized*.<sup>28</sup> Vico hereby notices a degree of anthropomorphism in Descartes’s thinking, projecting mind onto the universe, and discovering ‘there’ the operations of its own contingency, thus failing to see that human thinkers stand to mathematics as God stands to creation. “[T]o know and to create become synonymous, i.e., imaginative creation is the means by which man’s consciousness of the world unfolds” (Hutton 1972: 361).

Implicit in Vico’s approach was an important limitation on human aspirations; our efforts to understand the natural world will lead at best to an understanding of principles which govern what we can do in the natural world, but not to any theory that might claim to represent the natural world as it is in itself (or as God made it),

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<sup>27</sup> Taylor’s subscription to the Romantic line represented by Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, and his ignoring Vico, does not rest *entirely* upon the Cartesian critique, but that the particular strand of that critique proceeding from the German Romantic Johann Gottfried Herder. One can argue that as Herder proceeds from Kant, his position was more accurately counter-Enlightenment, and therefore his opposition to Cartesianism was somewhat indirect. Nevertheless, Herder stands in that *tradition* of thought. But allegiance to a tradition *per se* does not account for Taylor’s adherence to Merleau-Ponty, who in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) appears to critique Descartes more directly.

<sup>28</sup> See Shklovski (1998).



independently of human involvement in it. We can know the world only through our active involvement with it (Tiles and Tiles 1998: 428).

Vico's influence on modern historiography is considerable, Taylor admits, as he is to anthropology in so far as he "is one of the pioneers in developing a theory of the origins of human culture from a virtually pre-human, bestial stage .... [and] to bury the picture of humanity as fixed from the beginning" (Taylor 2007: 333). Taylor later compares Vico to the seventeenth century representationalist theories of language typical of John Locke, which Taylor discusses in relation to Herder in *Language and Human Nature* (Taylor 1985a: 226, 231). Taylor adds to his views expressed there a rider that the effect of Vico explaining "how humans came to be language beings ... [is] part of an overall theory of our becoming fully human" (Taylor 2007: 343).

So, why does Taylor ignore Vico? I do not believe Taylor simply *neglects* the Italian idealist, but I do contend that he does so because he refuses the tradition to which British idealism belongs, though recognizing nonetheless its important anti-Cartesian comportment. Taylor subscribes instead to a strand in continental philosophy, of which its most persistent feature is its questioning of foundations, together with positions on meaning no longer attributed to metaphysical essences. Meaning is gained intersubjectively, as are our identities. Taylor converges significantly with Paul Ricoeur in this respect, as he does to Mikhail Bakhtin (Taylor 1991: 313-314).

In *Interpretation and the Sciences of Man* (1985a), Taylor argues that our meanings are not *subjective* (that is, residing in the heads of actors), but, rather, *intersubjective*. "The meanings and norms implicit in these practices," Taylor observes, "are not just in the minds of the actors but are out there in the practices themselves, practices which cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but which are essentially modes of social relation, of mutual action" (Taylor 1985a: 36).

Continental philosophy thus finds itself renouncing the metaphysical quest for absolute grounds, even if some of its proponents – Husserl in particular – found this renunciation vexed and regrettable. Kant's claim to 'lay the foundation of knowledge', Hegel's appeal to Absolute Spirit, Kierkegaard's recourse to a Transcendent Deity, Marx's call for a Total Science, are largely superseded (albeit often reinterpreted) by continental thinkers in the twentieth century (Kearney 1994: 2).

Vico may lie near the beginning of a train of thought that informs Taylor's 'core idea', but Taylor's anti-epistemology has a critical realist slant that rejects idealist reductionism. Taylor's notion of our being "self-interpreting animals" (Taylor 1985a:

45-76) does not entail any sense of our being able to constitute ourselves as intellectualists (or ‘constitutive idealist’) may ‘imagine’. Thus we find a clue as to Taylor’s caution with regard to Vico, and the continuing influence of the Marxist ground of Taylor’s *realist* anthropology found in his paper on Ludwig Feuerbach: “one of those figures who appears again and again in the footnotes and introductory paragraphs of works on other philosophers, but [who] is rarely studied for himself” (Taylor 1978: 417).

One clichéd summation of Feuerbach (and Marx), Taylor points out, is that he “debunked Hegel’s pretensions to a science of some super-human, cosmic entity called ‘spirit’, and showed that the real, unconscious subject of both metaphysics and theory was man” (Taylor 1978a: 417-418). Taylor does not reject this view, but points out that Feuerbach remained Hegelian at least in so far as he accepted Hegel’s contention (in his *Phenomenology*) that “the question of how or what we know has to presuppose some conception of the knowing subject” (Taylor 1978a: 418). But it is not Hegel’s “Spirit”. Debunking Hegel’s central notion of *Spirit* required Feuerbach to look elsewhere for a humanist materialist of the ‘knowing subject’. As a Hegelian, the simple and unproblematic notions found in the Enlightenment were obviously inadequate<sup>29</sup> to “a critically defensible doctrine of what it is to be a human subject” (Taylor 1978a: 419). For Feuerbach people form conceptions of themselves in line with the Hegelian view, and are partly shaped by those conceptions. “Part of what is essential to being a human being, as against [being] an animal, is our relating ourselves to a certain conception of ourselves” (Taylor 1978a: 419).

Feuerbach seems to recognize that an adequate account of the human subject has to recognize that men form conceptions of themselves, and that they are partly shaped by these conceptions. Part of what is essential to being a human being, as against an animal, is our relating ourselves to a certain understanding of ourselves. He also sees that the subject who so understands himself cannot simply be individual, that it is only in relation to others, in a community of speech, that we make and develop these understandings by which we live. All this emerges in the rich and still obscure Feuerbachian concept of the ‘species being’ .... This is one of the terms that Marx took over from Feuerbach, using it extensively in his unpublished manuscripts of 1844. Marx dropped the term later, but I do not believe that he sloughed off his debt to the Feuerbachian notion (Taylor 1978: 419).

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<sup>29</sup> Taylor notes that “Feuerbach’s humanist criticism of Hegelianism is very far from being a simple return to earlier materialism; that in short, he did not just debunk Hegel, but tried to build a humanism through a dialectical transformation of Hegel’s thought. This humanism allows for self-transformation in a sense undreamt of in the earlier forms, and in this provides some of the groundwork for Marx’s theory” (Taylor 1978a: 420).

Taylor goes on to argue that Feuerbach sees our ‘species being’ as related to itself in ways that differ from other animals in that “we can think of animals as living this life with others unconsciously, unreflectingly” (Taylor 1978a: 419). But with man there is a “picture” of a life that is human. “We relate ourselves to some such notions or images of what we are as men” (Taylor 1978a: 419).

In the notion of species being Feuerbach has, it would seem, incorporated understanding of man both as a self-interpreting being and an inescapably social being. Marx took over both these dimensions when he borrowed the term (Taylor 1978a: 419).

As tempting as it is to assume that Taylor derived his notion of humans as “self-interpreting animals” directly from Feuerbach, it is more likely that he returns to Marx’s mentor a notion he derives from Merleau-Ponty. In any event, Taylor already uses the concept in *Interpretation* (Taylor 1971a). Already there, to our being languaged beings given to self-interpretation, according to the Feuerbachian model, he adds the *moral* dimension of which Nicholas Smith argues is Taylor’s original contribution (Smith 2004: 42-43). As Taylor puts his claim, “our self-understanding essentially incorporates our seeing ourselves against a background of distinctions between things which are recognized as of categoric or unconditioned or higher importance or worth, and things which lack this or are of lesser value” (Taylor 1985a: 3).

Taylor counterpoises to the empiricist outlook the “Marxist view ... as implied in the thesis that men can only come to solve certain perennial intellectual problems through advances in praxis (Taylor 1966a: 234). And since Taylor identified the anti-Hegelian bias in British empiricism, he does not choose to graft the Marxist or Hegelian branch onto the British stock – “[f]or this conception of thought an action is foreign to the rediscovered empiricist tradition” (Taylor 1966a: 233 – but took to introducing his British audience to post-Heideggerian phenomenology by attacking behaviourism which was thriving there at that time, in the 1960s, in psychology and other human sciences.

I took on the challenge of reformulating Merleau-Ponty’s ideas in the rigorous style esteemed by Austin and others, not without good reason. It was not only the empiricists who ignored phenomenology. Those influenced by St Thomas and medieval philosophy ... likewise considered this tradition as an exotic and uninteresting one. There were some marginal exceptions ... but on the whole, there was no interest in Husserl and phenomenology. I believed from the outset that philosophical anthropology passed through history while for analytical philosophers philosophy is a wholly contemporary undertaking (Taylor 1998: 105).

## Conclusion: The inner/outer picture

Taylor's collaboration with Merleau-Ponty provided him with his anti-Cartesian 'core idea' (Taylor 1998), and the primary inspiration for the thesis of his first book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964), in which he attacks the naturalistic foundations of behavioural psychology. Taylor's thesis is informed by a conception of *embodiment* found in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), combined with a critique of the inner/outer sorting informed by a range of philosophers drawn from both the analytic and continental traditions. These include, in addition to Merleau-Ponty, existentialists Heidegger and Gadamer in the continental tradition, and in analytical philosophy, Ryle and Wittgenstein. Where those sources combine is at a point where they expose the mechanistic *picture* of the human subject that comes through empiricism that was expressed most emphatically in behaviourism during the 1950s and 1960s, and before that in the positivism of empiricist thought during the late nineteenth century.

Taylor (2002a: 106; 2005: 26) finds in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* the notion of a 'picture' – “*Ein Bild hielt uns gefangen*” [A picture held us captive]<sup>30</sup> – that resonates with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological critique of the “mediational epistemology” that was derived from empiricist post-Galilean science (Taylor 2002a: 108, 111; 2005: 40-41). But while Taylor has given a particularly sociological inflection to this condition in the idea of the “social imaginary” (Taylor 2002b), it remains fundamentally a theme he first considered at length in *Explanation* (1964), and reaching poignant expression in *Foundationalism and the Inner-Outer Distinction* (2002a) and *Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture* (2005). Together, these two sources reiterate in the present the core of his philosophical anthropology that he worked out at the start of his intellectual career, as it does in his approach to the philosophy of social science in which his philosophical anthropology is indexed.

The powerfully scientific Cartesian image of 'inner' mind representing an 'outer' reality that was most evident in social science in the fifties and sixties – evident in the hegemony of positivism, behaviourism and the overall construal of

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<sup>30</sup> The original German text used the italics oppositely: “*Ein Bild hielt uns gefangen.*” The text following reads, in translation: ““And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (Wittgenstein [Anscombe] 2001: 41, 41<sup>c</sup>).

science – has continued to the present day despite effusively confident theoretical treatments of its symptoms (Gunnell 1997: 520-521). While “behaviourism is long dead”, Nicholas Smith (2002) writes:

the belief that the laws governing human behaviour must be mechanistic in form is still very much alive. The very idea that teleological explanations might have a place in the science of behaviour is no less anathema to many philosophers and psychologists now than it was in the heyday of behaviourism. Taylor’s defence of teleology from a *a priori* attack therefore retains contemporary relevance. Second, Taylor’s argument is as much about the relationship between scientific explanation and conceptual analysis as it is about behaviourism narrowly defined. And this issue remains of central interest to philosophy (Smith 2002: 43).<sup>31</sup>

We all know how easy it is to stop an academic in his or her tracks by invoking adjectivals such as ‘positivist’, ‘behaviourist’ and ‘empiricist’, and so on. But dispelling the condition cannot be done by these incantations, Taylor (2002a: 107) says. Castigation might treat the symptoms, but the ‘picture of mind’ remains covertly virulent. The Cartesian picture has held us moderns prisoner with a conception of mind conceived in a reductive representationalist model of an inner/outer sorting. According to representationalist theories in epistemology, “our epistemic practices are judged by whether they adequately represent something said to be independent of them all called Reality or Truth” (Phillips 1994: 35). While it “is now fashionable in virtually all philosophical milieux to be extremely impatient with this way of thinking, and to claim to have transcended or ‘deconstructed’ it .... the prisoners of the dominant image have just moved to another cell” (Taylor 2002a: 107). In *Overcoming Epistemology* (1987a), Taylor locates that entire ‘cell block’ in foundationalism:

In some circles it seems to be rapidly becoming a new orthodoxy that the whole enterprise from Descartes, through Locke and Kant, and pursued by various nineteenth- and twentieth-century succession movements, was a mistake. Within this new agreement, however, what is becoming less and less clear is what exactly it means to overcome the epistemological standpoint or repudiate the enterprise. Just what exactly is one trying to deny? .... The heart of the old epistemology was the belief in a *foundational* enterprise. What the positive sciences needed to complete them, on this view, was a rigorous discipline that could check the credentials of all truth claims. An alleged science could only be valid if its findings met this test; otherwise it rested on sand (Taylor 1987a: 465).

The seventeenth century scientific revolution accomplished its epistemological construal by abstracting from the Aristotelian yoke its rationalist core. This realization provides much of the core of Taylor’s agenda: a recognition that the modern scientific

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<sup>31</sup> This is a fuller version of a quote provided in Chapter One.

framework abstracts from the holistic Aristotelian view an aspect that, since Descartes, accounts for the mentalistic (or intellectualistic) essence of the *representative* view. That aspect constructs the *mediational* logic such that an outer ‘reality’ is interpreted by an inner ‘mind’, thus accounting for Taylor’s objection to what he refers to as the inner/outer sorting (Abbey 2004: 7; Dreyfus 2004: 53-55, 57, 60, 64; Taylor 1987a; 2002a: 112). In other words, the Cartesian framework abstracts from the Aristotelian whole its principle of representation, thus subverting the formerly-primary *constitutive* element that Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger (and Wittgenstein) reestablish through their dissolution of the epistemological picture (Taylor 2002a: 106). Taylor summarises the object of his critique:

But there is a wider conception of the epistemological tradition, from whose viewpoint this last would be a rather grotesque judgment. This is the interpretation that focuses not so much on foundationalism as on the understanding of knowledge that made it possible. If I had to sum up this understanding in a single formula, it would be that knowledge is to be seen as correct representation of an independent reality. In its original form it saw knowledge as the inner depiction of an outer reality (Taylor 1987a: 466).

At the core of *Epistemology* (1987a) is Taylor’s contention that the seventeenth century scientific revolution ushered in a threshold change in our self-understanding and its relation to the good (Taylor 1987a: 466-467). This change was manifested in the mind-body dualism which was Descartes’s legacy intertwined with his conception of mind as an ‘inner entity’ – which Ryle (1947) declares as a “‘category mistake’ which has generated the Cartesian theory of mind as an extra entity somehow ‘inside’ the visible human person” (Taylor and Ayer 1959: 104). Taylor emphatically concurs with Ryle that the Cartesian theory of mind is an implausible philosophical theory gone wrong (see Smith 2002: 22-23). In *Ontology* (1959b), Taylor draws heavily on Wittgenstein’s ordinary language philosophy to dispute the “‘inner man’ theory,” which

breaks down because, the internal events being imperceptible to all but myself, I could never be taught how to speak about them by others. I would have to invent a kind of “private” language, a vocabulary of private terms, to speak about my own behaviour (Taylor 1959b: 129).

Yet Taylor (2002a: 107-108) would point out in other fields bearing a similar critique – having allegedly expunged residues of positivism and behaviourism from their respective disciplines – the Cartesian *subject* remains nonetheless an effective trace. His most sustained critique of various ‘contemporary’ Cartesian traditions is made in his essay, *Self-Interpreting Animals* (Taylor 1985a: 45-76). But it is mainly

elsewhere that he explains that the Cartesian tradition survives in the mediational picture of an inner/outer sorting at the heart of representationalist models of perception (Taylor 1987a; 2002a).

Within a representationalist frame, what is being interpreted is essentially ‘outside’, and being decoded ‘inside’. Experience becomes problematic within the frame, which Taylor also calls a “mediational epistemology” (Taylor 2004a: 44). What is missing – and which Taylor’s *hermeneutics* supplies – is an understanding that “human beings are ‘interpretation all the way down’, which means that social existence and interpretation indeed become co-extensive” (Rosa 2004: 694). Barring an explicitly *constitutive* element, Hall’s model does not necessarily occlude the important *human* interface where the Cartesian epistemological construal actually operates. But in so far as it does, Taylor’s project, in its ‘core elements’, exposes where it is that Hall’s model falls short – the *human* interface – and is pertinent to Hall particularly as his is a model of *meaning*. As Nicholas Smith (2004) explains:

[T]he idea that there is something ontologically or metaphysically “queer” about meaning comes naturally to a mode of thought that divides the world into an “outer realm” of physical facts and an “inner realm” of mental ones. An important feature of the hermeneutic attempt to rehabilitate meaning as an indispensable category for understanding what it is to be human is to identify and dismantle the motivations for carving up the world this way. Along with other hermeneutic philosophers, Taylor maintains that one of the most potent motivations is epistemological: The inner-outer sorting is driven in no small measure by a certain conception of what it is to know (Smith 2004: 32).

# Conclusion

When the Media Wars broke out in Australian universities, it offered both sides – journalism training and cultural studies scholarship – an opportunity not necessarily to bridge the gap perceived to exist between them, but to reflect upon what it is that they do; and also what forces brought them to blows in the first place. Certainly, many took that opportunity; with journalism scholars engaging in introspection as much as their counterparts in cultural theory (see Rooney 2007; Shepperson and Tomaselli 2004; Skinner *et al.* 2001; Tomaselli and Shepperson 2000; Tomaselli 2001; Tomaselli and Caldwell 2002; Turner 2000; Wasserman 2005; Zelizer 2005). But on the whole, the lines where the original battlements stood remain as the contending positions now as they were a decade ago. Journalism education has marched on, perhaps in search of a holy grail of theory;<sup>1</sup> or happier with a conviction that practice has its own autochthonous theory (and be done with it). As for their opponents, an observer can be forgiven for thinking that its captains had not stepped back from whatever minimal breach they had made, and questioned whether Theory was not obsolete (see Ferguson and Golding 1997).

The term Media Wars may perhaps be a misnomer for the “journalism versus cultural studies” ‘battle’, as Keith Windschuttle (1998a) identifies it. However impressive its scale appeared at the local level, it was always a peripheral skirmish in the wider ‘science wars’, contested over the underlying epistemological logics of modernity. Terry Flew and Jason Sternberg (1999) cite John Hartley (1995: 20; 1996: 33) as arguing in a “direct provocation to cultural studies academics” that journalism was “the sense-making practice of modernity” (Flew and Sternberg 1999: 9). His comment was far from pejorative, but aimed at cultural studies scholars “whose focus has mostly been in areas such as literary, film and television studies” (Flew and Sternberg 1999: 9), and calls on those same scholars to take journalism seriously as a (modern) textual system, and not to downgrade it as ‘mere journalism’ lacking in

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<sup>1</sup> Myles Breen notes in *Journalism: Theory and Practice* (1998: 3) that “a discipline without a written body of theory (literally, a ‘literature’) is unthinkable in a university culture.” The book he edits is presented as a means to plug that gap in journalism’s existence in the academy.



literary niceties. Evidently, Hartley considers journalism's 'modernity' to be that strand flowing from Enlightenment rationality, particularly in the empiricist paradigm aligned to natural science. I have argued that Windschuttle defends a line of thinking that appeals to that same *modern* paradigm.

### **The thesis (revisited)**

This thesis has followed a transcendental argument around three propositions declared in the introductory chapter. The first proposition concerns Keith Windschuttle's contention that the *constructivist* and linguistic *idealist* outlook of postmodern cultural studies contradicts the *realist* and *empiricist* self-understanding of journalism practice. Windschuttle thereby places journalism and cultural studies at opposite ends of a continuum between *empiricism* and *intellectualism*. The proposition accepts Windschuttle's *claim for* journalism, and accepts at face value his related claim about the 'linguistic idealism' inherent in *postmodern* cultural studies.

Following Windschuttle's stand on the first proposition, the argument moves to a second: arguing that British Cultural Studies was formed at a *post-Marxist dislocation* between Enlightenment fundamentalism and sources derived from the Romantic tradition. Here I bring into view a contention that Windschuttle reduces cultural studies to its postmodern aspect. I have also intimated that this aspect is not unproblematic *within* cultural studies. I shall clarify this point in the last section of this chapter, where I address the question of *agency* in cultural studies - a field drawn principally out of *post-Marxist* debate specifically in the 1960s, but drawing on debate before that period.

I have argued that *post-Marxism* was a rejection of the empiricist thinking to which classical Marxism was at least implicitly aligned, and that its mechanistic teleology was a part of that thinking. If, as I argue, cultural studies was founded as a *post-Marxist* critique of the economism of classical Marxism, perhaps its most developed articulation in the New Left (apart from Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson) came from Charles Taylor's Marxist-humanist interventions that articulated a rejection of economism with a rejection of the mechanistic outlook of *empiricist* social science. Economism and empiricism, I have argued, share a common source in Enlightenment fundamentalism. This was not an esoteric concern, but mattered in the realm of ordinary (human) experience. A significant part of that

experience – at least so far as the New Left was concerned – was both to understand and to motivate popular resistance to that experience. Understanding required a conception of agency that was negated by economism. Such was the rationale for the Left clubs that Taylor, Stuart Hall, Ralph Samuels and others set up.

From Taylor's use of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, he came to treat both economism and empiricism as providing similarly inadequate accounts of human agency. That is, the foundational anthropology in both *empiricism* and *intellectualism* was rooted in a combination of Cartesian epistemology and the Lockean 'punctual self. Taylor (1964) would go on to critique behaviourist psychology out of his reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which emerged partly from a critique of classical Marxism, and from which Taylor drew his critique of the *empiricist-intellectualist* dualism as collectively endorsing a Cartesian subject. Thus, Windschuttle's dualism suffers its first setback: it negates the possibility of providing an adequate account of agency, and, by implication a plausible account of journalism *practice* beyond the very same Althusserian determinisms that he criticizes so caustically (Windschuttle 2000: 154).

Its second setback concerns the question of the correspondence between Windschuttle's dualism and the rival Enlightenment and Romantic traditions of modernity (Negus and Pickering 2004: 7-9; Taylor 2000b; 2002c). I have argued that these together constitute modernity; from Enlightenment come the rationalist sources that are conventionally taken to fashion modernity, and from the Romantic tradition come the creative impulses that make modernity a paradox. From Merleau-Ponty, neither empiricism (which accedes to the Enlightenment side of the paradox) nor intellectualism (which veers in the opposite direction) will do.

The challenges of dealing with this paradox, presented as a condition of modernity, is at the forefront of two of Stuart Hall's (1980a; 1980b [1981]) reviews of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). While there was certainly an intention in the Centre to conduct empirical research, they inherited the distrust critical theorists had of the positivist empiricism that reproduced pre-existing epistemological foundations in the Cartesian mould. While there is no doubt that the Centre's cultural critique veered towards the Romantics, Hall and others were clear about the dangers of not remaining within certain limits. The excesses of *intellectualism* Hall refers to as *theoreticism* - a term he may have adopted from Lenin. The reason why theoreticism was problematic for Hall was that it supplanted

“Marx’s own practice ... to move towards the constitution, the reproduction, of ‘the concrete in thought’ as an effect of a certain kind of thinking” (Hall 1980b: 68). Hall continues, in *Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms* (1980b), to argue that Marx’s method is adequately represented in neither structuralism nor culturalism. “An adequate working through of the consequences of this argument might begin to produce a method which takes us outside the permanent oscillations between abstraction/anti-abstraction and the false dichotomies of Theoreticism vs. Empiricism which have both marked and disfigured the structuralism/culturalism encounter to date” (Hall 1980b: 68).

In *Cultural Studies and the Centre* (Hall 1980a), Hall discusses the challenge of these oscillations as part of the challenge of constituting the “practice of intellectual work” (Hall 1980a: 42). In an interview with Kuan-Hsing Chen (Hall 1996a: 499), Hall explains that “when you talk about cultural studies theoretically, we actually went around the houses to avoid reductionist marxism.” How they did this, he explains on the same page, was by reading Weber, German idealism, Lukács, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, Hegelian idealism, all to find non-reductionist alternatives to functionalism and positivism (Hall 1996a: 499). Certainly this work would have occurred some years after Taylor had left England, but he had certainly not abandoned the issues he discovered (in Merleau-Ponty) while he was there. Hall mentions two dates, 1956 and 1958, when Taylor had gone to Paris to work with Merleau-Ponty. There he discovered his one ‘big idea’ - Merleau-Ponty’s method - that hinged on a critique of the *intellectualist-empiricist* dualism. It is unlikely that Taylor, who brought the *1844 Manuscripts* to Oxford, who engaged in spectacular debates about Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology, would not have shared these insights as he did with those concerning Marx in “discussions about alienation, humanism and class” (Hall 1996a: 497). “The issue of ‘theoreticism’ is not an irrelevant one, certainly,” he writes (Hall 1980a: 42); and in a footnote adds the following:

In the highly charged sectarian atmosphere which has sometimes disfigured these debates critical distinctions were frequently lost: for example, on one side the distinction between the ‘empirical’ moment in an analysis and ‘Empiricism’: on the other side that between the ‘theoretical’ and ‘Theoreticism’. These have turned out to be mirror-images of one another. But it has not always proved easy to get beyond them (Hall 1980a: 287, n. 103).

What I have argued is that a convincing link exists between Taylor's rejection of both empiricism in social science and economism in Marxism, and the similar attempts in early cultural studies debates to navigate between theoreticism (intellectualism) and empiricism; and that this forms the central problematic of cultural studies. All else (gender, class, race) more or less follows this problematic. In other words, the dislocation between the empiricist and the intellectualist traditions of modernity constitute(d) the 'blueprint' of cultural studies. I do not expect this statement to be uncontentious; but I do not believe it (following this part of my argument) to be false. Accepting this condition, however, leaves Windschuttle's similar dualism in a precarious position;<sup>2</sup> for surely he expressed a contradiction that lies at the heart of cultural studies? If so, his entire problematic must fit within the entire project of cultural studies.

So works a transcendental argument. And having accepted Taylor's viewpoint, the antagonist has no choice but to accept the 'thicker edge of the wedge': the third proposition, being Taylor's philosophical anthropology. The significance of this proposition lies not in the fact that if one accepts a few quills of the hedgehog one is obliged to accept the rest of its body too. The ethical import of Taylor's theory derives significantly from his *post-Marxist* scholarship, and his rejection of empiricism in social science derives from that scholarship. Their combined import is the recovery of an adequate model of human subjectivity and agency that rejects the epistemological construal at the centre of Cartesianism; which in itself has wrought as implausible a model of human agency as any found in poststructuralism. Taylor's Aristotelian outlook, deployed since the late 1950s, also critiques representationalism in epistemology and rejects foundationalist empiricist conceptions of human action. In its place he has sought to promote an embodied and engaged understanding of the human subject developed mainly from Merleau-Ponty's method.

I shall now address the three propositions as one might on a 'variation of a theme'. That is, I want to consider next an aspect of Windschuttle's genuine concern about journalism *training*, and to distinguish it from media *education*.<sup>3</sup> On the second proposition, I want to consider what I have called the 'blueprint' of cultural studies;

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<sup>2</sup> I am making this claim in relation to Windschuttle's empiricist assumptions. The practical question of journalism training is another matter that I shall address in the next section.

<sup>3</sup> This is a topic I have tried to keep at a distance so as not to add confusion to what my thesis is actually about.

that is, using a concept of Taylor's (2000b), that cultural studies is a space of 'multiple modernities'. As Taylor addresses this concept specifically in a book honouring Stuart Hall, it becomes more than likely that Taylor imagines cultural studies along these lines. The third section elaborates on the third proposition: Taylor's philosophical anthropology. Here I shall consider a few sources concerning the *ethics* of cultural studies; and more specifically, to pay particular attention to the only source (Freed 2001) I know of that actually brings Taylor to bear on cultural studies. But as I said in the closing paragraph of the opening chapter, I think Mark Freed (2001) misses the significance of Taylor in this respect.

### **Raiders of the lost... or lost in philosophy**

Cultural studies has always claimed as one of its practices the right to raid neighbouring disciplines for whatever tools and resources it needs to accomplish its work. Sociology, politics, anthropology, economics, history, literary studies and a range of research methodologies have been found rich with resources ready-to-hand. The gaze of cultural studies is necessarily interdisciplinary (Greenfield and Williams 1998: 96; Meadows 1999: 44), "assuming a mantle last worn by philosophy: not content to survey its own patch with its own expertise, it roams across everybody else's fields of knowledge-production too, from science to sociology" (Hartley 1999: 25). But there is an impression that, for cultural studies, stepping into philosophy is like going over to the 'dark side'.

For a time it seemed that cultural studies was invincible in the academy, and on its way to becoming a great and ever-conquering empire. But an empire does eventually collapse under the great burden of having to maintain equilibrium between its centre and its periphery. The provinces do not always behave. And there is the debilitating cost of discovering that the empire does not extend forever, but that there are boundaries, beyond which it may attempt to venture only at the crippling cost of not having remained closer to home.

Jennifer Slack (2005) reviews the recent initiatives in the Philosophy of Communication Interest Group (PHILCOM) – a group committed to "bringing philosophical reflection to the practices of studying communication, revealing the underlying philosophical assumptions of accounts of communication, and proactively reshaping the study of communication by self-consciously utilizing rigorous

philosophical assumptions that were in keeping with the changing cultural and political landscape of the 1970s” (Slack 2005: 395). Larry Grossberg had encouraged his cultural theory students “to participate ... to find common ground for undertaking research” (Slack 2005: 394). While ‘philosophy’ for PHILCOM promisingly “meant continental philosophy – primarily, in fact, critical theory ... hermeneutics, and phenomenology” (Slack 2005: 395), the new members’ insistence on *political* reflection (as *was* their practice) evidently disrupted the group’s more disciplinary understanding of what it meant to ‘do philosophy’. Slack describes her impressions of the outcome of their venture:

Sometimes it felt like the cultural theorists were relegated to the sense of being interlopers, poor cousins at the foot of the table eating the scraps of the big guys and hoping nobody would notice that we weren’t “really” doing philosophy.... Philosophy may well have entered into composition with us once, willingly; but they also resented what some began to characterize as an intrusion into their midst, a “takeover,” as it were. I also sense that, given our growing popularity, we undermined their challenge to mainstream communication studies. Perhaps our presence muddied the water in their challenge to analytic philosophy and to their sense of the mission of promoting explicitly philosophical – not political – reflection. But more likely, our presence – presented as philosophy – tainted philosophy, thus echoing the challenge confronting philosophy everywhere: suddenly everyone was doing philosophy. Continental philosophy in a sense ushered in the demise of philosophy. In breaking down distinctions between philosophy, theory, history, rhetoric, and sociology (and here in the interest group, communication and cultural studies), claims to be doing philosophy proliferated and detracted from the sense not just of “philosophy as king” but of philosophy as a unique discipline. Whatever the precise mix, our presence contributed to diminishing philosophy too (Slack 2005: 399).

*Déjà vu*, James Carey (2000: 16) might have said, mindful of journalism’s own unhappy incursion into the academy. “Good source for them,” Windschuttle might have crowed. But perhaps the lesson to be learned is to take seriously the balance that Stuart Hall’s urged between cultural studies not being ‘one thing’ and not being ‘any old thing’ (Hall 1990: 11; 1992: 278). The difference is also between the wildly permissive sense of what cultural studies *wishes* to do, and what it *ought* to do.

It does matter whether cultural studies is this or that. It can’t be just any old thing which chooses to march under a particular banner. It is a serious enterprise, or project, and that is inscribed in what is sometimes called the “political” aspect of cultural studies .... But there is something at stake in cultural studies, in a way that I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices (Hall 1992: 278).

While cultural studies has come of (postmodern and post-*Marxist*) age, there are some in the field of journalism studies who feel that the way their subject matter has been reshaped under the tutelage of cultural studies has far from improved the

vocational aspects of journalism (Windschuttle 1997a; 1998b), that it has undermined the confidence of reporters on the beat (Kieran 1997), and even become “the central disorganising principle in journalism education” (Tomaselli 2001: 44). Starting on these grounds at least, there may be a good case to be made for excluding certain aspects of journalism from the purview of cultural studies; and it need not be an entirely subjective matter in deciding where to draw those boundaries.

The claim that I am making is that the concept of journalism, not unlike Raymond Williams’s opinion of cultural studies itself, is “a vague and baggy monster” (Williams 1989: 158). But drawing on his advice that cultural studies be defined more closely “as media studies, community sociology, popular fiction and popular music” in order to “create defensible disciplines” (Williams 1989: 158), journalism as a field too can be defined into defensible aspects. A model to hand is Robert Craig’s (1999; 2001; 2003; 2005) conversational model of *communication* as a field constituted by rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, socio-psychological and critical (among other) traditions. The similarity between Craig’s “communication metamodel” and Zelizer’s (2004b) depiction of journalism as constituted by sociology, history, language studies, political science and “cultural analysis”<sup>4</sup> is instructive.

Communication is a *field*; journalism is a *field*; cultural studies is a *field*. It would seem quite impossible for any field to contain another field in any meaningful way. However, it is not unimaginable that one field could encompass a “defensible discipline” belonging to another field. But I want to make the matter clearer by distinguishing between four terms – *field*, *discipline*, *subject* and *topic* – and to suggest that ‘journalism’ as a field will differ from ‘journalism’ the discipline (if it exists), that it will qualitatively differ from ‘journalism’ the subject as it would from journalism as a topic. In the latter case, journalism defined within the disciplines of sociology, history, politics and cultural analysis will all differ remarkably. It is quite conceivable that cultural studies could ‘take journalism seriously’ (*pace* Zelizer 2004b), but the subject and/or topic it would *constitute* would be a ‘figment’ of its own methodologies conducive to its own site(s) of practice. In other words, ‘journalism’ would be something understood within its own language, and against its

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<sup>4</sup> Zelizer (2004b: 180-193) makes a point of inserting cultural studies within the whole of cultural analysis. At first I found this odd, but I do now endorse this move for reasons that cultural studies is about *power* and cultural practices, and not about cultural practices *in toto*.

own horizons of meaning. Alternatively, was journalism to be taught in a newsroom – as a newspaper cadet programme might do – the subject would be constituted by the ontologies germane to that site of practice. The problem remains: what to do when these converge in the academic ‘site of practice’?

It would seem that ‘journalism’ as a term suffers much the same vagueness and ‘bagginess’ as culture, ‘the media’, mass communication, and so on. No one person *does journalism*; as appears concomitant to the belief in English departments that if students can learn to write properly, they can ‘do journalism’.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps so, but to ‘do journalism’ requires learning to put content over form. Journalism is *about reporting*, not *about writing*. If it is any *one thing*, journalism is about research (Tomaselli and Caldwell 2002).

Reporting is the cornerstone of journalism. Reporting is to journalism as research and evidence-gathering is to scholarship.... Journalism schools do not make reporting methods a formal object of inquiry. Although there are texts on the interview, for example, there is little in print which examines the realities of requirements of reporting in the light of the epistemological concerns of scholars. Nor is there much which borrows from other professional disciplines. For example, academic lawyers reflect on rules of evidence for their own purposes. Journalists have something to learn from them (Adam 1989: 74).

It would be a mistake to reduce journalism to a range of effective techniques; for while it is certainly about methods of surveying the paradoxes of the modern world - the existence of which it is deeply implicated - journalism is intimately part of the reproduction of its imaginaries. As such, it ought not to be reduced to a practice of news *production* independent of the events of its *consumption*; though, to be fair, such bifurcation is standard throughout media research, and eschews the holistic research that David Deacon advocates (Deacon 2003). Stuart Hall’s (1980) encoding/decoding model, by which he largely ended the theoretical hegemony of technical sender-receiver models of communication (Pillai 1992: 221-222), provides an apt framework in which to imagine journalism as *happening in the consumption of news*.

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to pour scorn on what certain literary *affectionados* believe to be ‘mere journalism’. Journalism necessarily tends towards the popular, and its narratives *ought* to belong to the public domain to which it is directed as an economy of news. The *situations* that make news ought always to be a public *matter*. This description is not vulnerable to there being differentiated media products, and the tendency for certain kinds of stories to appear in different media titles; ranging from the tabloids to the quality press. It would seem, nonetheless, that to define journalism exclusively as a newsroom activity amounts to reaching a definition of the practice that is too narrow as news production becomes *journalism* at its point of consumption



Hall's model appears to offer a more accurately holistic picture of *journalism* than do conceptions that pay exclusive attention to news *production*. Journalism 'happens', or is constituted, in *practices* at the centre of which worlds are made, identities are shaped, and the *situations* of everyday life are made to *matter*. Journalism is about ever-recurring cycles of world-making, occurring at those moments when different people read the same edition of a newspaper, or listen to the same news bulletin. Each cycle ends with the conversations of that same audience making sense of their world constituted in the stories signified in the images and commentaries they entertain.

Hall's model was subjected to considerable critique at its inception (Morley 1980, 1981; Wren-Lewis 1983), but its continuing salience indicates that Hall was effectively articulating a range of theoretical concerns extant at that time, rather than inventing a surprising framework *ex nihilo*. Whether theoretical surprises are truly possible, however, is extremely doubtful as intellectual accomplishments are *social* accomplishments. That is, theorizing takes place in a *field* of concerns, and have a *dialogical* and *conversational* character.

As a 'field of concerns', cultural studies as concerned with the question of modernity appears to have moved away from the conversational logic (Hall 1980a; 198jOb) to a monological practice where, following its poststructuralist turn, "the eloquence-of post-structuralist critiques of teleology, universalism and essentialist reasoning have often been obtained by simplifying a 'theoretical Other' into caricatures written in capital letters: Reason: Enlightenment, Modernity, the West" (Hansen 1996: 59). Yet, Foucault, towards the end of his life, began to repudiate these excesses, and to see "a critical philosophical life" as entailing "'faith in Enlightenment' as well as faith in the possibility of creating ourselves as autonomous beings" (Hansen 1996: 60) - in short, a philosophy of limits within the bounds that allow for human wellbeing. "One may argue that if western intellectual history is marked by an emergent episteme bent on universalist reason, the same history is also marked, and enriched, by the existence of another, though weaker, romanticist episteme" (Hansen 1996: 60). All the more reason for cultural studies to take journalism seriously. Certainly, as John Hartley (1995) contends, journalism makes sense of that world constructed in universalist reason. It gives flesh to the rationality of its empiricist slant, but its truer virtues come from the Romantic side of modernity.

It is that side of journalism to which John Pilger draws our attention in an article on the “histrionics of Obamaniana”:

This was journalism as it had been before corporate journalism was invented, before the first schools of journalism were set up and a mythology of liberal neutrality was spun around those whose “professionalism” and “objectivity” carried an unspoken obligation to ensure that news and opinion were in tune with an establishment consensus, regardless of the truth. Journalists like Penn Jones, independent of vested power, indefatigable and principled, often reflect ordinary American attitudes, which have seldom conformed to the stereotypes promoted by the corporate media on both sides of the Atlantic....

“True democracy,” wrote Penn Jones Jr, the Texas truth-teller, “is constant vigilance: not thinking the way you’re meant to think and keeping your eyes wide open at all times.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Between empiricism and intellectualism**

Modernity, as Taylor (2000b) argues, consists not in a single Enlightenment family invested in Descartes, Locke and the behaviourist, cognitivist, mentalistic and scientific train that followed in their wake. A Romantic critique and reaction to Enlightenment rationalism also constitutes modernity. Here we look towards Giambattista Vico, Johan Gottfried Herder and Jacques Rousseau as its exemplars. We look also to the humanistic Marx, and to Feuerbach. But most of all, we look to Hegel to understand the articulation between Enlightenment and Romantic, empiricist and idealist, and many of the dualisms that typify modernity.

Certainly Windschuttle’s categories of *realism* and *idealism* present themselves as a different dualism. We can move to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s method of collapsing their inner tension by pointing out the similar Cartesian subject assumed in both *empiricism* and *intellectualism* – generally synonymic with *realism* and *idealism*. The impression can be easily gained that cultural studies was constituted under the signs of *culture* and *structure* paired as a dualism – the “names of the game”, as Stuart Hall (1980b: 72) conceded, even given his insistence that neither “is, in its present manifestation, adequate to the task of constructing the study of culture as a conceptually clarified and theoretically informed domain of study” (Hall 1980b: 67). But we can move further by pointing out that neither culturalism nor structuralism correspond to either side of those dualisms (realism-idealism, empiricism-intellectualism), but attempt – particularly in the move of Lacanian psychoanalysis to

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<sup>6</sup> Pilger, John (2008). Obama – we should dry our eyes quickly. *Mail & Guardian*, November 28, page 25.

retain and to collapse (Freudian) dualism – to effect different forms of articulation such as between text and context, agency and structure, and so on.

Similarly, Windschuttle’s castigation of (postmodern) cultural studies as a form of linguistic idealism, and his casting of journalism practice (and education) within the language and logics of empiricism and realism, could have been identified as a local expression of the underlying epistemological abstractions that sustain the ‘science wars’. Thus the vulnerability of his charge could have been recognized and neutralized by means of the challenge to the epistemological conceits that Michael Shapiro (1986: 311) identifies as the prime target of Taylor’s project – and which he began in his *post-Marxist* writing in the late 1950s.

It is not without significance that it was against *scientific* Marxism that the proto-cultural studies group in Britain reacted in 1956. As Tom Rockmore (2001) argues more forcefully than does Taylor, much of what is attributed to Marx in the name of ‘science’ is the work of Frederic Engels. This is a contentious point, no doubt; and as I have so far averred to question it seriously, I shall not make good that debt here. Nonetheless, it is a view that colours Taylor’s *post-Marxist* scholarship in so far as he seeks to recover the “humanist side of Marx” (Fraser 2003a: 759) in line with thinking derived from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s reading of Georg Lukács. I shall not review my arguments in previous chapters. What I do want to point out here, however, is what this picture says about cultural studies *as a site of (modern) contestation*.

In the opening chapter I suggested that British Cultural Studies was the quintessential site of *post-Marxist* activism. Stuart Hall states emphatically that cultural studies began with the first New Left in 1956 (Hall 1990: 12). In *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies* (1992), Hall insists that cultural studies was from the start a “Marxist critical practice” not least because the “New Left always regarded Marxism as a problem, as trouble, as danger, not as solution” (Hall 1992: 279). In *The Problem of Ideology – Marxism without Guarantees*, he argues that “[p]ost-marxism remains one of our largest and most flourishing contemporary theoretical schools” (Hall 1986: 28), and distances the school from, on one side, the deconstructionist “post-marxists” (or ‘post-Marxists’, as in my opening chapter) who “stand on the shoulders of the very theories they have definitely destroyed” (Hall 1986: 28), and on the other side, Perry Anderson, who regarded “problems relating to philosophy,

epistemology, ideology and the superstructures ... as a deformation in the development of Marxist thought” (Hall 1986 28).<sup>7</sup>

Significant proximities exist between Hall’s (1986) *post*-Marxist argument for the categories Anderson rejects, and Taylor’s own recovery of the humanist Marx. Hall’s argument for the validity of Althusser’s displacement of the base/superstructure metaphor, both in response to theoretical problems that the economic determinacy of classical Marxism presents to matters explaining and guiding cultural activism (Hall 1986: 32) he reiterates in large part in his later essay, *Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates* (1996). Buried in both of Hall’s essays is a recognition of the vital place Hegel plays in any instructive reading of Marx (Hall 1986: 33; 1996: 16) – being a principle of Taylor’s *post*-Marxist scholarship.

By inserting ‘modern’ in brackets, I am drawing attention to a problem of whether and/or how postmodernity is an extension of modernity, and whether or not the postmodern can be said to correspond with, or at least imbricates with, what I discussed in the opening chapter as the *post*-Marxist period. In terms discussed there, it is less problematic to identify postmodernity with the *post-Marxist* problematic even though the ‘postmodern condition’ quite evidently preceded what could also be called post-Communism. What I would prefer to settle with is to situate the *post*-Marxist rupture at a point where modernity began to yield to the postmodern condition, identified in one of its artifacts: the growing predominance of mass media and popular culture. This point was evident in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s; the period corresponding to the formation of the New Left, leading to that of cultural studies. It was the period in which Taylor’s critique of empiricism in social science began. But as he discusses in *Sources* (1989a), empiricism belongs to that family of paradigms that include Enlightenment fundamentalism, coexisting with its reactions in the Romantic movement expressed (particularly in hermeneutics and phenomenology) eventuated in contemporary continental philosophy.

These two strands constitute the (post)modern condition, defined partly as a (human) condition of radical choice and moral pluralism. As modern subjects, Taylor says, we face an array of moral visions. Yet, as he writes in his essay, *What is Human*

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<sup>7</sup> See Ioan Davies’s (1993: 123, 126) discussion on the debate between the culturalist E.P. Thompson and the structuralist Perry Anderson.

*Agency?* (1985a): “granted this is the moral predicament of man, it is more honest, courageous, self-clairvoyant, hence a high mode of life, to choose in lucidity than it is to hide one’s choices behind the supposed structure of things, to flee from one’s responsibility at the expense of lying to oneself, of a deep self-duplicity” (Taylor 1985a: 33). Taylor here and elsewhere (Taylor 1989a; 2000b; 2002b) draws a close correspondence between the ‘modern condition’ of what one could consider as a dualism of contending modernities, and modern identities as being similarly constituted.

I want to submit here that the ‘modern condition’ in which the Centre in Birmingham found itself mirrored its own structure as a kind of ‘intellectual hothouse’ of contending “multiple modernities” (Taylor 2000b: 367). That is, its members engaged in contestation between contending *sources of modernity* such that the Centre encapsulated what British Cultural Studies was *about*. The Centre was situated in the dislocation between *empiricism* and *intellectualism*. Without attempting to be neutral – Stuart Hall’s *dialogical* ethics, for one, urged one to take positions, and not merely to disavow them (Scott 2005: 1) – the Centre provided a *convergence* between the contending sources of modernity that the *post-Marxist* rupture afforded them, and the experiences by which mainly working class individuals were inserted into social positions that were simultaneously interpellated and resisted. That is, positioned within the Romantic tradition, and “[g]reatly influenced by Marxist humanism, the early cultural theorists set out to ‘rescue’ that group of individuals who had been disenfranchised and treated instrumentally in capitalist modes of production and were therefore denied their intrinsic identity, worth, and dignity” (Slack and Whitt 1992: 574). The situation that the (British) cultural studies field contended was simultaneously political and ethical.

In sum, British Cultural Studies was constituted (first) as a reaction to the *economistic* condition of classical (‘scientific’) Marxism, and to this end drew upon the *humanist* Marx who, at that period of his thought, most evidently expressed his Hegelian influence. From Taylor’s work in particular, we can see a correspondence between the economism of classical Marxism and the backing of empiricism the mechanistic outlook of Enlightenment fundamentalism. “As conceived within the Enlightenment fundamentalist’s outlook, the demands of reason and nature are both

non-negotiable and empty as sources of orientation for the contingently acculturated, purposeful subject” (Smith 1997: 4).

## **An adequate theory of the subject**

To return to Windschuttle’s contention against cultural studies, and bring into view the counter-contention that he had misrepresented the field by reducing it to its postmodern ‘tendencies’ in literary *theory* (Turner 2000), the point I have been raising from Taylor’s reading of Merleau-Ponty concerns the kind of *subject* that Windschuttle imagines journalists to be. One point of contention that Windschuttle raises is that cultural studies is *unethical*; implied in his claim that the field is contemptuous towards media audiences: “In all the replies to my original paper, no respondent disputed any of my claims about the contempt in which media audiences are held by cultural studies academics” (Windschuttle 1999: 19).

The question of ethics and the subject is not entirely foreign to cultural studies scholarship, evident in the fact that the driving force behind avoiding the excesses of empiricism and intellectualism was the recovery of not only a plausible model of agency, but also of a subject of emancipation. That, too, is the purpose of Taylor’s philosophical anthropology. But I want to take up David Scott’s (2005) argument that Stuart Hall, too, pursued a project that was deeply ethical. He defines Hall’s as a “*dialogical ethics*” (Scott 2005: 2), and in so far as Scott’s argument holds firm, Hall’s project bears a remarkable resemblance to Taylor’s, particularly as given in his essay, *The Dialogical Self* (1991a).

By [Hall’s dialogical ethics] I mean that his ethics are not rule-following of the rationalist or Kantian sort in which what counts is mastery of the moral law.... Rather [Hall’s] ethics are founded in and shaped by responsiveness to alterity, to the opacities of otherness, and to the unavoidable risks and ineluctable certainties haunting any dialogical encounter, and any hope of belong-in-difference (Scott 2005: 2).

Furthermore, Hall’s emancipated and critical *subject*, gauged by the *model* of *dialogical* subjectivity that he promotes, allows for the constitution of a world more thoroughly human than what Windschuttle’s *disengaged* subject could possibly accomplish. Granted, the literature on the ethics of cultural studies is sparse. Certainly the agential subject has been inadequately conceptualized, swaying through theory like a drunk – falling on one side into the ‘ditch’ of (modern) determinations; and after being hauled to its feet, toppling over again to the side of ribald, carnivalesque resistances celebrated in postmodernism – bearing a close resemblance to that

humanist myth of “self-determined agency ... grounded in a mistaken belief of an atomistic, autonomous self” (Freed 2001: 4).

Jennifer’s and Laurie Whitt’s (1992) essay was perhaps the first to address this lacuna, and is driven partly by the situation where the “engagement with postmodernism has brought to the surface questions that prompt debate over the constitution of the subject and the problems and possibilities of politics” (Slack and Whitt 1992: 571). A great silence followed their essay; to be punctured only recently by Scott’s (2005) essay on Hall’s ethics and Mark Freed’s (2001) essay on the eclipse of agency in cultural studies. Without an adequate account of agency the very possibility of ethical discourse is radically drawn into question” (Freed 2001: 3).

Freed’s (2005) paper is the only one I know of that brings Taylor into discussion on subjectivity in cultural theory, but he does in an abstract fashion that neglects to notice Taylor’s deep connection to the post-Marxist foundations of the kind of problematic that cultural studies faced. In this respect, Freed’s discussion of Taylor de-historicizes the problems of subjectivity that current debates in the field engage in. By adding to a combined synopsis of Freed’s (2001) and Scott’s (2001) papers a historicized account of Taylor’s philosophical anthropology (as I have been pursuing throughout this thesis), a synthesis can be made of the transcendental argument laid out in the Introduction of this thesis.

Stuart Hall, Scott writes, worries about “the solace of closure” (Scott 2005: 1). Hall “has cultivated an ethical voice responsive to the violations that grow out of complacent satisfactions, secure doctrines, congealed orders, sedimented identities” (Scott 2005: 1). It is a worry that harks back to his questions on ideology and the *problems* of determinacy inherited from the first *post*-Marxist dislocation that had fused the New Left. “As with its interest in mechanisms of determination, cultural studies” general tendency to occlude the possibility of agency “is traceable to its Marxist genealogy” (Freed 2001: 3).

Althusser did displace the base/superstructure metaphor upon which determinacy was grounded (Freed 2001: 4; Hall 1986: 32), but conceded that determinacy was economic in the final instance – “the last repository of the lost dream or illusion of theoretical certainty,” Scott (2005: 5) quotes Hall as saying. But in his essay, *Marxism without Guarantees* (1986), Hall wants to establish an “open horizon

of Marxist theory – determinacy without guaranteed closures ... determination of the economic in the *first* instance” (Hall 1986: 43), thereby opening a space for contingency that renders its subjects not sovereign, but exposed to conditions “over which we may have no absolute control and to face the prospect of alternatives between which it may be impossible to choose well” (Scott 2005: 7).

The idea that the present is contingently (over)determined does not imply that it is simply constructed or invented by the sheer will of rational action, and therefore can be reconstructed or reinvented by a fresh application of radical agency. Liberal as well as postmodern subjects often perceive themselves as agents of pure choice, *ironizing* agents who can stand back from themselves, so to speak, and revise and modify their ends *at will* (Scott 2005: 7).

Further on, Scott describes Hall as saying that “there is something altogether reductive and *therefore* morally about the picture of human selves and human interaction that emerges from the one-sided Enlightenment admiration for a sovereign, autonomous self legislating and single good for us all” (Scott 2005: 15). He is describing the *empirical* self as opposed to the *intellectualist* self of postmodernism; yet both types are impoverished; and therefore, from Merleau-Ponty, are not true opposites (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 39).

While Scott provides a generalized account of Hall as an intellectual for whom thinking “is a way of *moving on* ... of *changing* himself, [as] a way of preventing himself from always being the same ... honouring the provisional in himself” (Scott 2005: 4) – before moving on to post-Marxist questions of ideology and the demands of contingency – Mark Freed (2001) begins with these questions, then applies Taylor to them. Freed’s discussion to this point concerns the record set by Raymond Williams and Ernesto Laclau in the face of the poststructuralist development in cultural theory. I shall not summarise Freed’s treatment to this point, but start with the problem of agency that Williams, Laclau and poststructuralism leave unsatisfactorily theorized. However, the following contains the germ of the discussion:

In fact, the advent of poststructuralism itself has not made much advance in recognizing a place of agency within its cultural analytic. Poststructuralism is largely hampered – as post-Marxist cultural theory still is – by analytical emphasis on determination. The ubiquity and importance of (structural) determination in poststructuralism is perhaps best given in Derrida’s dictum that there is nothing outside textuality. It might reasonably be argued, in fact, that the inescapability of structural determination of some kind is present in poststructuralism from the beginning – that the recognition of the inescapability of linguistic determination in the form of discourse marks the inauguration of poststructuralism itself (Freed 2001: 6).



Poststructuralism, therefore, fails as much as its structuralist predecessor to allow for agency in a plausible way. Freed turns to Taylor after a brief discussion of a ‘crippling incoherence’ in poststructuralism, in which it is realized that any counter-hegemonic initiative must arise apart from structuring pressures; yet at the same time – having reduced human individuals to interpellated subject positions – denying this possibility by the monolithic structuring principles of *difference* (Derrida) and *discourse* (Foucault) (Freed 2001: 6-7). Ideological pressure make even the *idea* of a possible self and impossibility.

Taylor’s conception of positive freedom – against liberalism’s atomized conception of ‘negative freedom’ (freedom from structuring principles) that accords with Taylor’s concept of ‘weak evaluation’ – derives significantly from his conception of persons being hermeneutic, and regards social membership less as a limitation than as an enabling condition of agency. Persons only shape their identities in relation to others; in relation to *alterity* and the background that makes their agency intelligible. Positive freedom amounts to the recognition that choices and circumstances are negotiated.

In this condition, an *atomized* self could have no capacity to act, as both background and circumstances are erased. The argument for positive freedom “facilitates a simultaneous analysis of both determination and the possibility of agency amid interpellative pressures (Freed 2001: 10), and is therefore “the very move necessary to successfully underpin cultural studies as a mode of ethical discourse. Most significantly, it is a move postmodern cultural studies has not yet been willing or able to make” (Freed 2001: 8). Circumstances remain as crucial a part of the background that makes agency both possible and intelligible. As such, Taylor’s concept of positive freedom – by articulating interpellative pressures and an “engaged agency” that involves one’s form of life and bodily existence (Taylor 1995a: 62) – “presents a more adequate foundation on which to ground the aspirations of cultural discourses to speak to ethical problems” (Freed 2001: 10).

Agents have to create the differences that produce agency, and they have to create those differences in consciousness as a discursive product. Cultural studies can be the discourse that objectifies these differences provided it take these conditions of agency seriously and finds ways of articulating both circumstances and choices and the ways they have been negotiated (Freed 2001: 11).

Freed's advice might have been turned from discovering an answer to theoretical problems that (postmodern) cultural studies still faces, to a suggestion that scholars engage in a process of recovering from the field's history of "false starts" and "dead ends" (McGuigan 1992: 31) in order to discover scholarship that was always a part of cultural studies' genealogy. In this respect, Freed's paper does not go far enough as the value of Taylor's work lies not in its capacity to respond to the inadequate conceptions of agency at large in much of cultural theory, but that his conceptions were engendered as a participant in debates that are part of the field's genealogy.

While Taylor (1968) makes no secret of his belief that an "unreconstructed Marxism" would not serve socialist goals of achieving a socialist society - and that he made this claim during the early period of British Cultural Studies - his successive papers on Marx (Taylor 1974; 1978a; 1978b) show quite clearly that it was the political programme and not Marx himself that he was rejecting (Taylor 1968 ISO-181; 1972b). He rejects *Marxism* for the same reasons that he rejects empiricism in social science: each represents an implausible conception of agency, and with palpable consequences for ethics. I have argued that Taylor presents the Romantic and 'expressivist' Marx against the empiricist *Marxism* that Tom Rockmore argues is the 'invention' of Engels. It is easy to line up objectors to this view. And whether or not any of the "Marxisms" to which cultural studies has entertained would agree with Taylor, only a further study could determine.

Perhaps the surest indication of Taylor's connection to cultural studies, and specifically to Hall's enormous contribution to the field, is Taylor's inclusion in *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (Gilroy *et al.* 2000). Taylor's essay is one I have referred to a number of times, and concerns the question of multiple modernities against the Enlightenment and acultural conception of a single modernity – *acultural* being the one to which modernization theories of development subscribe (Taylor 2000b: 366-367) – whereas a *cultural* theory allows for difference and differentiation across cultures, and allows for conceptions of modernity that are ascribed differently from one culture to the next. The interstices between these and their related 'multiple modernities' remain points of dislocation.

Taylor adds to his discussion the concept of the "social imaginary" (Taylor 2000b: 370-374). "I'm talking about the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social

surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms: it is carried in images, stories, legends, et cetera” (Taylor 2000b: 370). Social imaginaries are shared at large, and possibly across an entire society (Taylor 2000a). It “is that common understanding which makes possible common practices, and widely shared sense of legitimacy” (Taylor 2000b: 371).

Humans operated with a social imaginary well before they ever got into the business of theorizing about themselves (Taylor 2000a: 26).

The idea of a ‘public sphere’ is one imaginary - delivered to discourse by recent theory, but having existed long before that. The idea of ‘the people’ is another. (Perhaps these and other terms become public currency when they have already expired.) Nonetheless, comparisons between Taylor’s ‘social imaginary’ and Hall’s ‘ideology’ suggest a striking like-mindedness. Taylor’s option for the *cultural* against the *acultural* suggests a similar affinity. The notion of ‘multiple modernities’ suggests a way to understand linkages between society, culture, and difference. But in his paper, Taylor is really speaking about the linkages between the representational and expressive workings of language in modern societies - a theme to which many in cultural studies could readily respond. This is instructive: Taylor is always one to open spaces for discussion rather than to close down debate with dogmas ready to hand. His way is dialogical, not monological. Thus he ends his paper:

[T]here is the entire phenomenon of development, that is, the evolution of societies under the impress of others, more advanced, who borrow, adapt, create new and hybrid forms. We are still looking for a language to understand this, to bridge differences, make comparative studies.

I have been trying to suggest some directions in which we might look for the languages we need. I hope they will prove fruitful (Taylor 2000b: 373-374).

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