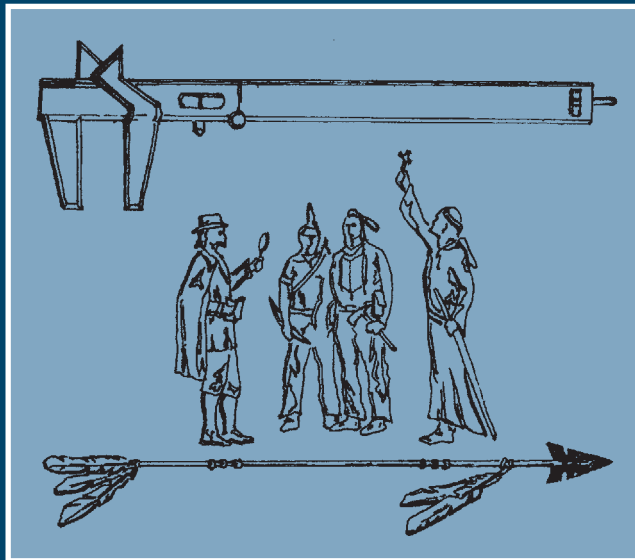# The Promise of Poststructuralist Sociology

*Marginalized Peoples and
the Problem of Knowledge*

Clayton W. Dumont Jr.

THE PROMISE OF POSTSTRUCTURALIST SOCIOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

*What is Enlightenment? . . . It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics
that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus,
as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.*
—Michel Foucault (1984/1997:101,125–26)

Early in our new century, there is still little agreement about what post-
structuralism is and what it means for sociology. Indeed, we might say
that the label *poststructuralist* refers to a group of philosophers, social
scientists, historians, literary scholars, and linguists whose affinity for each
other is more a function of their critics than an assemblage of their own mak-
ing. Nonetheless, in North America a conversation over the meaning and
consequences of poststructuralism began to emerge in the social sciences in
the last decades of the twentieth century. "Conversation," though, is too nice
a word. Angry argument is a more telling description.

Racialized, ethnic, and cultural minorities were largely and conspicuously
excluded from the debate of previous decades; and I hope this book speaks to
that omission. Despite the tremendous impact that Cultural Studies and Post-
colonial Criticism—traditions heavily influenced by poststructuralism and
where ethnic and cultural minorities are a major presence—had on anthropol-
ogy in the 1980s and 1990s, American sociologists mostly resisted these incur-
sions. Consequently, a tremendous opportunity to reinvigorate sociology,
making it more relevant for marginalized populations was lost. It is time to re-
think that mistake.

Writing as a proponent, my position is that a sociology informed by post-
structuralist thought will increase sociologists' intellectual, civic, and political
power. Yet how does one write a book about an intellectual movement that in-
sists upon, indeed celebrates, its own lack of structure? How can one hope to
write truthfully about a tradition that willfully and ruthlessly strives to pry
open the politics of any truth telling, no matter how esteemed or sacred? And
how can newcomers, particularly students, ever hope to comprehend let alone

appreciate the mind-bending writings that one of my less than appreciative colleagues disparages as "that postmodern gobbledygook"?

My insistence on revisiting and rethinking a debate that many American sociologists are happy to believe was finished by the late 1990s will draw wary glances from colleagues who want to get on with the business of producing scientific knowledge. Social scientists, after all, continue to develop careers by creating and defending elaborate systems of definitions that they hope help us better understand the social world. Indeed, for generations sociologists have even gone so far as to imagine that these understandings can improve the lives of humanity around the globe.

My argument is that leading American sociologists in the 1980s and 1990s largely missed the tremendous intellectual and political potential of poststructuralist philosophy. Their unwillingness or inability to adequately consider the power of poststructuralist criticism stemmed from a self-protecting blindness to their own cultural inheritances and worldview. As a result, they failed to appreciate the reasons behind the appeal that these writings hold for many intellectuals from marginalized populations.

I argue that sociology's central organizing principles are inherited from Greek and Christian ancestors and that the lack of attention paid to these philosophical and theological assumptions is at the root of American sociology's overwhelmingly hostile reaction to poststructuralism. Furthermore, had the structure of institutionalized sociology not been so thoroughly inundated with Greek and Christian presuppositions, poststructuralist criticism would not have appealed to intellectuals from marginalized groups to the extent that it has. After all, the disciplined quest for purity of understanding and foundational truth—an endeavor that has caused no shortage of pain and suffering for oppressed populations of many kinds—has its complex origins in Greek and Christian cultural histories. This quest, in recent centuries having become a scientific undertaking, is at the heart of what motivates contemporary poststructuralist critique.

With these European origins in mind, it is important to acknowledge that my own identity is fundamentally related to my affinity for this difficult French philosophy. I am a mixed blood, enrolled member of the Klamath Tribe from southern Oregon. My paternal family is both Klamath and Umpqua (another southern Oregon tribe), and my mother's people are fourth- and fifth-generation loggers who homesteaded close to the Klamath reservation early in the last century. When I discovered poststructuralist philosophy, and this happened in spite of the objections of my faculty advisers in sociology, graduate school was salvaged for me. Without Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and later Gayatri Spivak, T. Minh-ha Trinh, Henry Giroux, Judith Butler, and Homi K. Bhabha, I would have dropped out and gone home. With the help of these thinkers, I soon learned to understand myself as a "nontraditional" student "from the margins." Poststructuralism authorized my confrontations with powerful representational strategies deployed by privileged, professional sociologists.

Derrida remains one of the most controversial of the thinkers responsible for unsettling, poststructuralist challenges to traditional Western philosophy (philosophy that is the ancient origin of modern sociology). In an essay published nearly forty years ago, Derrida writes of the difficult birth of this poststructuralist turn in the social sciences.

> Here there is a kind of question, let us still call it historical, whose *conception, formation, gestation,* and *labor* we are only catching a glimpse of today. I employ these words, I admit, with a glance toward the operations of childbearing—but also with a glance toward those who, in a society from which I do not exclude myself, turn their eyes away when faced by the as yet unnamable which is proclaiming itself and which can do so, as is necessary whenever a birth is in the offing, only under the species of the nonspecies, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity. (Derrida 1966/1978:293, emphases in original)

Derrida calls the birth a "terrifying form of monstrosity." The decades following the publication of his essay bear out this prophecy. Fear and desperation, and outright hatred of the birth, erupted in sociologists' professional meetings and in sociological writings.

Sociologists pursued at least three distinct albeit overlapping attacks on the terrifying newborn. Perhaps most important is the claim that poststructuralism equals relativism, nihilism, nominalism, solipsism, or subjectivism. Susan Hekman (1986:196) asserts, "Derrida and Foucault lead us toward a nihilistic Tower of Babel." Rosalyn W. Balogh and Leonard Mell (1994:83,89) see an "ultimate subjectivism" that can only end in "a Hobbesian version of society as a war of all against all." Stephan Fuchs and Steven Ward (1994:506) worry that the birth of Derrida's monstrosity will bring "a crisis in solidarity, organizational cohesion, and professional communication." In these and in countless other alarmed sightings there is great fear of destabilizing long institutionalized methods for producing scientific knowledge.

Much of this dread stems from the closely related worry that poststructuralism will destroy a prerogative for making political claims that sociologists have gained only with generations of hard, disciplined, scientific scholarship. If the foundations for truth making are overwhelmed, this criticism goes, then sociology loses any authority to claim that its understandings are superior to those of anyone who cares to claim anything. Thus Pauline M. Rosenau (1992:139) maintains that sociologists will be forced "to relinquish any global political projects" as we "struggle to survive in a normative void." Ward (1997:785) goes even further, arguing that this lack of foundation is dangerous. "Without the trust and moral commitment which realism generates," he exclaims, "all social interaction and communication would break down under the weight of paranoid suspicion." Anxiety, here, tends to be over consequences and not about the merits of poststructuralist arguments per se.

A third criticism claims that poststructuralist writings are purposefully unintelligible or a kind of elaborate scam designed to fool people into believing outright nonsense. Jerry L. Lembcke (1993:67) writes of "pig Latin" while Michael Faia (1993:65) refers to "the word salads of the mentally deranged." Randall Collins (1992:184) lampoons that the academic jokester Erving Goffman is probably responsible for the whole charade since "the condition of 'being dead' is just a social construct." Todd Gitlin (1998:71) finds in the new birth only the schizophrenic, nihilistic "blank stare of the postmodern," while George Ritzer (1997:xvii) describes these works as "self-consciously unreadable." Although these attacks are vicious and overstated, it is true that many poststructuralist writings are difficult to decipher.

Although that is not my primary motivation, I write with each of these criticisms in mind. Poststructuralist thought is not nonsensical, and missing the great potential found in these admittedly dense texts is far too high a price for scholars to pay for this flimsy excuse not to read closely and carefully.

Nor does poststructuralist scholarship impede political work. On the contrary, the rigor of poststructuralist analyses promotes a hyper-awareness of the politics found in all knowledge creation. And this awareness is precisely why it appeals to many nontraditional intellectuals. Poststructuralist writings, seriously considered, can help sociology become a far more inclusive and vibrant project.

As a poststructuralist, I assume that all knowledge is political. Thus I understand political work as my *primary* endeavor. Notions of pure knowledge or pure research or knowledge for the sake of knowledge make no sense to me—except perhaps as historical curiosities. In fact, the very fearful charges of "relativism," "nihilism," "solipsism," and "subjectivism" that prop up this alleged political paralysis appear to a poststructuralist's gaze as profoundly political gestures. Recognizing these accusations as political actions leveled in defense of hardened cultural traditions requires careful exploration of their extended cultural origins.

In his famous essay, "The Promise" (1959), C. Wright Mills argues that sociology ought to help people see the too often unrecognized links between extended history and personal biography. Mills thought that sociology could teach people to understand how social history and individual actions come together in society. In the early chapters of my book, I take this tack. The founding assumptions of our methods for making knowledge (which in the opening chapter students will learn to call "epistemology") become, in the pages that follow, sociological phenomena. Understood as cultural forms with long and complex genealogies, familiar social scientific habits are less comforting and the possibility of new intellectual assumptions is less frightful.

Relieved of some very enduring superstitions, a poststructuralist-inspired sociology can finally lay claim to the civic duty and public responsibility that generations of sociologists have sought. As differences within and among societies explode, spread, and overlap, the freedom that Enlightenment-era Europeans dreamed about grows more elusive. Only a fearless investigation and

critique of sociology's most cherished epistemological (and culturally inherited) assumptions can sustain sociologists' honest participation in that dream for much longer.

Coming as I do from a nonacademic background, I learned early in my university education that academics' dreams of freedom and equality are often scarcely recognizable to, and at times quite patronizing of, the people and social spaces where I feel most comfortable. The social science I learned from my graduate and undergraduate professors left me unconvinced of its claims and uninspired by its aspirations. I was interested in politics and social issues even as a small boy, but I did not grow up around educated, middle-class people. Academic culture initially struck me as strange. I remember marveling at how seriously professors took themselves and their works. I soon realized that they believed unequivocally in the superiority of their knowledge over that of all other knowing traditions. Because social scientific narrations were given a privileged status by the sociologists from whom I learned, I soon found myself struggling to reconcile those scientific accounts with the narrations of friends and family who often became the unwitting objects of my sociological gaze.

Most of my extended family has at some point worked in the timber industry, and most of my maternal family members are quite proud of their "time in the woods." During my graduate school years at the University of Oregon, there was an all-out cultural, economic, and political struggle over the fate of the forests of the Pacific Northwest. I very much wanted to understand, and to help others understand, what was happening to our timber-dependent communities. I endeavored to write a doctoral dissertation that would do exactly that. However, explanations of "class consciousness," "resource mobilizing social movements," or "ideal types" made me increasingly aware of the fact that sociology and sociologists are themselves thoroughly cultural and political entities. Ironically, then, my familiarity with small, timber town culture was more hindrance than help. I spent countless hours fretting over how my family and friends would react to being sociological categories written about in tones of analytic distance. Ultimately I finished a rather traditional academic dissertation, but I balked at revising it for publication. I simply could not sanction the conspicuously unacknowledged power of the academic renderings that structured the project.

By the time I was a junior at Southern Oregon State College, it was painfully clear to me that being Indian was destined to be a constant annoyance should I choose a future in academe. The authority of science was always at work in any academic discussion of Indians and our ways. But social scientists, particularly the anthropologists, were rarely willing to admit that their queries, desires, and ideals were anything but natural and designed to increase a universalized knowledge of humanity. Worse still, they routinely denied they had this power even as they constantly invoked it.

During my graduate school years, one professor who knew of my fondness for fishing asked me if my Indian side had a problem with my white side putting

live bait on a hook. Another wanted to know, "what happens to you when you are with other Indians?" I wanted to tell him that we get gut-splitting laughter from the telling and retelling of questions like his. But, I refrained and wished someone or something would teach him that his scientific gaze was neither objective nor without consequences. Both of these individuals and their institutions possessed and wielded great power. However their status and that of their institutions—status that gave them the power to pronounce judgment on the merit of my work—did not require that they see their scientific ways as cultural and political acts.

My academic experiences since leaving graduate school have only strengthened my conviction that scientific knowledge, while powerful and often of monumental benefit, must not be allowed the status of extra-cultural, extra-political truth. By the time I obtained an academic post at San Francisco State University in 1991, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 was federal law. This hard-won statute finally made it illegal for museums and universities to hold and "collect" the grave contents of deceased Native Americans. The debate over NAGPRA was and is intense. Many in the scientific community continue to believe that the law amounts to destruction of their scientific data.

The vast majority of Indians, including myself, tend to see things very differently. In this case, then, the power of scientific narrations is directly confronted by Native reasoning(s) that are often well beyond what many scientists can appreciate or even tolerate. Indeed, successive chairs of the Sociology Department on my own campus repeatedly engaged me in vigorous debate over what they see as the overzealousness of the law. These knowledge politics are taken up in considerable detail in the penultimate chapter of the book.

Similarly, chapter 6 stems from my frustration with the assumed authority of academic narrations purporting to depict the reality of affirmative action programs in the United States. Although I have benefited in multiple ways from affirmative action policies, I do not accept any of the accounts contained in the widespread and vigorous debates over these initiatives as descriptions of an empirically verifiable reality. Rather, I see these scientific and judicial portrayals as active and politically powerful constructions of me, my family, and many of my friends. These politics, I maintain, are far better navigated by sociologists who understand and appreciate the challenges brought to the academic table by poststructuralist writings. Chapters 5–6 both demonstrate why and how a poststructuralist-informed sociology can increase the political efficacy of cultural and racialized minorities.

My short biographical reflections point to politics as an enduring part of all knowledge making, but they are not an argument for a more penetrating, more accurate, more comprehensive sociology. Rather, they point to the contingency of all sense making. In the words of Steven Seidman (1997: 37), they "relativize sociology." That is, they support his request that we learn to understand sociology as "a local practice" with "conceptual strategies and

thematic perspectives . . . indicative of a particular tradition rather than . . . a universal language of the social." Sociology should not, as he says, "fantastically imagine its conventions as providing a privileged access to the social universe" (54).

Once again, my argument is that leading American sociologists of the 1980s and 1990s missed a tremendous opportunity to increase the relevance of sociology for a wider, more diverse audience. This failure stemmed from these sociologists' unwillingness or inability to think critically about the discipline's Greek and Christian origins. A close examination of cultural assumptions inherited from their Greek and Christian predecessors can help professional sociologists see poststructuralist writings in a less hostile light. This, in turn, will lead to a sociology that can be far more productive for marginalized populations. My argument is made over six chapters.

Chapter 1, "Meeting The Monster: Understanding Poststructuralist Assumptions," is an extended introduction. Because I want this text to be accessible to undergraduate theory students, I begin with demonstrations and stories from everyday life that provide easily accessible, interpretive context. In these early pages, students and colleagues can both gain access to assumptions routinely made by poststructuralists and recognize how these assumptions are consonant with their everyday experiences.

Chapter 2, "A Genealogy of the Scientific Self," locates contemporary sociologists' epistemological assumptions and political aspirations in much older Greek philosophy and Christian theology. My aim in these pages is to demonstrate that our Greek and Christian predecessors pursued unobtainable, faith-based certainty, and that structuralist sociologists have failed to critically interrogate their allegiance to these divinations.

Chapter 3, "Toward a Post-Christian Ethic of Responsibility in Sociology," substantiates the Christian origins of contemporary, structuralist sociologists' sense of political responsibility. I argue that the biblical God—understood as a discipline demanding, hard to know, center of certainty—remains the unexamined source of the assumption that viable political work requires a general, thematically coherent sense of history and society. Ultimately, I conclude that the quest for social and historical structure inhabited by an essential human agency is politically debilitating. Chasing our own theological tales distracts us from developing far more pressing, more earthly, and actually obtainable political acumen.

Chapter 4, "The American Debate on Postmodernism," retraces some of the heated controversy of the 1980s and 1990s as it unfolded in American sociologists' writings about poststructuralism, or "postmodernism" as these perspectives were routinely labeled. In this chapter I connect the major objections raised by these critics to sociology's culturally inherited and faith-based assumptions explored in chapters 2–3. I focus, in particular, on these sociologists' stated desire to include marginalized others while simultaneously trying to defend their own epistemological beliefs.

Chapter 5, "Who's Understanding Whose Past? Telling the Truth about Native Dead," is a political document written by a Native sociologist (me) using poststructuralist writings. Anthropologists' attacks on NAGPRA, attacks they claim are mounted from their concern for objective truth, are rethought and rearticulated using voices of Native peoples. Acting as a political intervention, the chapter recasts anthropological fables of objectivity as acts of political aggression. Anthropological narrations of Indian histories are routinely awarded the status of "facts" and "evidence," I argue, only because Europeans came to the Americas in overwhelming numbers and carried guns. Thus, far from being a fight over "truth," Native American struggles to reclaim our dead are better understood as the most recent confrontation with colonialist power that these physical anthropologists uncritically assume as their birthright.

Chapter 6, "Taking Charge of the Affirmative Action Debate: Social Science and Racial Justice," is both analysis and political strategy informed by poststructuralism. The central argument of the chapter is that the major components of the debate over affirmative action have no inherent structure. "Race," "merit," "discrimination," "individuality," and "equal opportunity" can never be finally defined, and they will never have their truth laid bare for all right-minded people to witness. Neither affirmative action nor its societal consequences are "empirically verifiable," in the sense of scientific truth that can end political struggle through appeals to the objective qualities of social structure. These programs and their consequences, I argue, are always constructed, comprehended, and maintained from within the midst of political struggle. Because poststructuralists understand politics, and not discovering "the truth" about affirmative action, as our primary intellectual duty, I maintain that we are better poised to develop the skills and strategies necessary to defend these programs.

I

MEETING THE MONSTER

Understanding Poststructuralist Assumptions

To my mind these endless abstractions, at best, are the grindstones of the garrulous;
at worst, they are the word salads of the mentally deranged.
—Michael Faia (1993:65)

It is my intention that this text be readable and politically relevant from the outset. Although there will necessarily be a substantial amount of abstraction and difficult-sounding terminology to master, these discussions and terms are illustrated with detailed examples grounding them in everyday life. Abstractions are most accessible when surrounded by the context of lived understandings. This said, let me be honest and up-front about obstacles that accompany initial encounters with poststructuralist writings and thinking, including the work you have just begun.

For poststructuralists, there is no extra-social access to the world. One can only know reality by using tools (language, imagery, theory, and methodology) that are always socially acquired. Although other social theorists (e.g., the philosopher Immanuel Kant and the sociologist Max Weber) were quite forthright in acknowledging this lack of direct access to the world, poststructuralists have abandoned *even the desire* for an unmediated approach to reality. Think about this for a moment. Poststructuralists find even the apparently basic pursuit of objective truth to be an assumption that ought to be questioned—an assumption whose social history should be explored and analyzed. Many social scientists find this unsettling. They speak and write of feeling intellectually paralyzed, as if banished into vastness without any firm ground in which to place even temporary anchors. Yet others, including myself, find this orchestrated and perennial disturbance to our patterns of understanding enlightening. Nonetheless, questioning the wisdom of pursuing objective truth is a poststructuralist habit that many find difficult to swallow.

Let me begin by immediately living up to my promise to provide you with examples from everyday life. Imagine that the coffee mug I am drinking from this morning is placed in the middle of the classroom where our theory lessons this semester are taking place. Now we have made it our task to discover and understand "the real" qualities of the mug. What is it, exactly? How might we arrive at a definition that anyone in her right scientific mind could agree with? What methods can we employ to get so near to understanding the essence of the mug that the correctness of our definition will become accurate enough to transcend time and place? Our goal is to depict *only the qualities of the mug itself*. If a scientist one hundred years from now is to agree with our definition, our account will have to be as free as possible from the prejudices of our own time. The same is true for geography and culture. We want our description to be accurate regardless of whether our classroom is in California, Austria, or Australia. Initiated in the time of Socrates and Plato (fifth century BC), for centuries this "view from nowhere"[1] has been among the most central goals of intellectuals from European civilizations.

As a poststructuralist, I understand this to be a pursuit of structure. To look for the essence of the mug, for its "actual" makeup, is to look for its inherent structure, that which it *is,* despite any social context where it might be found for a time. But what if the meaning of our mug can never be reduced to the mug itself? What if this coffee-holding, ceramic creation, which happens to be adorned with colors and designs celebrating the University of Oregon (my alma mater) can only always have meaning as it relates to other significations that are not part of the mug itself? Said another way, what if I can only know what the mug is because I also know other things that are not inherent to the object itself?

The mug is a birthday present from my family. Because it came from my wife and sons, the mug of coffee has a warm, reassuring, feeling-of-home quality to it. I have a vivid memory of the smiles on my two sons' faces as they gave it to me. On the other hand, when I unwrapped it I saw that the tag read "coffee mug." Like any good sociologist, I try to be aware of my consumption habits and of their impacts on peoples and places often far away from my desk at San Francisco State University. Thus when I pour my morning coffee, I wonder about where it was grown, about the economic conditions that the farmers who grew the beans live under, about their relations with their own governments, and with the large corporations who buy their crops. For example, I know that the governments of impoverished nations often do all they can to encourage (if not force) farmers to abandon subsistence crops in favor of export crops that can be grown and sold on a large-scale to wealthy multinational corporations for hard currency. Perhaps the farmer who grew the beans that I consumed this morning no longer farms food for local consumption? Maybe s/he is now wholly dependent on global coffee prices for her subsistence? S/he may even be exposed to dangerous agriculture industry chemicals that are used in the race to stay competitive in

a global market? Obviously, neither the love of my family nor my environmental and political concerns can be found in my new mug, itself. As an object, the mug has significance inasmuch as it relates to meanings and concerns that are in excess of its physical presence.

To be a *post*-structuralist ("post" means "after") means to be no longer interested in searching for truths (the "real" structures) contained in things themselves. The meanings of the objects of the world, including my birthday present, are as varied and unstable as the narrative threads that provide for their interpretation. I could have gone on for some time about how the importance of a simple coffee mug arrives from outside of itself: the meaning of its decorations, of its place of manufacture, the significance of ceramics, and so forth. No doubt you could add your own list of descriptors to the conversation. But, you may also still be intent on asking, what is the mug *really?* Doesn't it still have a physical reality that is prior to the narrations within which I have placed it?

As I noted, Western intellectuals have traditionally pursued their belief in objective truth by isolating and de-contextualizing parts of our world. Perhaps the most widespread method for doing so is to introduce numerical and geometric representations. After all, an eleven-centimeter-tall piece of circular ceramics is the same regardless of where it is found or in what context it exists. If I am mathematically capable enough, I can figure out the volume held by the mug, its circumference, diameter, and construct a whole host of defining mathematical portrayals. So why would poststructuralists insist on rethinking the desire for numerical representations of reality that seem to be correct despite any temporal (time), cultural, or geographic context?

There are two related answers to this question. First, poststructuralists do not necessarily find fault with this style of knowing itself. Isolating, de-contextualizing, and applying numerical representations to existence continues to show itself to be a powerful way of understanding. The problem is rather one of questioning the absolute authority assumed by the users of these styles of understanding. In other words, if we can show that structuralist desires are born in the particular circumstances (many of which we will trace in the following pages) of European history, does it not follow that the spread of these traditions may be more a function of European colonialism and influence than proof of their obvious and universal correctness? Surely it is foolish to believe that had native Australians or Native Americans occupied and conquered Europe we would now think so highly of the scientific method. No doubt understanding would be a rather different enterprise, and the effects of these alternative modes of thinking would be a profoundly different world. So if the pursuit of the "real" nature of my coffee mug through de-contextualizing, mathematical calculations is itself a political outcome, a historically arrived at, culturally specific desire, do these geometric, numerical accounts depict a reality contained in the mug itself? Or, do these meanings *also come to the object from outside of itself*: not unlike my narrations about family and the political economy of coffee?

Recall that this coffee mug story all began as an illustration of initial obstacles to learning to think in a poststructural way. Said simply, poststructuralist arguments can be difficult because they assume that desires for an existence made up of definable, verifiable, essential structures (desires to defy the contextual contingencies of time, place, and culture) are best understood as effects of time, place, and culture. Structuralist desires for extracultural understandings *are themselves cultural understandings*! Given that the social realities studied by sociologists are far more complex than any coffee mug, you can begin to see why questioning the very foundations of knowledge making appears ominous to many social scientists. How can we ever get anywhere in the already difficult business of knowing (which, after all, is what professional intellectuals are paid to do), if we continually and forever circle back on ourselves to interrogate the "how we know" of our "what we know"? Although not new to sociologists, who refer to this self-awareness as "reflexivity," poststructuralists have taken this self-critical attitude to a level that very few, particularly American, sociologists have been yet willing to tolerate, let alone embrace.

Even when one decides that the effort is worthwhile, scanning the torturous sentences of many of the writings of the thinkers now labeled poststructuralist, is enough to send most newcomers to social theory screaming into the night. Indeed, many a seasoned social scientist has thrown up his or her hands in disgust at the apparently unconquerable composition contained in poststructuralist texts. For example, in this chapter's epigraph Faia (1993:67) refers to the writing of Michel Foucault as "the word salads of the mentally deranged." Later in his text, he laments, "the human mind does not work this way." Similarly, Jerry L. Lembcke (1993:67) refers to poststructuralist writings as "facades of theoretical sophistication" that he hopes his students will recognize for the "pig Latin" that they really are. As I have already said, these complaints are overstated, but they are not without some merit.

Let's consider another passage from the essay by Jacques Derrida cited in the introduction. Despite his many vociferous critics Derrida remains perhaps my favorite thinker. "The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the episteme as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent." (1966/1978:279)

What on the Creator's blue earth could such sentences possibly mean! Many readers never get past this point. Indeed, I chose this particular set of sentences precisely because they are a favorite of my students, who at first glance believe them to be totally nonsensical. However with their intellectual diligence and a little guidance, the passage and indeed the whole of Derrida's essay on social science becomes not only intelligible but profoundly insightful. We will return to these difficult lines by the end of this chapter. By then, we will be in a better

position to assess the wisdom contained therein. In the meantime, there are still other initial impediments to understanding poststructuralism.

Despite the attempts at comprehensive definitions, there is no single definition of poststructuralism.[2] Making any attempt at definitive description still more improbable, in the United States the label is often taken to be synonymous with "postmodernism." Together these labels have been used to group a variety of thinkers from varied academic disciplines and national origins who write in different languages for different purposes. Usually, this collection is said to include thinkers ranging from, but not limited to, Derrida, Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Joan W. Scott, Homi K. Bhabha, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Henry Giroux, Zygmunt Bauman, Jean Baudrillard, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Trinh Minh-ha, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

The homogenization legislated in the creation of this mega-camp of "postmoderns" is a function of critics' perspectives and not a sign of agreement between theorists and their followers who at times are downright hostile toward each other. Critics who too quickly tag this immense diversity "postmodern" and then move to the attack, are doing poor scholarship. Lumping together such vast difference certainly helps one dismiss a great deal of thinking in short order, but it does little to promote thoughtful, productive understanding. Even the most cursory of readings reveals that the majority of these thinkers do not use the terms *postmodern* or *poststructuralist* in their writings or in descriptions of their own works.[3]

Recognizing the Monster: "The Species of the Nonspecies"

So how as students and teachers of a poststructuralist sociology are we to deal with this confusion? How can we understand poststructuralism if no one can say for sure what it is? Our answer to this difficulty lies in furthering our understanding of the "post" notation in the label: *post*-structuralism. Remember, "post" means *after*. To think in a poststructuralist way, then, means no longer seeking to document the existence of a structured, at least somewhat stable, and eventually comprehensively understood social reality. It means to think and write at a point after the pursuit of a structured reality has lost its appeal. It means being part of a very different intellectual species.

Remember, we live, work, and attend classes at locations in time, culture, and political climates. Sociology never happens in a social vacuum. Whether we are considering the thinking of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, or authors labeled poststructuralist, the significance and meaning of theory shifts with context. For example, over time in the United States prevailing opinions about Marx and his works have varied tremendously. Although several generations of Americans have been taught that Marxism is evil, the intensity level of anticommunist propaganda has waxed and waned throughout the

years. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many Americans openly sympathized with socialist ideals. By the 1950s, though, a red-hysteria had spread through the land and people were taught that "Communists could be anywhere"—in the schools, in government, and in their neighborhoods. My point is that any theoretical tradition becomes what it "is" from within the context of times, places, and politics. (This should sound familiar; remember how my coffee mug got its significance?) Writing and reading a book about poststructuralist sociology are practices that exist within what Foucault called "conditions of possibility."

You might be tempted to argue that "Clay decided" to write this book to set the record straight, to quell the critics, and to tell the truth once and for all about poststructuralism. But this is too simple and misses the point. I am not just arguing that critics are mistaken about what poststructuralism is; I am saying that they are wrong *precisely because* they try to make poststructural thinking into a stable, containable "is." Perhaps the first lesson when learning to think in a poststructural way is that the instability of social reality must be studied from within this same instability. From a poststructuralist perspective, neither I, as the author of the pages you hold in your hands, nor the meaning of the writing on these pages have anything like a stable essence. The narrations that you read in this text are effects (complicated outcomes) of our experiences in time, culture, politics, and geography. I have reasons for promoting a poststructuralist approach to sociology, but they do not include an attempt to say what the meaning of such a diverse list of authors' texts "really are." Indeed, it is more accurate to say that others' misguided attempts at such pronouncements are a condition (found in recent decades among too many American sociologists) of my own motivation for this writing.

Consider that for me to produce any such definitive narration, I would have to escape from the unstable narrations of life (mine and countless others') that continue to constitute me as a person and that therefore inform how I understand the works of these authors. Then, you readers would have to escape the contingencies of your own lives and all uniformly read the sentences I create. This means that each of you would have to read my words as having exactly the same meanings and significance. This highly unlikely occurrence would need to happen after I purge all the "bias" born of my life from my reading of poststructuralist thinkers. Again, it is all but impossible that this will ever occur. So why should we assume that there is a "real poststructuralism" in all of this interpretation of interpretation?

Some of you have heard about poststructuralism (or, more likely "postmodernism") before. Have these opinions impacted what you expect to read here? Does the relative weight of these expectations relate to your respect or lack of respect for the person who provided you these assessments? Certainly my writing this book has to do with how I perceive prominent American sociologists to have read, and not read, the works of thinkers I find immensely important. So again, let us anticipate the impossibility of discerning the "real" poststructuralism: Is it

what I write here today? What you read here? What you reread here five years (full of attitude-altering experiences) from now? Is it the critics' readings of the thinkers in the above section? My readings of the works of the authors just listed? Or, is it my readings of the critics who have read from that list?

Admitting and embracing this overwhelming complexity means recognizing this writing as an articulation (a pronouncement, a giving over of meaning) born of the complicated, changing affairs of my life and the lives of those who influence and provoke me. In turn, you readers glean meaning from within the instability of your lives, and from the lives of those whose commentaries on postmodernism or poststructuralism you have paid attention to. Thus as a poststructuralist, I understand that this book can only be written, read, and made sense of from within the complexities and contingent qualities of many unstable agendas. Poststructuralist thought *cannot* be reduced to structure. To attempt such a reduction is to miss a fundamental lesson of poststructuralism.

If poststructuralism has no essence, no inherent structure, then it is not a difficult jump to assert that authors who embrace this label also lack a core structure. Why, except due to habit, should we assume that I, as the author of the text, am a stable, essential, self-directing being? This question is at the center of the first half of this book, and we will take a much more detailed historical approach to its answer in chapter 2. For the moment, though, we can further our introductory discussion by questioning that perhaps most cherished of American beliefs about the nature of being human: "individualism."

Most Americans like to think that they are individuals who in exercising free will make independent choices in life. But was I born "an individual"? Should we suppose that the earliest humans understood themselves to be "individuals"? Or, have we all learned along the way that this is what we are?

Given that many societies do not, and have not, championed the idea of individualism, should we assume that everyone *has* individuality, even if they do not know this is the case? Are those who do not know, and have not known themselves to be individuals, misguided? Misled? No doubt most Americans have little trouble with the assumptions in such logic. Indeed, if we consult one of our society's popular culture icons whose very character is to seek out all that is unknown and different, we find Star Trek's television starship heroes maintaining that not only are all humans everywhere "individuals," but even life-forms alien to earth are inherently individual.[4] Thus the most easily understood and far too simple answer to questions about why I wrote this book is to say that it was an individual decision. It is also, then, an act of cultural literacy (a learned "appropriate" behavior) to refer to my "free will" when asked to explain why I spent so many long hours learning and writing about something as difficult as poststructuralism.

If I had to learn that I am an individual and that I have this thing called "free will," then these are socially acquired ideas and not innate or naturally occurring perceptions. Indeed, are not the very notions of individualism and free will tantamount to a sentiment that one is not willing to simply be like

the rest of the group, that one should insist on thinking for oneself? Yet how do we know that we are "individuals" if not by referencing the very group definitions that our individualism would seem to require us to defy? It would seem, then, that like my coffee mug, and like poststructuralist theory, my "self" is an ongoing, social (and thereby unstable) effect.

I can even say that this book will impact how others perceive me and consequently how I perceive myself. Assuming that people actually read the book, my selfhood will be shaped by the way in which they read and by what they say and write about what they read, and they will read it from within unforeseeable contingencies of disparate lives that will amount to their capacity to award it significance. Maybe poststructuralists will be herded out of academic departments as heretics or blamed for allowing a world war to begin? Maybe some prominent thinker who is labeled as a poststructuralist by her critics will invent a new means of space travel? Who knows? My point is that any number of contexts and unanticipated events may impact how the book is read in the future. Inasmuch as my sense of self is tied to my perceptions of these readings, my personhood (what philosophers call "subjectivity") will evolve and change. Like the mug and like social theory, the significance of me (as an object) does not reside within me. My self is not reducible to something I have been taught to value and refer to as "my individuality."

Of course, my relations with the readings of my work done by others plus what I have learned about being an individual are only two minor examples of a far more complicated set of affects and effects that make me who I am from moment to moment. Consider the fact that I am a father of two boys, a husband, a man of forty plus years, a Little League coach, a sociology professor, a Native American, and a friend to many different kinds of friends. To start with the beginning of my abbreviated list, what does it mean to be a father? Either one is born knowing how and what "father-ness" is, or one has to learn it, socially. Surely I have gotten some of my ideas about being a father from my own fathers. (I have two.) They in turn learned about being a father from their fathers. No doubt the many popular images of what "being a good father" looks like, have also affected my image of myself as a father. The mass media, particularly since the 1980s when conservative politicians began shouting about "family values," have provided countless images of what being a good father entails. (My television cable company has a Family Channel that seems to show endless re-runs of *The Brady Bunch* and *The Cosby Show*.) Inasmuch as I am affected by these images, I am an effect of others' narrations. Inasmuch as I internalize and act on these articulations of fatherhood, I affect the ideas about being a father that others, most notably my own boys, come to understand. When I try to be a good father, I inevitably judge myself by comparing my efforts to images of fatherhood that have affected me. Thus in using a learned scale of fatherhood stretching from "goodness" to "badness," I am again an effect, a consequence, a complicated outcome. And none of this is stable. Yet these competing, overlapping, changing narrations of fatherhood that all of us have been exposed to, are the

very condition of the possibility of my self-understanding: "father." Despite the centrality of this role to my self-perception and to the everyday functioning of tremendous numbers of families making up society, the role has no internal essence. It has no inherent structure.

We could have gone through similar discussions for each of the pieces of subjectivity I listed. What does it mean to be a husband, a sociologist, and a friend to this or that friend? Where did I learn how? Are the readings that I continue to do (of narrations that inform my understandings of all of these roles) stable? My point is that I as a subject (as a knower and a doer, as an author) am no more essential, finite, or stable than my coffee mug or poststructuralist theory. I also am not structure.

Let us pause to review where we are in our discussion of initial difficulties in understanding poststructuralist approaches to the study of social reality. I have argued that despite what too many critics maintain, there is no single, identifiable poststructuralism. Poststructuralist writings, like the being now pushing computer keys, have meanings and significance that are forever unstable. Indeed, I have even gone so far as to suggest that *the desire* to know in a final and comprehensive way is itself a profoundly social, albeit long and complex, effect. This, then, is why, as a poststructuralist, I will not supply a simplistic, structuralist description of poststructuralist theory. It is also precisely this unwillingness to assume a structure in subjectivity or in the objects that knowing subjects encounter in life that renders poststructuralist thought difficult to read and comprehend. It is what makes poststructuralism, as we heard Derrida say, "a terrifying form of monstrosity." However, once one becomes comfortable with this poststructuralist sentiment, it is emancipating, both intellectually and politically. The initial obstacles to learning to think poststructurally are now on the table, but the claim of increased political efficacy remains to be considered.

Why Should Sociologists Care about Poststructuralism?

Given all of this complexity and difficulty, why should sociologists and our students care enough to dedicate the hours and effort needed to learn to think poststructurally? Above all, sociology should be socially and politically relevant. Sociology should equip one with tools for understanding and changing society. I believe this style of analysis to have the best chance of improving the lives of underprivileged, impoverished, and systematically abused human beings.

Pursuing sociological understanding as if it were an ever-growing stockpile of truths quickly becomes politically debilitating. Chasing truth has a tendency to remove sociologists from the always-evolving and contingent concerns of, for example, my eighty-three-year-old neighbor who struggled with the onset of Alzheimer's disease, of the homeless Romanian immigrant whose son plays with my son at the community pool, or of the single mothers whose

sons play on the Little League team I coach. In other words, the conviction that there is a "more real" world of the social that escapes the unscientific perspectives of my elderly neighbor, the immigrant, or the mothers, disconnects sociologists from those we know and care for. It sets us up as distant experts who on the basis of our advanced degrees are charged with determining the levels of veracity contained in the perspectives of everyday folks. Furthermore, assuming we have a duty to pursue an overall and underlying structure in social reality (to "advance knowledge") detracts from the moral pursuit of social justice that I see as the most important part of professional, sociological work.

Surely sociology is most relevant when people beyond the doors of our university offices and professional meetings actually care about what sociologists say and think. It makes no political sense to carry on arguments with other sociologists about esoteric problems of theory or methodology while desperate political battles with immediate life consequences rage in the lives of oppressed human beings around the world. Because I do not dream of one day knowing existence as an extra-social structure, I do not spend time and energy chasing it nor engage in academic street fights over the best way to approximate it. As a poststructuralist, I understand existence to be a borderless realm of competing and overlapping organization schemes. For me, truth exists *within* narrations of reality. Truth is not something that exists independently of competing perspectives whose champions strive to isolate it and lay it bare. Truth does not pre-date the rather emotional desire, if not fear-based need, for such certainty; things are quite the reverse. Truth has always been a wholly human destination. As Friedrich Nietzsche (1873/1954:45) put it: "Only through forgetfulness can man ever achieve the illusion of possessing a truth."

Once again, abandoning the pursuit of an ultimately verifiable and structured existence is important for at least two reasons. First, it allows me to concentrate on improving the lives of those I care about. I get to write, speak, and teach about subjects that I find meaningful because they are important to real people with real lives outside of exclusively academic discussions. Second, I am free to explore how fellow human beings organize their lives without the (rather egomaniacal) expectation that I must eventually pass judgment on the accuracy and mistakes in their narrations. This is not to say that I refrain from making moral arguments. I absolutely do make and defend moral and political assertions. However, I do not claim to base my politics on an extra-social, *metaphysical* realm. This last term is one that you will hear throughout the rest of this book, so let us take a moment to discuss its meaning.

"Meta" means other, after, or beyond. Metaphysical, then, refers to that which is beyond or other than the physical. Prior to the nineteenth century, scholars assumed that some ultimate force (usually God) in the universe ordered and caused systematic movement in existence. Understanding this theological force that lay behind and beyond the physical world was the concern of metaphysicians. Metaphysics fell out of favor as the positivist science of the nineteenth century openly declared its separation from, and opposition

to, theology. Science, positivists argued, should validate only what can be seen and positively measured (sociologists still refer to this as "the empirically available world"). Because God is not physically present for scientists to observe and measure, belief in the existence of God is a metaphysical assertion.

Poststructuralists maintain that believing in essential qualities of objects—objects that therefore have inherent meaning (like my coffee mug or my self or a theoretical tradition)—requires defending metaphysical positions. Like attempts to describe God, every attempt to isolate and accurately depict a "really real" world must always fall short. To continue to believe in a structured and ultimately knowable existence, then, is to do so solely on the basis of faith. Thus when I, as a poststructuralist, offer analyses, they are explicitly political interventions (as opposed to attempts at impartial description) and moral arguments. I do not claim that my narrations are based in an objectively structured reality that I can empirically "verify." Indeed, I see such claims as akin to those of earlier generations of intellectuals who sought verification of God's plan. Another example from daily life can add to our appreciation of this important poststructuralist sentiment.

How do Bob and Margaret, my elderly neighbors, understand themselves, me, my family, or our city and state? Before Margaret's death and his subsequent move to a senior center, Bob often saw me leave home at noon on my way to teach a late afternoon seminar. Having trouble with his memory, he asked me on more than one occasion, "do you go to work after noon everyday?" From our conversations over cake and ice cream at the boys' birthday parties, I know he believes that he pays too many taxes and that public employees deserve a large part of the blame. He feels this way in part because he contextualizes the present using a past where he remembers feeling comfortable. He recalls a California with far fewer people, fewer public services, fewer laws, and from his perspective fewer social problems. He and Margaret talked fondly of the 1940s and 1950s. Things then were "made by Americans for Americans"; people shared values and community; and despite hardships, during the war years people were dedicated to the certainty and nobility of their purpose. Margaret lost her first husband in the Korean conflict; Bob served in the Air Force and displayed a bumper sticker identifying his war-time unit on their car.

When my family and I bought a Toyota car, Bob and Margaret were visibly annoyed. How could such nice young people not realize how important it was to buy American products? From the political conversations Margaret and I had over coffee and beer, I know that her perspectives on patriotism, immigration, education reform, and other important social issues were vastly different from my own. For example, she saw that the United States had lost many young men and spent enormous amounts of money (causing shortages, rationing, and heartache at home) to defeat the Japanese not too many generations ago. Now, she and Bob believed, the United States has helped to rebuild a Japan so economically powerful that it threatens to overwhelm American productivity. What's more, she and Bob knew that I spend their

tax dollars presenting arguments to my students that are quite critical of the nationalism that they embraced so completely.

I knew Bob and Margaret to be wonderful human beings and dependable friends. I disagreed completely with the strength of their (what I would call "overzealous") patriotism. I also shuddered at Margaret's near blanket dismissal of any arguments she related to "socialists." As I think back, I remember that Margaret used the word "colored" to refer to our African-American neighbors and looked cross-eyed at me when I told her that I agreed with President Bill Clinton's attempt to modernize the status of gay men and lesbians in the armed forces. Clearly our friendship existed despite having almost no agreement about the social and political issues that we each cared deeply about.

As a sociologist, how am I to think about these potentially unsettling differences? As I have already admitted, my self-perception is fundamentally tied to my sociology. Thus I think that patriotism is a dangerous phenomenon that can allow people to avoid thinking and that can allow leaders to channel great rushes of emotional energy that too often end in unnecessary death and destruction. I also tense with anger when I consider the amount of amassed wealth that exists alongside abject poverty, not only around the world but, here, in the enormously rich United States. Thus although not a Marxist, I routinely hear myself making arguments that most social scientists easily recognize as those of a socialist. I understand why *African American* is a much better term than *colored,* and I cringe when I hear reactionary AM talk radio hosts trivialize the difference as "just more liberal P.C." I am also abhorred by the continuing open and ugly discrimination waged against homosexuals in the United States and around the planet. So given that a great deal of my subjectivity is created in and by my expressions and feelings about these social problems, what are my options for handling Bob and Margaret's also honestly believed opinions?

If I believe that history and reality have essential and singularly truthful qualities, then I somehow have to reconcile the differences between my perspectives and those of my dear neighbors. For example, I remember that in 1995 the Smithsonian Institution proposed to display part of the Enola Gay airplane that dropped atomic bombs on Japan, ending the Second World War. The display was to be part of a fiftieth-anniversary-commemoration of the end of hostilities. However, almost immediately after the plan was announced, newspaper accounts began relating details of a growing controversy over how to narrate the display. Should the captions say that this plane symbolized a great victory in a just and necessary war fought at great human cost to defeat a maniacal enemy? Or should the plane be remembered as a symbol of a great human failure, of human cruelty to humans in abominable proportions, and as a warning to the young—illustrating past generations' inability to solve their differences in less than barbaric ways?

By the time of the controversy, I did not have to ask to know that Margaret would have strong feelings about these news-stories. What to do? Perhaps I should listen closely to her opinions, thinking that I might gain some insight

that was "at least of historical value." After all, I could have concluded, most of that generation was so shaped and formed by that era, by wartime propaganda, that they could never understand those events from a less-biased perspective. I would glean her words for the value of her firsthand experience, all the while remembering that I understood things from a much wider and more objective viewpoint. But Margaret was smart. She would know immediately if she was being patronized. She had piercing blue eyes that would immediately convey that she knew I was merely listening politely while dismissing the real significance that she assigned to each sentence rolling off of her tongue. Another option would be to do what I have all too often seen other academics do and insist on setting wrongheaded opponents straight by insisting on "the facts." Adopting a pose of displayed profundity, I could "wow her" into submission by reciting social scientific understandings of the events and their significance leading up to the war. I could go on for some length about imperialism, colonialism, racism, and state-produced propaganda. I might even secure the victory by researching and presenting statistics illustrating differences between the reality of the American government's behavior and its propaganda claims. There may be still more options (we might admit that we are both partly correct or that we are both completely wrong), but my point remains, if we stick to a structuralist interpretation of existence, there is an essential reality to the events leading up to, and surrounding, the dropping of the bombs, and the argument is over whose account comes closest to truthfulness.

On the other hand, if I take a poststructuralist and more humble position, I can be comfortable with Friedrich Nietzsche's (1882/1974:32) counsel that "conclusions are consolations." There is more than enough room in life for Margaret (who lived very different and longer years than myself) and I to have completely different understandings, and even to celebrate these differences. Understanding that things are more complex than quests for underlying structure can seriously allow for, provides us with a far richer basis for practicing sociology and for doing politics. Perhaps it also suggests the appropriateness and intelligence of genuine respect for the experiences and wisdom of an elder.

Recall that our goal in this section is to illustrate why poststructuralist analyses provide for greater political efficacy than do more traditional social scientific quests to verify "empirical reality." We now need to add a few more analytic tools. This will take several pages, but by the end of the chapter we will come back to recollect Margaret's sense of history within our poststructuralist analysis.

De-centering Subjectivity (Person-hood)

A few pages back, I argued that I (as an author or a father) lack structure. I maintained that my subjectivity is unstable and continuously reconstructed. Let's now extend this "de-centering" to our sociology courses and to the disciplinary training we receive there.

Subjectivity as a centering force is the bedrock of modern structuralist understandings. Essential personhood (understood, e.g., as "the nature of the psyche," as "pure consciousness," or as the qualities inherent to humans' "Being-ness"), is the centering foundation of modern knowledge forms. Remembering that structuralists pursue exactness in what they surmise is an empirically available existence, it makes perfect sense that they should require some stable and central place from where to record their measurements. Knowledge understood as an accumulation requires a consistent foundation: a disciplined knower. Indeed the term *epistemology* (which refers to the study of the bases, possibility, and limits of knowledge), is derived from the Greek *epi* (upon) and *histemi* (I place). Thus knowledge is the result of "placing oneself upon," of adopting the correct posture and position. If the knower is untrained in the correct method of physical observation or is not steadfast in his intellectual composure, then his observations will lack "reliability" (consistency) and "validity" (accuracy).

As sociologists, we learn methods for avoiding systematic bias in our work. For example, we learn to be sure that our sample populations are randomly acquired, to be aware of our potential to influence those we interview, and to understand the gravity of editing decisions as we work with ethnographic data. This is epistemological training, and the self-discipline learned is what gives sociology its status as a science. In these courses, sociology students are taught to discipline their subjectivity, to put their mental and physical acumen into a correct knowledge-gathering posture.

As we shall see in chapters 2 and 3, this discipline is rooted in a cultural despair over the inadequacies of the self that is a very old sentiment in European and European-derived civilizations. We will spend many pages tracing sociologists' modern style of subjectivity (a learned version of being human) to ancient Greece and Judeo-Christian theology, but for the moment I only want to reach back as far as the seventeenth century and the self-examinations of the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596–1650). Like all of us, Descartes inhabited conditions of possibility. His interests, his work, and his self-perception reflected his era, place, and culture.

By his lifetime, Europe had seen recent and serious challenges to many old and established understandings. For example, firsthand accounts of the strange and marvelous peoples, plants, and animals of the Americas were accumulating. Medieval understandings of natural history, based on a mixture of Christianity and the works of Aristotle, had assumed a systematic finality and closure in nature. Known as the "Great Chain of Being," this ordering maintained that everything (from angels to insects) had a proper place and role in the cosmos. Because God was perfect, he had created no more diversity than could precisely fit within existence. This great chain, then, was a classification scheme that showed how all things were related, including hierarchically with God at the top and humans below angels but above other earthly life forms.

The New World held countless marvels that severely disrupted this theretofore neatly cataloged, European existence. Before the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, no known European had ever seen a skunk, tasted corn, heard a Native American language, or smelled the many strange trees, plants, and flowers of the Americas. Adding to this confusion, Galileo used his telescope to see beyond the known heavens, and Copernicus and Kepler had asserted that the earth and planets orbit the sun. Long relied upon imagery, including nothing less than the physical locations of heaven and hell, were thrown into doubt. It is this environment of epistemological disarray as well as the resulting intellectual self-doubt that Descartes attempts to conquer.[5]

The "scholastics" (the Aristotelian Christians) had gone wrong because they assumed that existence made sense only if one first understood the logic of "the big picture." These medievals assumed that pieces of existence were meaningful because they fit deductively within larger, older, and established understandings, and, surmised Descartes, it was their failure to adequately interrogate these grand systems that produced their horrendous errors. Although a devout Christian who was careful not to offend the Church Fathers, Descartes was also influenced by Plato. By his lifetime, Latin translations of long-lost Platonic dialogues were impacting the intellectual classes of Western Europe. In the pages of these dialogues, Descartes heard Plato call for systematic knowledge of the true forms of the things themselves. To free himself from the elaborate prejudices of the previous centuries, he must doubt everything. Accurate understandings of larger existence depended upon disciplining the self. (Students will recognize this sentiment in their professors' encouragement to "make a contribution to the discipline.")

It is difficult to overstate the impact that Descartes has had on modern, Western knowledge forms. His self-interrogation in the discipline-enshrined pursuit of certainty was almost manic. For example, in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* ([1641/1984]1994), Descartes allows his readers into the privacy of his study for an up close look at the rigorous, inward-turned skepticism that he heaps upon himself. In an all-out and self-torturing attempt to purify his mental capacity, Descartes says that he will stop his ears, shut his eyes, withdraw all senses, and eliminate all images of bodily things. As for those worldly understandings that he cannot finally purge, he will force himself to regard them as "vacuous, false, and worthless" (24). Like glimpses into neuroses, for more than sixty pages Descartes treats us to a desperate self-abuse of his perceptions, at one point even contemplating whether he really exists, or whether some demon is at work making him think that he can think. In the end, he falls back upon the only things he is sure of: his God and the goodness of his God. ". . . I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgment which, like everything else which is in me, I certainly received from

God. And since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the kind of faculty which would ever enable me to go wrong while using it correctly" (37–38).

So at the beginning of the modern scientific era, we find Descartes' God guaranteeing that he and all right-minded Christian intellectuals have a "faculty" which, if used correctly, places them in an epistemological relation to existence through which certainty can be discerned. The mind, he says, was created by God. Thus it is separable from the lies often communicated by mere senses that are (after all) shared with lesser animals. This divinely awarded reasoning faculty is indivisible and unquestionably good, although, in humans it requires perfection and protection through technique and discipline. Descartes' attempt at self-overcoming (resolved finally and only by appeals to his God) amounts to a metaphysical centering of a metaphysical subjectivity. Neither the version of personhood he champions nor its position as the basis for all legitimate knowledge can be substantiated by anything greater than his religious faith.

Descartes' theology is the basis of his self-perception, and this theological subjectivity is the only possible center of correct knowing. "If I were unaware of God," he proclaims, "I should thus never have true and certain knowledge about anything, but only shifting and changeable opinions" ([1641/1984]1994:48). Descartes knows what is true because God, who is unquestionably good and does not deceive, gave him this faculty for knowing. This circular reasoning is based in a faith that Descartes placed beyond his formidable power to doubt. For Descartes, there was ultimately no way to justify his belief that this "faculty" or mind could be isolated and purified for the purpose of gleaning knowledge, except through the faith-based, theological reasoning he supplied. I do not mean to suggest that he found this reasoning to be insufficient. Descartes believed unquestionably in his God, and his science was theologically inspired.

Although later generations of structuralists have abandoned Descartes' theological language, the scientific subjectivity (the scientific selves) of modern, structuralist, sociologists remains Cartesian. When sociologists attempt to control bias, when we insist upon discipline in our knowing procedures while pursuing objectivity (even as we grudgingly admit the goal unattainable), when we strive for correspondence between our theoretical models and an objectively present social existence, we are acting in a Cartesian way. Structuralist scientists, then, are trying to cleanse their knowing postures, struggling to place their subjectivity (the Cartesian "faculty") in an epistemological stance that will, as Descartes said, "not enable [them] to go wrong while using it correctly." Indeed Descartes helped institutionalize the subject-to-object binary that remains the basis for the scientific method.[6] In the three hundred and fifty years since Descartes' death, many famous philosophers have struggled to improve upon his call for purity in understanding and the promise of ultimate knowledge that it holds out. Despite the impossibility of

success, these attempts continue; the old and Western disdain for the self, and the discipline this self-loathing perpetuates, remains active. Only in the last four decades of the twentieth century (with the exception of Nietzsche who was horribly alone in his own era) do we find thinkers who seriously question the entirety of this metaphysical, theologically inspired, structuralist project.

I have already said that poststructuralists understand subjectivity to be a complex effect. Our short discussion of the ongoing impact of Descartes' project and the intellectual concerns of his time illustrate how and why this is the case. Descartes' self-interrogation and attempt at self-discipline is one important part of the history of scientific subjectivity. Modern subjectivity is, in part, a Cartesian effect. Yet, and as we will see in chapter 2, this notion that there exists an "I" (a "faculty," mind, ego, etc.) that predates its experiences, or any context where it would arrive only later, is much older than Descartes. One need only consider the Christian concept of "eternal soul" or read the words Plato placed in Socrates' mouth to appreciate the ancient origins of what Derrida has for the past forty years called "metaphysics of presence."

The modern scientist must dream that s/he is (at least in principle) capable of taking on a purity of form that allows her to correctly assess objective reality. S/he must have a stable basis for gathering knowledge. Thus the idea of "empirical verification" requires that the subject (the knower) be understood as a nonproduced presence. The scientific self must be whole and self-contained before and after any particular context where it lives for a time. Because if the personhood of the scientist is always only a complex outcome rooted in the many and specific contingencies of her life, her perceptions have no hope of approaching the objective truth that s/he aspires to. If s/he is an effect of long making, an amalgamation of countless and innumerable episodes of social engineering (her failures, triumphs, loves, hatreds, gains, losses, and the appraisals of her authority figures), her subjectivity can never be completely present in any place or moment. Her self is made of affairs that are not present in the instant when she seeks to do her science. The episodes of her life *are not* physically or temporally present in her research settings, but *they are* the possibility of her understandings. The history and ongoing construction of her self is far too complex to be controlled for by any regimen of discipline, by any epistemological stance, or by any research design. The Cartesian and scientific attempt to purify the "faculty of judgment" can never succeed because this faculty can never be simply present to itself, in all of its significance, all at once. Subjectivity can never be centralized (found whole) in a comprehensive presence. Unless we too agree to believe in Descartes' God, the self is not theologically awarded, and it can never succeed in making itself into a metaphysical essence.

My point is not that our scientist has first of all a pure subjectivity and that life then colors this self in innumerable and unpredictable ways. This would only be a reiteration of the primacy of Descartes' pure "faculty" that would allow us to hold out hope for one day arriving (through discipline) at a purity

of mind. Rather, the point is that social existence *far beyond and before the birth of our scientist* is the very possibility of her having *any subjectivity*. All of the things that have happened to her in life and that continue to make her who she is can have meaning only because of countless events that pre-date her existence (including Descartes' systematic self-disdain).

For example, let's suppose that she speaks English and is an American. Did you know that there was a war between the French and the English that resulted in British colonial control over important parts of North America? There was (The French and Indian War) and the British prevailed, but what if the French had won? There is a good chance that our scientist would now speak French and be part of a United States with much closer cultural ties to France. How would another language and a different history of cultural affiliation have played out through the generations between the French victory and the self of our scientist? Would the form of her government and thus of her citizenship be other than they are today? Presumably, the framers of the American Constitution would have been French aristocrats and not men derived of wealthy British families. So would our scientist have been born into a nation where she acquired political perspectives that looked more French in heritage and less British? How about her aesthetic tastes and her artistic sensibilities? Furthermore, given that our fictitious scientist was born into a United States that evolved much more French and much less British, what of the impact of the American military, economy, and cultural influence on the rest of the world? Would the impact of the French language and French culture not be much greater the world over than it is today? What kind of impact might an increased French American hegemony in the world have on the self-understanding of our fictitious scientist? Of course, it is impossible to know. My point is simply that a British victory over the French in this often forgotten (some might even say obscure), mid-eighteenth century war is one condition of possibility of American subjectivity. Indeed, it is a condition of the very language that animates most Americans' self-understandings.

We could go on with this (what Nietzsche and Foucault called "genealogy") exercise indefinitely. Since our scientist is a woman, we might ask about the many feminist battles of the past and even those yet to come. Would she even be a scientist if feminists of earlier generations had not done what they did? Does the fact that contemporary feminist leaders will surely continue to point out the inequalities in opportunities that exist between men and women in our society have anything to do with her chances of competing successfully (because of legislated fairness) with her male colleagues in some future research competition? Indeed, if she is interested in feminist sociology, might the very possibility of the recognized relevance of such work be tied to the civil rights struggles of countless activists from many historical periods? Again, my point is that there is always much more to any subjectivity than anyone can be aware of in the present of a particular moment. Why then is it not a metaphysical belief to assume that I can have, all at once, in any single

place, enough control over the scattered and complex makeup of my (and thus is it really "mine"?) self to provide a foundation for the gathering and accumulation of truth?

The complexity that is the very possibility of any subjectivity is perhaps limitless. It is certainly more than any discipline or piety can hope to control and domesticate. I sometimes relate this to my own students by telling them that they "cannot push the same bus they are riding in." If disciplinary self-overcoming is to remain an ethos in European-derived civilizations (for knowledge making or entrance to heaven or overcoming self-indulgence), then it is an unrealizable one. One cannot interrogate, evaluate, and subjugate the social origins of one's self from anyplace other than the unstable perspectives of that same self. I can only evaluate my biases by invoking biases.

Because the attempt to discipline one's scientific subjectivity for the purpose of gathering knowledge is already an effect, an outcome of quite researchable political disputes (some of which can be revisited in the pages of Descartes' works), then a truly diligent Cartesian is faced with trying to eliminate the prejudices that are the very possibility of the Cartesian project. In other words, the Cartesian attempt to nullify historical contingency in the quest for epistemological certainty is, itself, a historical and cultural contingency.

Appreciating Margaret on Terms Other than My Own

Clay Dumont de-centered is a consciousness that recognizes the scattered, overlapping, mutating, unstable conditions of its possibility. A de-centered subjectivity understands the impossibility of self-possession and even learns to enjoy the feeling. My father once told me that people are like the infinity of reflections that can be seen when we stand between two mirrors. I think that this is as good an analogy as any I have since come across. If we can imagine that each of the reflections built upon the one prior to it are not exact replications but rather the variety and differences of perception one encounters in everyday living, then my father's mirror illustration is a fine one. I am a reflection not just of my life but also of those lives who react to me, who mirror myself back to me. I am also the lineage of faded and difficult to see reflections that originated long before I had life (complex assemblages of reflections that harbor no coherent theological or metaphysical pattern). Surely then it is folly to attempt to identify any center of "my" (again I have to point out the mistake of claiming possession) self.

Margaret and I, as social and historical effects, shared much social genealogy. Like me, she spoke and read English; she was taught to pay attention to many of the same historical events, although from rather different history books; she watched some of the same television programs and often read the same newspapers; we shared an understanding of many customs, traditions, holidays, and of social etiquette. Because we shared all of this, and were able

to share all of this in part because we were both born into cultures that continue to bear the strong imprint of Christian, Greek, and Roman influences, Margaret and I could interact, understand, and appreciate each other. This common social genealogy, none of which had to unfold through the centuries as it eventually did (that is to say not because of some metaphysical "laws of history" or "divine plan"), is the possibility of the conventions (the social agreements) that Margaret and I relied upon for our daily interactions. However, there was much to Margaret's subjectivity that was nothing like the outcome of my own origins.

Margaret was a Virginian and a proud Southerner. (I once made the mistake of suggesting that she was from West Virginia, which she promptly informed me was "filled with Yankees.") I am from Oregon. The narrations about being from the South that she grew up with were vastly different from the accounts of civil rights battles that I learned to associate with that part of the country. Her father was a Southern minister; one of my fathers was an Indian boy in a Catholic boarding school. She vividly remembered the Second World War; I am just old enough to remember the years of the Vietnam War. All of our understandings of these events (and consequently of ourselves) were made possible by other people and events far beyond the moments Margaret and I inhabited. Yet because I do not pursue nor believe in the possibility of some centered subjectivity, some extra-social, extra-cultural, un-arrived at, Cartesian faculty, I do not require reconciliation of the differences that these vast contingencies produced between Margaret and myself. I have no metaphysical premise about my subjectivity to protect. I feel no need to deny living (hers or mine) to understand living. Inasmuch as Margaret and I are the consequences of ongoing narration and dispute (she is still being constituted and re-collected after her death, even by this writing), we are political outcomes and continuing political events. Thus, and as I have already said, when a poststructuralist argues for the superiority of an intellectual position, s/he does so only by invoking explicitly political and moral (not metaphysical) claims.

My discussions with Margaret remained civil, respectful, and even productive for precisely this reason. Because we were not arguing about God's will, or Truth with a capital T, or any other metaphysical center (and we both understood the excess of self-importance required for those sorts of discussions), we could appreciate each other on terms supplied by each other. I caused Margaret to rethink some of her political opinions, and she returned the favor. Our relationship and my understanding of history grew and flourished because I did not attempt to assume some central, foundational, epistemologically secure vantage from where I could assess the accuracy of her experiences. My goal was to get Margaret to think about her political positions in different (and I thought better) ways and to allow her to do the same for me. I learned an immense amount and developed an intellectual cooperation that would have quickly disintegrated in an adversarial dynamic where the "really real" was under contestation. In fact, my understanding of us as contingent, contestable, and without

a metaphysical center meant that Margaret and I could become fast friends. Defending a center always makes one less amenable to hearing the voices of those defending their own, alternative foundations.

After the Center

Structuralism requires a center. We have just recounted Descartes' attempt to cultivate a self through extreme discipline. We stressed this important cultural event as an attempt to forge an epistemological center. In the end, we noted, Descartes' dream of a fully present faculty (mind) could only be sustained through his faith in his God.

Structure can be imagined to be coherent only because it is thought to have a central framework that governs its outlying parts. For example, if I cannot center my reading of a map by locating myself relative to the center of the depicted area, the map is of little use to me. Similarly, one cannot understand any particular Marxian perspective without first understanding the central notions of dialectical change, materialism, and the labor theory of value. These concepts center Marxian thought. The quality of having structure *requires* a center. Otherwise in any analysis, the definitions that are insisted upon, the lines of logical reasoning that are sketched out, and the analytic divisions that are detailed have no common point of reference to substantiate their relations, each to the other.

Yet, there are many ways to draw a map, many ways to understand labor and production, and infinite ways to make sense of living and of the self. To insist on the indispensability of any particular center, or of centering itself, is to deny this infinite complexity. We are now ready to revisit Derrida's words cited in the opening pages of this chapter. Here is the whole quote again. "The center is at the center of totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the episteme as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent" (1966/1978/:279).

Derrida says, "The center is at the center of totality." In other words, not only does every structure require a center, but it also requires borders, limits, and outlying areas. The center of the map can be recognized as such only because it is equidistant from each edge of the page, and the edges constitute the borders, the "totality" of the map's structure. Likewise, the central premises of any theory are recognizable only because limits to theoretical scope are also recognized. For example, if some well-known Marxian scholar decided tomorrow that Marxists should begin focusing on urban water quality or on the energy conversion efficiency of hybrid vegetables, cries of consternation would be heard immediately within communities of Marxists. These are no doubt interesting and important topics, the critics would say, but they are too far outside the field of the central

concerns of Marxian scholarship. If Marxism tries to be everything, it will end up being nothing. The center, then, makes sense as a center because there are borders drawn around it that define the "totality" to which it acts as center. Maps have borders that limit their domains just as Marxisms (or any analyses) have limits that govern the borders of their concerns.

Derrida continues, and this is the point we have been driving at, " . . . and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere." In other words, how could Margaret or I ever hope to identify common borders to the shifting contexts of our lives or hope to center our very different selves (epistemologically) for the purpose of agreeing on such borders? There could be no absolute outcome to our disagreements because there can be no center to the existence or history that we debated. Every political and intellectual position staked out necessarily relied on meanings, understandings, narrations that lay beyond the borders (beyond any imagined totalized structure) of her or my particular analysis. For example, which are "the facts about *the* Second World War"? The one she knew? The one she knew as it was happening? The one I have read about or heard about from my own grandparents? Every attempt to pin down the "real war" required calling upon images and narrations that had come from others in other places and in other times with other agendas. Likewise, neither my self nor Margaret's self could anchor a structurally coherent understanding of the war because we remain outcomes of seemingly endless, mostly forgotten layers of social effects built upon still earlier effects. We have no center. We can agree on no common totality. As Derrida writes, "The center is not the center."

When we tried to discipline ourselves and speak only of the facts, we found that the very selves that had to recognize these facts were only to be always found elsewhere ("the totality has its center elsewhere"). As I have noted, she sometimes recognized her self by referencing what she called "the South." But that place and time was never present for me and was an edited re-collection for her. This is to say, it was a part of her self (the subjectivity that anchored her perspectives) that was always elsewhere, never simply present. She had to explain to me what *her* "South" was. It had to be imported into the moments of our discussions. Because this center (subjectivity) that is required to render the structure of our understanding coherent is always only to be found elsewhere (and thus cannot anchor any "totality"), "coherence itself, the condition of the episteme [of making knowledge] as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent." In other words, Clay or Margaret or any sociologist, when we attempt to render history, the war, or reality structured and coherent must rely on a fictitious center (a metaphysical lore). And this longing for a metaphysical center is a direct intellectual inheritance from Descartes and from his faith in his God.

This center, the place that disciplined authority attempts to stake out when it moves to pronounce what is real and true, can only bring contradictions. In

trying to free a proposed center from the extended contingencies of living, authority can only always call upon hopelessly contingent understandings. The condition of structuralist truth—a center—can never be isolated from all that constantly threatens to reveal it as a merely contingent set of definitions, definitions that themselves always rely on still other far-reaching contingent definitions for their own comprehensibility. Attempts to define a would-be epistemological center, then, can never succeed. Thus, as Derrida says, the coherence of epistemology is based on contradiction; it is "contradictorily coherent." It is a metaphysician's dream.

Summary

I have argued that poststructuralism is difficult to comprehend because it calls into question building block assumptions of Western knowledge. Subjects (knowers) and objects (the known) have no inherent structure or essence. Because they can only be understood through the extended instability of human narration, interpretation, and re-collection, they are not "empirically verifiable." Things and people have meaning only because they can be related to meanings and understandings that lie beyond their (apparent) presences. Because they must endlessly refer to what they are not to understand what they are, subjects and objects cannot be isolated and understood as per the Cartesian project. Every attempt to center understanding in a wholly present (thus metaphysical) mind or faculty must contradict itself. The "I," and thus the objects it assesses, cannot be reduced to an a priori presence.

From this it follows that sociologists who strive to negate or hide the political bases and consequences of their science are engaged in what is perhaps the most political of all acts—that of persuading others to adhere to their faith. Structuralist pursuits, because they can never achieve finality, are potentially limitless in terms of the intellectual energy they can consume.

In chapter 2 we look at some of the ancient origins of Western subjectivity and knowledge making. The modern, structuralist assumptions that continue to govern the business of professional sociology have very old, deeply embedded, cultural roots. Consistent with C. Wright Mills's (1959) assessment of the promise of sociology, chapter 2 helps us understand the scientific self as the complicated outcome of much larger and older social forces.

2

A GENEALOGY OF THE
SCIENTIFIC SELF

Plato? Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after all? Could Socrates have been
a corrupter of youth after all? And have deserved his hemlock?
—Friedrich Nietzsche (1886/1990:32)

O ur contemporary selfhood has an ancient but traceable genealogy. Europeans have not always understood themselves to be free-thinking, unified, self-responsible, extra-contextual beings. And people who were unlike our modern, Western version of personhood populated most of the world's cultures dating across the ages in which humans have inhabited the planet. Our modern selves are profoundly Greek and Christian in heritage. Thus the scientific self that seeks to discipline itself for the purpose of gathering knowledge is a sociological phenomenon. Social scientists' self-understandings are rooted in the ancient cultural politics of the Mediterranean region.

Because sociology as a science depends upon the uncontested status of modern subjectivity, few sociologists have honestly explored its social development. Certainly many social theorists, from Emile Durkheim to George Mead to Erving Goffman, have been interested in the self; but almost none (including these famous three) ever seriously entertained the idea that modern, Western subjectivity could be other than basic to the human species. Although sociologists and anthropologists have always understood that other peoples in other times and places viewed themselves in unique ways, the self-perceptions of cultural others were, and are thought to be, underdeveloped, irrational, or superstitious. In contrast, the modern, Western, rational self is understood as a developed, progress-based, outcome—one that other peoples eventually arrive at.[1]

In addition to its sheer ethnocentrism, this outlook never seriously considers how the social history of their own version of personhood is implicated in what social scientists think they know. This unwillingness to rethink modern subjectivity as a cultural and political outcome means that the structural sociologist persists in his quest to empirically verify an objectively present reality. The scientist who does not de-center his subjectivity continues to insist that his observations are reflections of a "real world" of essences and truths. On the other hand, if this desire to objectively approximate reality is understood to be rooted in a version of personhood that is itself the complex product of time, place, and culture, then pursuing fully present essences begins to lose its appeal.

Said more simply, what one thinks one knows is entirely related to what one thinks oneself to be. Modern, structuralist sociology is possible only because of the assumed and taken-for-granted versions of selfhood that sociologists live with. Destabilizing this subjectivity by exploring its sociological development changes how we think about the sociology we do. Where did this Cartesian faculty, this mind, this self-present intellect derive from? What politics spawned it? What were the cultural conditions of possibility from whence it was born? In short, what ancient genealogy does it conceal?

Inventing the Psyche

The mind and the mind-versus-body form of the self did not begin appearing in Greece until the late fifth century BC. As Eric A. Havelock (1963:197) describes this situation, in the last twenty-five years of the fifth century "the notion was not understood" by "the majority of men" and "in their ears the terms in which it was expressed sounded bizarre." Thus as Bruno Snell (1953:16) observes, "the belief in the existence of a universal, uniform human mind is a rationalist prejudice." In the time and spoken language of Homer (ca. 950 BC), there was as yet no "deep thinking," and never in his recounting of past experiences does Homer "attempt to sound their special, non-physical nature" (Snell 1953:18). People and things in Homeric Greece were not knowable as "ideas." Their specific and physical activity in specific and physical living was their calling card; they possessed no generic, extra-contextual essences.

Among the generations before Socrates (Socrates lived from 469 to 399 BC), the body is not even understood as a unified system. Rather, it appears in the Homeric texts as an "assemblage of distinct parts" (Hirst and Woolley 1982:123). So where we might say "his body," Homer says "his limbs." Nor is this pre-Socratic subjectivity, which lacks the notion of "intellect," a "self-responsible" *person-hood*, at least in the modern sense of the term. Humans are more akin to a location or ending point for the intrusion of dreams, Gods, or various (what appear to us to be) supernatural forces, than autonomous generators of their own behaviors (Dodds 1951:17; Hirst and Woolley 1982:123–24).[2]

As Snell (1953:61) indicates, for these early Greeks "there are personal fates but no personal achievements." Thus the change in subjectivity that occurs between the times of Homer and of Plato (427–347 BC) amounts to a cultural revolution, a profound social reorganization that Havelock (1963, 1978, 1986) argues was spurred on by the transformation of an oral society into a literate society.

The earliest uses of Greek writing were probably dedications engraved by stonecutters and potters on their creations. The first known example of this kind of writing is found on the "Dipylon Vase" that is estimated to have been made between 740 and 690 BC (Havelock 1986:82). The limited writing that occurs in the centuries before Socrates (who is not known to have ever written anything) was of minimal social importance in a society where oral remembrance and understanding were organized into public institutions. Oral societies are almost by definition societies of memorization. Because events and stories that are important to an oral culture are not written down, they must be stored in the memory and recited often to maintain the integrity of these re-collections. These recitations worked most effectively when they were organized to assist the memories of the listeners. Elaborate and ingenious schemes for developing and maintaining what now appear as extraordinary, even superhuman, capacities for memorization were commonplace in many oral societies.

One such device can be illustrated by noting the ability that each of us has when recalling early childhood memories. For example, I can remember a moment when I was afraid of a loud and intoxicated loved one. I cannot have been more than three years old at the time. I can also remember standing on a fence in my family's yard, holding up the appropriate number of fingers and proudly proclaiming that I would be "four tomorrow!" Because these events were enveloped in extraordinary emotion, they survive as memories. Try to call up early memories from your own lives. No doubt you will find that they are associated with emotions. You were physically (viscerally) impacted by the event that you recall so well, even as most of your early childhood remains beyond easy recollection.

The poets of oral Greek society were skilled encouragers of the bodies of their listeners. As Bennet Simon (1978:59) indicates, "Homer makes no clear or consistent differentiation between organs of thinking and organs of feeling or emotion." To know was to feel. These poets and storytellers made sure that the history of the community was preserved in the memories of its citizens by showing them how their ancestors felt. Capturing the original meaning of the ancient Greek word *ethos* (which in modern English becomes the ethical and moral principles of a group), these stories related the physical and emotional contexts of experiences of those who came before. Oral Greece did not use abstract principles.

Because these Greeks knew no "mind" they had no abstract concepts or ideas, in the sense of formal understandings existing beyond the contexts of

sensual life. Indeed, Homer does not even have a term for "person" or "one-self." These would be abstractions depicting a self that exists independent of lived life, and he has no use for these extra-contextual notions. He does not even possess generic terms for depicting gender: man, woman, male, and female (Simon 1978:61). This is a culture where people and things *behave* and not one where they *are* (Cornford 1932/1976:8–9). As Havelock (1986:94) explains, a spade digs but it is never "an implement designed for excavation." People and things "do" and live but they do not have an "is" quality to them. The notion that people and things have an abstract "beingness" or essence is an invention of Socratic and Platonic "dialectic," which in ancient Greek meant what modern English calls "dialogue."

Possessing nothing written by Socrates, what we know of him comes from later literate philosophers, primarily from Plato. Although the execution of Socrates probably occurred when Plato was in his late twenties, he remained an enduring character in the dialogues that Plato authored. It is interesting to consider the fact that Plato *wrote* dialogues; that is, he used his written alphabet to depict oral conversations. A kind of oral hangover remained, even as the educated classes of Plato's Greece had become literate.

When this transformation was occurring, during Socrates' lifetime, educated Greeks for the first time were able to see written accounts of oral recollections collected together on the page. This meant that it became possible not just to repeat oral narrations that maintained sensual experiences and memories. With written script, the reader visually sees narrations of more than one event at a time. Because a literate person can read of Odysseus' adventures, he can place these experiences side by side in his line of vision and find similarities and differences. With literacy, then, comes the feeling (slowly at first) that people and things may have consistency that can migrate from experiential context to experiential context. If I can see, at the same moment, because of the technology of reading, that Odysseus *does* this and *does* that and *does* something else, then I begin to suspect that Odysseus *is*. Odysseus becomes an abstraction that has existence in excess of the scenes where he lives and feels. Rather than know of Odysseus' adventures by allowing the storyteller to help me feel the places where he was (the temperature to my skin, the wind in my hair, the smell of the ocean in my nose, and the heat of the blood from my wounds), I now place individual contexts or episodes from his life one next to the other and compare and contrast them.[3]

Literacy brought profound sociological transformation to ancient Greece. Because Greek oral society relied upon strong memories, poets were the information storehouses of their time. They were the keepers of the past, of the "mythos" (of the stories) that functioned as statements of "ethos" (of the successes and failures of the ancestors). And they tailored this crucial social function to the needs of their listeners' bodies. Rhyme and meter were used for their rhythmic qualities, for the beat and tempo that the body of the listener could participate in. Remember, the goal of a good oral storyteller is to

enrapture her audience, to help her listeners feel in unison Odysseus' suffering, joy, relief, and the whole range of experiences at the appropriate points in her narration. But even to use the phrase "her narration" is to invoke the imagery of our literate culture. Remember, the storyteller is not an "is." Thus the story is not "hers." Rather, she is a kind of medium through which the whole group physically experiences ancestors' lives. The audience collectively groans with pain and sighs with relief. In the more elaborate settings, there was music, dancing, and multiple performers providing large audiences with vicarious livings of lives long past. Literacy changed or eradicated all of these institutions.

Once literate Greeks began to suppose that they were abstract "beings," the storytellers or poets of oral Greece became dangerous impediments to self-understanding. Remember, oral Greece did not have moral principles per se. In place of such abstractions, communities recited the behaviors of ancestors and the reactions of other animate beings (wind, love, and Olympic gods) to these behaviors. These stories acted as immediately relevant guides to the present. Good storytellers, as the teachers of their era, knew which stories their communities needed at particular times, and which verses to emphasize in which contexts. The stories recalled what those who came before had done in similar situations and what results their behaviors had brought. As Havelock (1978:53) notes, these remembrances acted as "validations" that said that the way we are living is the way to live. For Plato this situation was intolerable.

Plato's disdain for the body is infamous. (To this day we speak of "Platonic love" as love without sex.) His attack on the body was aimed at poets' ability to physically enthrall listeners. In *The Republic* he exclaims that he "shall warn its [poetry's] hearers to fear its effects on the constitution of their inner selves" (608). Plato, the literate philosopher, cannot tolerate an older, oral tradition that recounts Achilles' actions and experiences but never asks who Achilles was. In the last pages of *The Republic*, he makes it clear that the things themselves, including the self, will never be known and understood by the educated population of his ideal city until the poets are banished. Urging his readers to beware of the "magic of poetry"(601), Plato warns, "very few people are capable of realizing that what we feel for other people must infect what we feel for ourselves" (606). This is dangerous, he tells us, because upon hearing the "sweet lyric or epic muse, pleasure and pain become your rulers instead of law and rational principles" (607).

So Plato and Plato's Socrates juxtapose and compare where Homer, Hesiod, and the Muses remembered and felt. "Dialectic" is a Socratic tool for breaking the rhythm, meter, and emoting of the storytellers. In Plato's dialogues we continually find Socrates asking his opponents to explain themselves. For example, when Laches tries to answer his queries about courage and cowardice by reciting Homer, Socrates interjects that he "is asking about courage and cowardice in general." Repeatedly he admonishes Laches, asking, "what is that common quality which is the same in all . . . cases which is called courage?" He

forces the boy away from feeling Homer's stories vicariously and back to himself (his extra-contextual, abstract self) as a self-responsible agent: "now do *you* know what I mean?" and "do *you* call him courageous?" (*Laches* 191–92, my emphases).

These dialogues, this dialectical format, are designed as the antidote to the spell casting of the poets. Indeed, in *The Sophist* Plato compares this "cross-examination" to the duty of a physician who "expelled the notions within him which obstruct his learning, thus reducing him to a purified condition" (230). In dialogue, there is no time in between questions, answers, and more questions for the mood, and the context of a story to envelop the setting. Dialectic breaks the power of the storyteller by disrupting the rhythm that threatens to transport the listener into the time and the place woven by the story. In this way dialectic preserves the "idea" (and this is a Platonic notion) of things and people as "essences" that exist before and after the physical contexts they inhabit.

The modern words "idea" and "ideal" come down to us from Plato's Greece. Plato tells us that "the good" (as in "ideal") is tantamount to the essences of things. (Latin translations of the Greek "idea" become *forma* or "the Forms.") "Ideas" are (as they remain today) abstractions. But in Socrates's day, the notion of an idea emphasized the core forms of things extricated from the tales of the poets. Thus there are many kinds of boats existing in many different contexts and stories, but there is only one essential quality: "boat-ness."

Now it is not far from the proposing of essential forms (of ideals) to the claim that morality is related to knowledge of these forms. And, indeed, Plato tells us that "the Good" is contained in the true forms of the world of things. Remember that we are not talking about things as they appear to the senses but about the essences of things as they are understood by what Socrates and Plato called "psyche." Although the word is older than Socrates, its evolving meaning becomes institutionalized in the teachings that Plato credits him with. The older word referred to the living breath or to the blood of life, but these significations as yet contained no hint of self-consciousness. As F. N. Cornford (1932/1976:50) describes this understanding, "the ordinary Athenian thought of his soul—his psyche—as an airy unsubstantial wraith . . . a shadow that, at the moment of death . . . escaped as a breath to be dissipated like smoke in the air." Only later does Plato's Socrates instruct that the psyche is akin to "a ghost that thinks" and that this abstract being should be understood as "the seat of moral responsibility" (Havelock 1963:197).

The abstract, contextually independent self that is institutionalized in Plato's dialogues, and that arrives with Greek literacy and in opposition to the oral tradition, is a condition of possibility of modern, scientific personhood as well as of the quest for (abstract) morals. The invention of the psyche, then, changes not only Greece but also eventually most of the world. It becomes the possibility and basis of classical Greek "philosophy." (The Greek *phil* means "lover" and *sophia* means "wisdom"; thus a philosopher is a "lover of wisdom.") Plato's dialogues are filled with Socratic calls to know thy

self and to be true to oneself. And repeatedly we are told that truth and good-
ness come from this self-knowledge.

In *Charmides,* Socrates declares: "Then the wise and temperate man, and
he only, will know himself, and be able to examine what he knows or does not
know, and to see what others know and think that they know . . . and fancy
that they know when they do not. No other person will be able to do this. And
this is wisdom and temperance. . . ." (167). We should not allow the modern,
and now commonsensical tone of his statement to hide its then near revolu-
tionary qualities from us. Socrates is saying no less than that this new "self " is
a basis for the judgment of everything and everyone! (No small wonder that
he was executed for "corrupting the minds of the young.")

The philosopher, Plato's Socrates tells us, has "made of himself a unit, one
man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison" (*Republic* 443). Justice
will arrive only when man learns that "he should dispose well of what in the
true sense of the word is properly his own, and having first attained to self-
mastery and beautiful order within himself" (443). Similarly, in *The Sophist*
Plato tells us, "True being is ever self-identical and unchanging" (248). Sub-
jectivity, then, is born as consciousness becomes uniformity, self-directing,
and knowable as an ideal that exists before and after any episodes that it might
participate in for a time.

Only when understood as an abstract psyche, mind, or soul does it become
possible and, Plato thought necessary, to police the self. This policing, this
self-disdain, this attempt to manage the self will grow with the rise of Christi-
anity. As we saw in chapter 1, it was of almost manic importance to the de-
vout Christian and father of modern rationality (Descartes), and it remains
central to modern scientific subjectivity.

In the *Phaedrus,* Plato claims that only a philosopher and "he and he alone
becomes truly perfect" (249). Indeed, he goes so far as to compare philoso-
phers to gods.

> Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and
> none shall sing worthily. . . . It is there that true being dwells, without color or
> shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul's pilot, can behold it, and
> all true knowledge is knowledge thereof. Now even as the mind of a God is
> nourished by reason and knowledge, so also is it with every soul that has a care
> to receive her proper food . . . and contemplating truth she is nourished and
> prospers . . . she discerns justice, its very self, and likewise temperance, and
> knowledge . . . the veritable knowledge of being that veritably is. (*Phaedrus* 247)

In this and in many similar passages, Plato fundamentally links his contrived
world of metaphysical abstractions ("being dwells without color or shape,
that cannot be touched") to a grand morality ("justice, its very self, and like-
wise temperance, and knowledge"). The Platonic psyche alone, we are told,
can discern "the veritable knowledge of being that veritably is." Only the

disciplined and abstract mind can know essences, and these essences are, for Plato, tantamount to "the Good." One approaches divinity by disciplining the body and the emotions and thereby embracing the ideal, which are essences (forms) available only to the mind and not to the senses. Knowledge of the divine (of the good) provides one with a recipe for healthy living. Indeed, Plato tells us (rather ominously) that this "veritable knowledge of being that veritably is" must be shared with the less enlightened.

In *The Republic,* he links knowledge of the abstract forms to "light" and "sunshine" that are known only upon ascending from the depths of a "darkened cave of shadows." It is "our job as lawgivers," he maintains, "to compel the best minds to attain . . . the highest form of knowledge, and to ascend to the vision of the good . . . and when they have achieved this and see well enough, to prevent them behaving as they are now allowed to do" (519). Thus Greek philosophy is a fundamental precursor to Christians' claims that they have a mission to save the unenlightened from themselves.

By the fifth century AD, St. Augustine had published *The City of God against Pagans* (426/1998:14) in which he explains, even the pious "should know bitterness in this life" if "they neglected to be bitter to the wicked." St. Augustine and the other early Church Fathers were heavily influenced by classical Greece, and by Plato in particular. The theological notion that Christians and Christianity have a hold on truth and a direct contact line to God is rooted in Greek philosophy. The self-aggrandizing zeal of Christian missionaries was nowhere more clearly foretold than in Socrates' unapologetic lecture to his accusers, as his life hangs in the balance: ". . . it is my belief that no greater good has ever befallen you in this city than my service to my God. For I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old" (*Apology* 16).

As I suggested in the opening pages of the chapter, what one thinks oneself to be is the very possibility of what one thinks s/he knows.

Greek Foundations of Christianity

Despite what many modern scientists like to believe, science is unable to cut itself off from two thousand years of Christian cosmology. Christianity remained the basis of Western knowing techniques for roughly fifteen centuries. Scientists have only proclaimed (at least publicly) their independence from theology since the nineteenth century, and the metaphysical bases of scientific sociology are still quite Christian. Thus it is important for us to understand (as part of our genealogy of modern subjectivity) some of how classical Greek metaphysics impacted the early Christian church.

The church itself (as an institution in a central location with a status hierarchy) does not yet exist in the first centuries after Christ. Early on, Christianity was something that was practiced by informal small groups and in homes. Sociologists who study religion tell us that early Christianity was a "sect" or

what we might today call a "cult." The Mediterranean world in Christ's time and in the decades after his death was dominated by Greek culture, language, and learning. Consequently, the legitimation of Christianity depended on early Christians' abilities to speak and write the Greek language and to present their beliefs to educated classes who understood themselves as philosophical minds (Colish 1997:3–75). The apostle Paul traveled to the major Greek cities, speaking Greek to the citizens. The first translation of the Bible was into Greek. Indeed, Werner Jaeger (1961:7) asserts that even in Paul's debates with Jews, both parties called upon a Greek translation and not upon the original Hebrew version of the Old Testament.

Because the Greek language was the *lingua franca* (the common language among different peoples) of the era, and because Greek forms of thought dominated educational institutions, Christianity could only grow and prosper as a semblance of Greek philosophy. That is, it had to resemble what was already assumed, if it was to be taken seriously (Colish 1997:57). Thus we see the basic tenets of the Greek philosophical tradition in the recorded teachings of famous Christians throughout the formative centuries of the church.[4]

The asceticism of Christianity is initially borrowed from the Greeks. That is, the denial of the physical self in an attempt to better a metaphysical self is both Platonic and central to Christianity. Indeed the whole separation of the soul from the body and the association of one with immortality and the other with earthly existence are both basic Platonism and fundamental to Christianity. The assigning of moral precepts to this separation is likewise both Platonic and Christian. Both traditions teach that morality is the basis of just governance, and both traditions locate this morality in desperate attempts to rid an abstract and metaphysical self of its physical aspirations and pleasures. Both posit ideal earthly states designed to strive toward and imitate metaphysical perfection. For example, both Plato's *Republic* and St. Augustine's *City of God* (426 AD) are calls to a more perfect existence with constant reference to metaphysical truths organized by a unifying purpose. Although St. Augustine and the other Church Fathers were often careful to distinguish Christian understandings from pagan, Greek philosophy, they nonetheless endeavored to create Christian versions of Greek metaphysical structures.

For example, let us more carefully consider this unifying purpose notion. Poststructuralists who are interested in the history of scientific consciousness speak and write about *teleology* and *eschatology*. The latter term refers to the study of the Second Coming of Christ, of the Judgment Day, and of how the value of one's life will be assessed on those dates. In short, eschatology is a theological study of the final outcome and thus of the ultimate meaning of life. Said still another way, there is said to be a culmination or ending (death, and the return of Christ to earth) that provides the context for making sense of all that individuals have done and accomplished during their time on earth. This is structure. By knowing how the endpoint will look (a centering), I can fit my daily self-governance into a larger set of structured reference points. It is

as if someone had given me a map for self-appraisal, and I had thereby gained the ability to keep track of my "score" on some ultimate (extra-earthly) examination card. If God has a purpose for everything, then everything in existence is organized in terms of that purpose. If this plan can be understood (through purification of the self), then existence and life have a discernible order and logic to them. They have a centered structure that I can use to govern and assess my behavior.

Similarly, the second term, *teleology,* is derived from the Greek *telos* and also refers to an ultimate purpose or final meaning. Greek philosophy places a uniform purpose into existence (Plato's "Good"), and this purpose is said to be progressively unearthed by those with critical, dialectical "minds"—that is to say, by philosophers. This too is metaphysical structure. An unobservable endpoint or culminating, finite logic in existence is assumed, and each of the essential forms of all of the pieces of reality are said to fit in an ordered way into this grand plan that correct, disciplined thinking will slowly reveal. In this way, Greek teleology is a model for Christian eschatology.

Once Plato infuses existence with eternal and perfect essences, it follows that they are finite in number. If the Creator, as the source of the Good, is perfect, then, of course, he has only placed as many essential forms on the earth as can fit in exact fashion. Arthur O. Lovejoy (1936/1965) refers to this positing of a finite structure to existence as a "metaphysics of plenitude." That is to say, because existence has essential pieces, and because they fit together perfectly in a finite, systematic, and overall structure, patterned structure *fills* existence. It has complete plenitude (plenty). And indeed, with the Greeks (primarily in the work of Plato's student Aristotle) we find the first great attempt to catalog the whole of existence into its most basic and substantial patterns. The molders of the early Christian church were thoroughly indoctrinated into these Greek structuralist "ideas": essential components making up a finite existence, perfect plenitude in their numbers, and divine planning in their organization that becomes evident at a grand conclusion (self-knowledge, philosophical perfection, death, and the Second Coming of Christ). The core metaphysical tenets of Christianity can be found centuries earlier in the Greek philosophical model. Cornford (1932/1976:65) goes so far as to declare, "Plato and Aristotle are among the greatest fathers of the Christian Church. . . . [T]hey might have been canonized in the Middle Ages, had they not happened to be born some centuries before the Christian era."

The so-called Patristic Period (through the fourth century) of Christianity is a time when the Church Fathers manage to establish organization, hierarchy, and a degree of uniformity in theological teachings. In this period the church becomes an institution. Clement (150–220 AD) reportedly used Greek political ideals as his model for organizing the new church community (Jaeger 1961:21). Origen (185–254 AD) and Clement lived in a time when Christians referred to Plato as "the Divine Plato" who, they believed, had revealed the very Word of God (Jaeger 1961:44,46). They were quite aware of the fact that

it was Plato's Socrates who had "revealed" the human soul as an abstraction that had existence in excess of mere physical life. Both St. Basil the Great (b. 330 AD) and St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329/330–390 AD) were educated at the University of Athens and explicitly attempted in their lifetimes to create Christian theology modeled after Greek philosophy. But it was St. Gregory of Nyssa (b. 394 AD) who is perhaps most responsible for linking the Socratic/Platonic call to develop the abstract psyche (*morphosis*) to a Christian transformation of the abstract self (*metamorphosis*).

That is, Plato and Socrates urged recognition and development of the extra-physical and abstract self, but early Church Fathers wanted this Platonic meta-self to learn to strive for extra-earthly, spiritual perfection. Thus in the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa, the whole Christian ascetic (denial of the physical self) tradition becomes visible. In the hands of this important Church Father, Plato's assertion that the philosophical mind can approach God becomes the basis of Christian monasticism. To contemplate God, to lead the life of the mind, St. Gregory surmises, Christians must isolate themselves from the world, avoiding earthly distractions in the simplicity of a monastic life. Like Plato, he believed that the Divine could be approached through rigorous, self-discipline.

Christians who taught self-denial in pursuit of self-purification needed a means of recognizing when and if they understood God's creations correctly. After all, how could these early Christian leaders know when they were close to understanding the very Word of God? St. Gregory and Christian authorities throughout the centuries have claimed at moments when truth is handed down, to be inhabited by the Holy Spirit. This means nothing less than that God becomes present in their experiences and thus guides their explanations. They know that they have achieved a high spiritual state through their self-denials because they feel the very spirit of God moving in them. This inhabitation by the Holy Spirit is positive proof of the correctness, then, of their assessments of existence. Truth is recognized when revealed by the Holy Spirit. This idea of a "Holy Spirit" is very telling. (Descartes will prefer to say "the natural light.")[5] As a metaphysical premise it links Greek philosophy, Christianity, and scientific epistemology.

Scientific Subjectivity: A Descendant of Greek and Christian Personhood

In his last work, *Laws* (645), Plato writes of the "doctrine" of a god. In asserting that the philosopher alone is able to discern the order of the universe, he uses the Greek word "logos." Logos is the Creator's plan expressed. It is the reasoning (the doctrine) that orders existence. Thus it is simultaneously the voice of God and the order of existence revealed. Similarly, for Christians the logos or word of God is revealed to those who make themselves ready to be inhabited by the spirit of God (by the Holy Spirit). As the philosopher

disciplines his body to develop his mind, the Christian ascetic elevates guilt to a weapon of defense against himself as he strives to cleanse his soul. Thus Christ, as the Son of God, reveals the Holy Logos or Word of God, and he teaches his followers how to behave in the world so that this logos may be revealed to them. The Platonic Good and Christian Truth are both revealed in the word (logos) of the Creator and both can be known only through rigorous self-discipline and self-denial.

The modern word "logic" is a direct etymological (etymology is the study of the history of words) descendant of the Greek and Christian "logos." It is not difficult to recognize how our modern sense of the word, as in "the logic of things," and as revealed in the suffix attached to many of the sciences (e.g., socio-logy, psycho-logy, anthropo-logy), descends directly from our Christian, intellectual ancestors and from their Greek predecessors. The quest for the divine logos revealed through the Holy Spirit will become a scientific quest for the logic contained in the parts and organization of the Creation. We need only look to the theological inspiration of any of the fathers of modern science to reawaken these affiliations.

Together with those of Descartes and Galileo, the writings of Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) are among the most influential in the development of the scientific method. Bacon was both a devout Christian and a proponent of an inductive style of knowledge. As noted in chapter 1, during the Middle Ages Western Christendom was deeply rooted in Aristotelian philosophy. This "scholastic" style of theology tended to be deductive, starting from knowledge of the logos and fitting the pieces of the world into an already understood eschatological/teleological scheme. Knowledge for the Aristotelian Christians was knowledge of things as they fit into the larger Chain of Being and this grand system building had been weakened by the telescope, the New World, and by a growth in intellectual debate across national borders and languages.[6] Thus Bacon urged knowledge of things first. To be inductive means to build the larger understanding from the smaller, to understand the whole of the Divine Plan by first understanding the smaller pieces of the Creation. It is from within this attempt to overcome the deductive and grandiose "web spinning" of Aristotelians that Bacon emerges as the central figure in the development of experimental methodology and thus of the notion that knowledge advances and accumulates. Science that attempts to build truth from small-scale, individual experiments one piece at a time can be replicated and argued over with much more precision than whole grand cosmic schemes can be debated.

In the *Advancement of Learning* (1605/1952), Bacon quotes from the Scriptures often and regularly, sometimes several times on the same page. In this monumental work that George A. Kourvetaris (1994:314) calls "the most influential book on learning of the seventeenth century," he leaves no doubt that his attack on "the schools" of Aristotelians is a Christian endeavor. ". . . laying before us two books or volumes to study, if we will be secured from

error; first the Scriptures, revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing his power; whereof the latter is a key unto the former: not only opening our understanding to conceive the true sense of the Scriptures . . . but chiefly opening our belief, in drawing us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of God which is chiefly signed upon his works. Thus . . . divine testimony and evidence concerning the true dignity and value of learning" (Bacon 1605/1952:20).

The scientific, experiment-based study of nature is the study of "his works," of his "signature upon his works." The purpose of the growth in knowledge (of the "Advancement of Learning") is to "draw us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of God." Scientific knowledge of the natural world has "true dignity" because it reveals "divine testimony." This metaphysical quest is where Bacon and the early scientific fathers find the "value of learning."[7] Indeed the scientific laying bare of the natural world is "the key" to understanding God. Ultimately, Bacon believed, scientists having learned the secrets of nature (and thus the divine logos) could restore an earthly Garden of Eden.

Bacon's science is for restoring human dominion over nature as it was spelled out in the divine logos. The book of Genesis does no less than quote God making it quite clear that humans were created "in his own image" and that as the life-form closest to God humans were to enjoy "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:27–28). But to "subdue it," to "be fruitful and multiply," to exercise dominion requires knowledge of its inner workings, of its secrets. Bacon was sure that science could reveal the divine signature, that it could "raise and advance our reason to the divine truth" (1605/1952:41).

The so-called overcoming of the Dark and Aristotelian Ages, then, was a *theologically inspired Enlightenment.* The modern notion that science can supply human beings with the capacity to control and predict the workings of nature was conceived and championed by Bacon from within the depths of his Christian faith. Like the early Church Fathers and the Greek philosophers they imitated, Bacon sought to understand the divine logos; but now this truth was revealed by active pursuit of the logic (logos) contained in Creation. The Holy Spirit that early Church Fathers recognized in themselves and relied upon for their certainty was for Bacon *vehicula scientiae* (the scientific vehicle or conveyor of wisdom) (1605/1952:19). Thus the very same Holy Spirit of God, embodied in the words he spoke in Genesis, became the celebrated cause of early, modern science. To act with the Holy Spirit meant to follow God's words as recorded in the book of Genesis and to pursue dominion (in his image) over all other life-forms.

The advancement of humanity through science requires self-discipline just as knowledge of God requires self-denial. As with Plato, and as with generations of Christian monastics, and as with Rene Descartes, we hear Bacon

lamenting the limits, the horrible sensual prejudices of human subjectivity. The self-disdain of Plato and of earlier generations of Christians remains pivotal to the self-conception of the seventeenth-century, European, man of science. The ascetic Christian who cleansed himself of bodily passions thereby allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal God's word will become a scientific ascetic who also seeks enlightened truth through self-discipline. "For the mind of man is far from the nature of a clear and equal glass, wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence; nay, it is rather like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture, if it not be delivered and reduced" (Bacon 1605/1952:60).

Induction, because it means concentration upon the unitary and not upon the all-inclusive and totalizing, permits the opportunity to repeatedly test results obtained by the senses. My mind need not be "enchanted" by the senses if I can enlist the help of other scientists and of mechanical instruments to replicate my findings. Bacon is out to find God, but he is out to locate him in the detailed logic of his most minuscule workings. And he will not be fooled by a wily nature ("full of . . . imposture") that appeals to the senses, pleasures, and "superstitions" and that his God has instructed him to subdue.

This scientific discipline remains Christian asceticism, but it is asceticism aided by inductive method and technology. Aristotelian Christians failed not because they did not understand the dangers of the senses but because their "weakness of intellectual powers" allowed for "deceit" that should have been overcome in "the manner of collecting and concluding upon the reports of the senses" (Bacon 1605/1952:58). A ruler or compass is always more steady than the hand, Bacon tells us, and mechanical instruments must whenever possible be employed to keep watch on the senses. Without the aid of outside, human and nonhuman verifications of measurement, "the great and wonderful works of God" will continue to be shrouded in "superstition and imposture" (20). Without replication and investigation at the most immediate level (and this is to become the modern scientific quest for "only the facts"),[8] Enlightenment-era scientists will, like their medieval predecessors, "rest only in the contemplation of the exterior of them as they first offer themselves to the senses" (20). And in our negligence, "we should do a like injury unto the majesty of God, as if we should judge or construe of the store of some excellent jeweller, by that only which is set out toward the street in his shop" (20).

Bacon, as a father of the scientific ethos, teaches that Christian self-denial and self-purification must be stepped-up, enhanced, and given explicit rigor. God's truth is hidden in the sensual appeal of a prejudicing natural world (like jewels enchanting the eyes). It would do him an injustice if we did not pursue his creations beyond their sparkle and appeal to the senses (beyond that which is visible or "set out toward the street"). Thus Christian asceticism becomes the methodological discipline of scientific exploration.

And this discipline and self-overcoming remains rooted in the metaphysics of teleology and eschatology. As with earlier Christians and as with the Greeks, there remains for Bacon an end logic or final reference point that acts as the basis of totalizing structure: "it is the duty and virtue of all knowledge to abridge the infinity of individual experiences, as much as the conception of truth will permit, and to remedy the complaint of *vita brevis, ars longa* [life is short; art is long]; which is performed by uniting the notions and conceptions of the sciences" (Bacon 1605/1952:44).

All that is known, then, *must* fit ("the duty and virtue of all knowledge") within the singularity of the logic of the Creation ("to abridge the infinity of individual experiences"). Because the Holy Spirit pervades all existence, it exudes a singular logic that will one day be revealed in cumulative scientific truths uncovered by generations of disciplined scientists ("life is short; art is long"). Scientific knowledge, Bacon tells us, is "holy in the description of his works; holy in the connexion or concatenation of them; and holy in the union of them in a perpetual and uniform law" (1605/1952:44). The search for God's plan, for the Holy Spirit revealed in the logic (in the logos: in the word or signature of God) of his creations becomes the logically ordered and structured existence that science will lay bare in the ("perpetual") pursuit of human dominion over the planet.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of recovering the theological genealogy of modern science is noting that the seventeenth-century fathers of modern science *knew their pursuits were metaphysical pursuits* and proudly said so.[9] Indeed, even in eighteenth-century France, where agitation against the church was greater than anywhere else in Europe, many "philosophes" (the intellectuals who were key agitators of the French Revolution and articulators of the principles of the Enlightenment), found it impossible to imagine a formal separation of nation and church. Most of these men were baptized and married in the church, and they went to their deaths receiving the last rites from a Catholic priest. Most of the literate class in France remained oblivious to any necessary conflict between Christianity and the secular claims of the Enlightenment (Van Kley 1996:3–4). Again, only in the nineteenth century with the rise of positivism do we begin hearing scientists proclaiming that they will not tolerate metaphysical assumptions.

Lord Bacon (1605/1952:43), by contrast, writes with explicit candor of metaphysical undertakings as the highest form of science, as the study of "fixed and constant causes." "For metaphysic, we have assigned unto it the inquiry of formal and final causes . . . the invention of forms is of all other parts of knowledge the worthiest to be sought, if it be possible to be found."

The ascetic pursuit of underlying, hidden teleological coherence is a widespread metaphysical narrative that continues to undergird modern, structuralist sociology. Nonetheless, the published epistemological desires of structural sociologists lack anything like Bacon's explicit and celebratory recognition that these quests are a metaphysical pilgrimage.

The Metaphysical Desires of Structuralist Sociology

My goal in this chapter has been more than simple recovery of the cultural and thus theological conditions of the possibility of scientific subjectivity. I want to substantiate claims I began advancing in the introduction and in chapter 1. First, I assert that the desires and techniques of modern, structuralist sociologists mimic theological desires and metaphysical dreams of earlier generations of Christian intellectuals. Second, I claim that these desires rest on a subjectivity, assumed and unquestioned by modern scientific sociologists, which uncritically replays the metaphysical asceticism (a self-disdain) of ancient Platonism and of Christian theology—a theological metaphysics that most scientists want to believe they have left behind. Finally, I am asserting that those critics claiming that poststructuralism renders sociologists politically impotent assume these same Greek and Christian imperatives. In other words, because these critics fail to examine the sociological origins of their own normative needs they take for granted that these aspirations are necessary to any affective sociology.

Perhaps the most unrecognized yet commonly recited of our Christian inheritances are the following interrelated notions: that we, as scientific sociologists, are in disciplined pursuit of a difficult to uncover world of essential truths, and that these truths are arranged systematically (as patterns, rules, laws, or some other form of internal logic) in some grand, teleological scheme. Consider, for example, the perennially influential words of Peter Berger (1963/2005) reprinted into a theory course textbook by Joel N. Charon (2005:7): "It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem. This too is a deceptively simple statement. It ceases to be simple after a while. Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole. . . ."

In a matter-of-fact tone that suggests the uncontroversial status of his assertion ("the first wisdom of sociology"), Berger speaks of "many layers" that is, in itself, "deceptive simplicity," and is thus an understated assessment. There are *many* layers, so many that some are *yet to be discovered;* and "[T]he discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole." Now recall the words of Bacon: "it is the duty and virtue of all knowledge to abridge the infinity of individual experiences"; and, we must "remedy the complaint of *vita brevis, ars longa;* which is performed by uniting the notions and conceptions. . . ." The metaphysical inheritance could not be clearer. Berger urges us on to discoveries of the layers that are "not what they seem" in pursuit "of the whole." Bacon likens any failure to pursue these layers to a "construal of the store of some excellent jeweller, by that only which is set out toward the street in his shop." Inductively, the whole appears from knowledge of the parts. The parts (including and in excess of that which is visible from the street, or the layers that change our conception of the whole) are arranged according to the logic of the totality (Bacon's "store" and Berger's "whole"). Berger, and presumably

Charon, still pursue a metaphysics of totality, parts, and logos (now understood as internal logic), and this is the very metaphysics of Greek teleology and Christian eschatology that we just discussed.

We can also recognize the old metaphysical premise that God's plan, or the Platonic Forms, or the secrets of Bacon's dominionized nature are never readily available, but must be pursued. Berger's description of "many layers" is "deceptively simple" presumably because the layers themselves are "deceptive." They are not as they appear. Indeed in a passage on the prior page, Berger (1963/2005:6) tells us that the revelations of sociology are even less easily attained than those of "many other intellectual disciplines" because they are "more difficult to segregate" from the common understandings that surround the scientific study of the social. He likens this difficult segregation of scientific thought to the need for a "special compartment of the mind." This is the very scientific discipline, the very same ascetic disdain for the self that Bacon's theological desires championed three hundred fifty years earlier.

Bacon says, "The mind of man is far from the nature of a clear and equal glass wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence." He warns that the unenlightened, un-Christian mind is akin to "an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture, if it not be delivered and reduced." Likewise, Berger warns that his sociologist, in protecting the "special [reduced?] compartment of the mind," also must "reckon with [be delivered from?] his convictions, emotions, and prejudices" (1963/2005:3). In spite of the handicap that Berger calls "being human," he says triumphantly, sociologists nonetheless cherish "one fundamental value only—that of scientific integrity" (1963/1996:3). Although this "one fundamental value" of "scientific integrity" is perpetually threatened by "convictions, emotions, and prejudices," Berger's sociologist (like generations of Greek philosophers and Christian ascetics) can find salvation in "intellectual training." "[The sociologist] tries to understand and control these as bias that ought to be eliminated, as far as possible, from his work. It goes without saying that this is not always easy to do, but it is not impossible. The sociologist tries to see what is there. He may have hopes or fears concerning what he may find. But he will try to see regardless of his hopes or fears. It is thus an act of pure perception, as pure as humanly limited means allow, toward which sociology strives. . . ."

It is interesting that Berger should use words and phrases like "integrity," "fundamental value," "regardless of . . . hopes and fears," "not what they seem," "deceptively," "pure perception," and "as pure as humanly limited means allow" when describing his scientific and self-discipline. This is morality-laced language, as we would expect given what we now know of its origins in theology and metaphysics. We should not be surprised, then, to hear Berger describe the fruit of this self-discipline as the ability "to see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives" (1963/1996:6). Indeed, we can recall that the piety and asceticism of the early Church Fathers made them pure and allowed them to be inhabited by the Holy Spirit,

and that this inhabitation transformed their very beings, helping them to see in a new light the very world where they too had lived all of their lives. In a tone that sounds hauntingly evangelical, Berger tells us that this "new light" begotten of "scientific integrity" is so powerful that it "constitutes a transformation of consciousness" (6). Because of the strength of this transformation "a good sociologist," will find himself unable to resist this new light. It will, Berger says, "have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers" (1963/2005:6). Recall that both Plato's Socrates and St. Gregory of Nyssa called for such transformations (*morphosis* and *metamorphosis,* respectively) in pursuit of a more enlightened moral order. Thus it appears that this scientific self-transformation in pursuit of truth strongly resembles an act of Christian confession.

As we know, Christians have for millennia included the confession in their rituals of self-discipline in the pursuit of self-purity. In the Gospel According to St. Mark, we hear that John the Baptist is sent to "baptize in the wilderness" so as to "prepare . . . the way of the Lord (1:4)" This baptism is to be "a baptism of repentance" and "a remission of sins" (1:4). To prepare the way for the truth of God, John is said to have baptized "all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem"; all went "in the river Jordan, confessing their sins"(1:5). Similarly, in Peter (1:16) we are implored to "Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed"(emphasis in original). For, we are told, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (1:16).

The institutionalization of the Christian confession became a major force in the fashioning of Western personhood. The writings of the early Church Fathers are full of calls to public humility and to the visible and expository renunciation of self-indulgence. As Michel Foucault (1997:225–27) discovered in his study of these ancient works:

> As verbalization brings to the external light the deep movement of the thought, it also leads, by the same process, the human soul from the reign of Satan to the law of God. This means that verbalization is a way for the conversion (for the rupture of the self), for the conversion to develop itself and to take effect. Since the human being was attached to himself under the reign of Satan, verbalization as a movement toward God is a renunciation to Satan, and a renunciation to oneself. Verbalization is a self-sacrifice. . . . And we have to understand this sacrifice . . . as the consequence of a formula like this: you will become the subject of the manifestation of truth when and only when you disappear or you destroy yourself as a real body or as a real existence.

If Foucault's reading is accurate, then why should we not accept that the Christian call to renounce the sensual self (to confession of sins) in the pursuit of God's logos is the cultural prototype of the scientific call to purge one's rational self of all things personal, emotional, and judgment clouding in the pursuit of the logic of existence?[10] Nonetheless, and often in tones of anger

and/or desperation, older generations of structural sociologists plead with younger members of our field, urging recommitment to the disciplined removal of the self from our studies of the social world.

For example, Jonathan H. Turner (1998b:275), who, like Berger, is a highly influential and successful player on the American sociology scene, admonishes us to "be aware of the sources of biases—biographical, culturally, structurally, intellectual, and political"; he urges us to "make them explicit and try to formulate lines of inquiry in ways that do not reflect one's biases." He worries that sociology relies too much on mere popularity with students, and, using weapons of guilt and shame that sound quite Christian, he pleads for sociologists to forsake the pitiful status of a viability driven only by enrollments. "What we should pursue, instead, is intellectual discipline and respectability. . . . If this kind of mental discipline is unappealing to the majority of our current students, we have not lost much, but of course, we might lose a great many of our faculty who lack such discipline. . . . Important disciplines, especially important scientific ones . . . are created and sustained by cumulative knowledge, which, by itself, will attract the kinds of students that we need and attention in the world at large that sociology should have" (1998a:256).

Turner wants discipline. He wants a core of ascetic ("disciplined and respectable") sociologists who will publicly renounce their biases (confess their sins?), and who will as part of this public cleansing "push ideology to the background" (1998a:256). He continues, the "marginal" (impious? heretical?) may be necessary members of the American Sociological Association's "big dues paying tent," but accommodating them "absolutely prevents sociologists from thinking of themselves as having the obligation to acquire a standard body of knowledge, to learn the general theoretical principles explaining the operation of society" (249). Once again, then, we see functioning the wholly metaphysical and untenable belief that there is some grand plan, some unifying and underlying logic that the disciplined and the ascetic can, if they only persevere in their faith, one day uncover and lay claim to.

We also find champions of this pilgrimage making their cases with all of the old theological weapons: guilt, shame, piety, and vigilance against impure heretics in their midst. Indeed, in terms that sound a great deal like centuries of Christian threats over straying from the true course, Turner warns: "if we continue along our current path, theory will descend further into its postmodern hell, surrounded by flames of relativisms, cynicism, pessimism, and solipsism" (1998a:255).

I ask the reader not to misunderstand my intentions. Despite this, and what Turner might agree is a rather unfortunate choice of theological imagery, my intention is not to suggest that he or any other structural sociologists are literally deists or theologians. My concerns remain: are not sociologists who (through regimens of self-attacking discipline) pursue realist truths contained in a logic of underlying and difficult-to-capture social structure mimicking and replaying (far too uncritically) the metaphysical pursuits of

Christian theology and classical Greek philosophy? And, if I am right in this assertion, why should we continue to believe that creating a better world requires us to defend these old superstitions?

We can also find the "restoration of the Garden of Eden" imagery (the linking of metaphysical truth and moral politics) that figured so prominently in Bacon's era functioning in the self-descriptions of modern, structuralist sociologists, including those of Professor Turner. Throughout the European centuries since Plato's "philosopher kings" were assigned to rule in his ideal Republic and since Church Fathers claimed to hear God's words, speakers of foundational truths have claimed to know not just the fundamental and ordered structures of existence, but also (because of their special, unique, discipline-delivered knowledge) the best way to put this knowledge to use obtaining salvation and happiness. To claim as Plato's Socrates did that "the discovery of things as they truly are is a good common to all mankind" (*Charmides* 166) and that only the philosopher is qualified to access these "things as they truly are" is to think very highly of oneself and one's abilities. Similarly, to claim to know the Word of God, and to know how to behave and how not to behave so as to hear and correctly interpret his words (as Christian leaders have done for centuries), is to claim tremendous power for oneself.

How, then, should we interpret Turner's (1998a:249) lament that "we fail to live up to our calling" when we do not pursue "codified knowledge" that will allow us to rightly think of ourselves as "social engineers"? ". . . to the extent sociologists still want to build a better world, they had better begin to think of themselves as social engineers. If we are to give advice and to be listened to, we must gain the respect that comes from having codified knowledge. The advice of a discipline will not be heeded without coherent theories, verified research findings, and past success at building something that did not fall down."

Is not the assertion that a better world will result from truths purchased through unpleasant discipline and the personal sacrifice of dedicated ascetics a thoroughly Christian notion? And how far from the zealotry of Christian missionaries have we come? Have we not, for centuries now, been made to listen (often through the force of raw power) to philosophers and theologians who claimed an exclusive right to show us a better way? Why should sociologists accept, uncritically, that our ability to help our fellow beings (our political efficacy) must be tied to this twenty-four-hundred-year-old recitation of self-disdain and metaphysical aspirations? From my poststructuralist perspective, the belief in a world of metaphysical social structure is suspect enough, but then to doggedly persist in the hope that these underlying (Platonist) forms can be "verified" is simply to maintain (again uncritically) the machinations of theological faith. Worse still, to continue to insist that the less enlightened should "heed" our "codified knowledge" is to risk continuing the horrors already visited upon oppressed peoples by centuries of self-assured possessors of metaphysical truth. Sociologists should not be missionaries.

Although Berger and Turner are more forthright than most in advocating their epistemological desires, the metaphysical premises that they work from are assumed and uncritically shared by the overwhelming majority of American sociologists. American sociology departments, professional meetings, and academic journals remain dominated by what Tugrul Ilter (1995) refers to as "the united methods of empiricism." That is, the pursuit of a logically structured world of essences and patterns that can be "empirically verified" remains an unquestionable premise for virtually all American sociologists. Although and as I have already said, most sociologists no longer believe in the possibility of completely objective access to this structured social world, they continue to insist that such a world exists. More curious still, they maintain that this objectivity that they admit is unobtainable is an ideal that sociologists must continue to pursue.

Think about this. "Objective reality": *they cannot find it.* "Objective Research": *they cannot do it.* Nonetheless, they continue to insist that, despite being beyond their reach, both are real. How can we understand this as other than a faith-based, inherited, and institutionalized pursuit of a metaphysical ideal?

In terms that force a recollection of earlier confrontations between the pious and the heretics they feared, the blame for the vilest of contemporary social ills is routinely ascribed to those of us whose faith has waned. Consider, for example, Patricia Hill-Collins's (1997:3–6) assertion that racism in academic settings "seems to be part of the unethical stance of the postmodern movement, one where appearances seem to be all that really matter—just as long as it looks good and sounds good, it doesn't really matter if it is any good at all." Identifying the intellectual causes of specific and ugly racist incidents, Hill-Collins blames "faculty members whose objectivity failed." Not unlike generations of Christians, she believes that the loss of faith in metaphysical presumptions leads inevitably to unethical chaos.

Perhaps most interesting of all the attacks predicting a moral disintegration of social life should poststructuralists invade sociology are those asserting that poststructuralists are not being objective in our analyses of the faithfuls' desire to be objective. For example, Steven Ward (1997:781) asserts: "one of the central ironies created by the postmodern deconstruction of objectivity . . . is the problem created by second-order observations of science. . . . Scientists [are said to] construct fictions that can be deconstructed using the various tools of interpretative methodology; however, analysts of science [are said to] produce facts about the cultural construction of science."

This is rather like using Bible verses to attack an atheist. Just as the nonbeliever no longer fears the wrath of the theologians' God, poststructuralists have lost interest in being objective, and it is compounded meaninglessness to charge that we claim to be objective ("produce facts") in our criticisms of objectivity. Doing poststructuralist work does not involve attempts to be more structuralist than structuralists about structuralism. Again, this is akin to

charging an atheist with making his refusal to believe in God into a newer and better "God of the there is no God."

Still, like Turner and Hill-Collins, Ward sees no acceptable alternative to continuing the 2,400 year-old pursuit of an essential and structured reality. As he says, "without the trust and moral commitment which realism generates, all social interaction and communication would break down under the weight of paranoid suspicion" (1997:785). This belief that pursuit of realist truth is a moral imperative that responsible thinkers must defer to is the subject of chapter 3.

Summary

My argument thus far is that the longings and techniques of modern, structuralist sociologists assume the theological desires and metaphysical dreams of earlier generations of Greek and Christian thinkers. These assumptions remain unexamined and unacknowledged by the same sociologists who assume that they are imperative to the moral pursuit of political justice. These inheritances include an assumption of (theological and now scientific) dominion; a championing of ascetic discipline; the self-cleansing confession and now scientific expulsion of bias; and an untenable pursuit of singular, finite, and teleological order (structure) in existence. This order, in turn, is assumed to harbor the secrets of moral, ethical life. And finally, intellectuals (Greek, Christian, and now sociological) are asked to spread the faith to the less enlightened.

Chapter 3 builds on this argument by adding structuralist sociologists' conception of responsibility to our list of Christian inheritances. Remember, our interrogation of this intellectual history is an exercise in sociological imagination. I want us to recognize our scientific biographies as the outcome of much larger political and cultural histories.

3

TOWARD A POST-CHRISTIAN ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIOLOGY

Who will dare call duty a duty that owes nothing, or better . . .
that must owe nothing?
—Jacques Derrida (1993:17)

Like virtually all sociologists, I want sociology to make a tangible difference in the lives of real people. I certainly share this desire with each of the sociologists discussed in the closing pages of chapter 2: Jonathan H. Turner, Peter Berger, Patricia Hill-Collins, and Steven Ward. Our differences, then, lie in our assumptions about how to best reach this goal and about how we understand this ambition as a form of responsibility.

Poststructuralists speak of ethics and politics only as part of a rigorously reflexive process. We advocate only with an eye toward thinking through not just the potential effects of our advocacy but also the very possibility of the political and ethical positions we stake out. (To be "reflexive," you will recall, means to think about the social, political, and historical qualities of our thinking—to think about thinking.) Thus our analysis of the ancient philosophical and theological origins of structuralist desires is crucial to the exploration of alternative (non-faith-based) motivations for doing sociology that we take up in this chapter.

Having now understood (reflexively) something of the Greek and Christian metaphysical quests that form the underlying and almost always unexamined assumptions of structuralist sociology, we are now in a position to ask

ourselves about the possibility of political responsibility in poststructuralist sociology. In other words, if our politics and our ethics do not emanate from a pilgrimage for empirically verifiable knowledge of "the real world" then how can professional sociologists assume any responsibility for improving life on earth? In order to answer this question, we must think carefully about the long history of assumptions involved in the idea of responsibility.

The words in the title of this chapter, "post-Christian," could easily be misunderstood. What would it mean, after all, to be "post-Christian"? If the influence of Christianity on science and sociology is as definitive as I claim, then how could one ever hope to escape it? Furthermore, would not the desire to "escape" be but another tale of (Greek and/or Christian) deliverance? The "post" of post-Christian responsibility has to be read in the manner of what Derrida for decades called "supplement."[1]

In part, to supplement means to add or even to differ from (but nonetheless to reference as a starting point) that which already exists. Christianity is too pervasive, too permeating a force in modern cultures to be simply replaced. It can only be supplemented. The very idea of responsibility as we understand it today is absolutely rooted in the development of Christian subjectivity. Although, and as we have already noted, Christianity became a force only because its early proselytizers adapted so well to the Greek language, culture, and philosophy, our modern understanding of personal responsibility is properly much more Christian than Greek.[2] While it is true that Plato's dialogues contain numerous Socratic references to an ethic of self-knowledge and that the last pages of *The Republic* are even dedicated to a discussion of the afterlife and the repercussions for an eternal soul of responsible or irresponsible lives led upon earth, it is the God of the Holy Bible who raises the stakes of responsible living to a level of sacrifice and desperation.

While Platonism promised to lift the mind from the darkness of emotion into the intellectual sun (the Good) and into a realm of fully understood and essential objects (forms); the Christian God requires faith, allegiance, and absolute deferral to his omnipresence. The Christian and Judeo-Christian God is a face, an omnipotent Being who sees and hears all. He is not simply a force (like the Platonic Good) that underlies and animates; he is a Being and a Will that awards love and threatens anger, testing the faith of his subjects.

Because the God of the Bible is both omnipresent and omnipotent, he sees me and knows me even when I have (only) momentarily forgotten that he is around. Because his power to watch and judge me is total and inescapable, while my ability to recognize him is limited by my mortality, by my earthly delusions, and by any waning of faith, our relationship is wholly unequal. This dissymmetry between an all-knowing God and those who must fear his judgment is more than mere theology; it is a historical and sociological phenomenon that is a condition of the possibility of our modern pursuits of good conscience and of personal responsibility.

To know that God knows all, that his gaze cannot be evaded, ever, is to make guilt into a constant companion. And from this guilt comes the unceasing search for its alleviation through purification, through sacrifice, and through discipline—through the self-disdain born of the constant need to "measure up," to be responsible to God.

But the biblical God is perfect. No one can ever measure up. To make matters still more desperate, only the most disciplined and pure can hope to have any idea of how they or others are faring in God's eyes. He does not hold office-hours or post grades. One can only always struggle to locate and interpret evidence of this all-seeing and all-knowing God's frowns and smiles. But how can one ever hope to interpret the judgments of The One who is infinitely superior? How can I read the countenance of he whom I cannot look upon? And when this inability to be sure of God's judgments leads me to desperate attempts to calculate the adequacy of my lived responsibility to him, does not this same constant and unrealizable need to tally my score only serve to remind me of my insecurity, of my anxiety over not knowing how I am or am not measuring-up in what are always ever diminishing days left for securing salvation?

Writing of what is perhaps the most atrocious of biblical stories of responsibility and sacrifice to the God of the Old Testament, that of Genesis 22, Derrida (1995:94) argues that "[t]his look that cannot be exchanged is what situates originary culpability and original sin; it is the essence of responsibility." In Genesis 22:1 we are told that God "did tempt Abraham." God tempted Abraham in order to test him; God wanted to measure his faith and devotion—his willingness to be responsible firstly and foremostly to the one true God. In Genesis 22:2, then, God speaks: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

It is this most abominable of requests, indeed of commands, that Derrida suggests (1995:94) "sets in train the search for salvation through sacrifice." Certainly every parent knows, and, given our legacy of patriarchy, every father certainly knows that the sacrificing of one's son (of one's only son) is so horrible a proposition as to be nearly unthinkable. One would rather die the most painful and ugly of deaths a hundred times in succession than watch the death of one's child. Yet here, in the very first book of the Holy Bible, we find this God setting the standard for responsibility to him (an allegiance extracted in exchange for his goodwill) at this highest, most unfathomable of levels.

Abraham does not balk. He proceeds with his son up the mountain, even putting off Isaac's query about why there is no animal in tow for the sacrifice that the boy knows is coming. Abraham does not plead nor ask to understand; he simply has faith in his God as the location of absolute certainty. Because his God is the end and the beginning, the only basis of all measuring and assessing, Abraham accepts as fact that God knows what he is doing and prepares to slay

his only son. The extreme nature of his approaching sacrifice testifies to his absolute dedication to his God's plan and to the salvation that he believes awaits him if he remains resolute in his responsibility.

Derrida (1995) points out that Abraham does not tell Isaac what he is about to do because he knows that neither the boy nor anyone else (except God, of course) can understand or would even be willing to try to understand why this sacrifice must occur. The temptation of Abraham lies partly in the fact that mere humans (Abraham's peers) are not equipped to understand God or his plan. Abraham is not about to do something that he alone finds utterly awful; the murder of his son will also shock and sicken the minds of virtually every other mortal. They will never understand. He must proceed with this responsibility to God (who alone represents infallible certainty and consistency in the universe) in secret. His task is lonely and there are always those who would dissuade him. If he let them, they would help him not do what he already does not want to do. His responsibility, then, is a painfully personal responsibility.

The entire experience of anxious, personal responsibility to a general ethics (not the pre-Socratic *ethos* of orally recollected, corporeal experiences of the ancestors, but the later, Platonic and Christian notion of responsibility to abstract and objective moral principals) is built upon faith in an absolute certainty supplied by an unknowable deity.

By acting as the absolute, bedrock, foundation of everything, God acts as the initial and final centering that allows for notions of general responsibility to be entertained. If God's face was readily visible and immediately interpretable (if he posted grades and held office-hours), then his desires would be easily available to everyone who was properly scared enough to show up, listen, and live accordingly. Everyone would know who was behaving morally (consistent with truth) and who was errant. There could be no personal responsibility in the modern or biblical sense of the term because one would simply programmatically apply, act upon mechanically, and enforce habitually the rules insisted upon by an always immediately present, law-enforcing, grade-posting God.

It is only and precisely because the God of the Bible does not often exchange looks with mere mortals that our modern notion of responsibility (as something that requires discipline and sacrifice as well as perseverance in the face of skeptics whose will and faith are less stead fast than one's own) has come down to us as it has.

Because it is difficult to know what the biblical God intends for me (he speaks rarely and only to the most self-effacing), and because he is capable of extreme anger should his will not be followed, one must always set out, *on one's own,* to understand and adhere to his holy desires to the very best of one's mortal ability. I may seek the counsel of those who I hope know better than I, but the onus is always upon me personally to live up to his gaze that never sleeps.[3] There are always those who would lead me astray, those whose interpretations

are heretical or who fail in their responsibility to be diligent on an everyday basis. The possibility of responsibility remains personal.

Nonetheless, because the deity is absolute, this personal responsibility also has a social (general ethical) quality. Because God is the absolute source of salvation or damnation, he is a personal foundation and anchor for *all* human subjectivity. In the end, neither you nor I are what our mothers think we are or what our enemies think we are. We are only what God judges us to be. Despite our many differences, every single human must face this ultimate judge who is almost never heard or seen, and this common anxiety is a condition of possibility of my personal, yet shared, moral conscience. Because my responsibility to God is personal, it amounts to a hyper-responsibility. No one else can share the burden with me. On the other hand, we all bear this same burden of intense responsibility, and this common predicament leads us to general concerns for abstract ethical understandings and to proclaiming collective responsibility to those moral truths.

The ever present specter of the final judgment and, most importantly for our purposes, of what is *a singular* place, force, or location for this ultimate judgment, means that every human being touched by this theology seeks a singular reference point from which to understand the nature and quality of his or her self. There is but one scorekeeper and only he knows the whole of the game. And we all play—whether we want to or not. Ultimately, communities of Christians, in their shared anxieties, always find a uni-versal, theological theme (logos/logic). And, they have always surmised, some among them are more diligent than others when it comes to understanding, worrying about, and living according to this generalizable theology.

Political Responsibility and Sociologists' Christian Hangover

The parallels between this Judeo-Christian theology and the aspirations of modern, structuralist sociologists are clear. Recall that in the last pages of chapter 2 we encountered numerous references to the moral responsibilities of sociologists. I will not recount the desperate and angry calls for ethical responsibility of the sociologists quoted there. Nonetheless, I do want to reiterate these themes to the extent that they must always be part of any programmatic attempts to spell out a general responsibility for sociology. Again, the goal is to make the dual theological and structuralist qualities of these attempts explicit. To aid me in this review, I call upon a volume written by one of America's most prolific and influential authors of sociological theory: George Ritzer's (1997) *Postmodern Social Theory*.

Ritzer's text displays a desire to be both fair-minded and comprehensive in the midst of what he recognizes as a sociological debate that "is far from dispassionate" (1997:243). As he says, "debates about postmodern social theory

ordinarily generate an enormous amount of heat" (243). Because Ritzer's theory texts are so well-known by American sociologists, and because he has worked so very hard in the face of this enormous heat to maintain what he calls a "reasonably dispassionate portrayal of postmodern social theory" (243), his writing provides an additional and perhaps less emotionally charged example of what we have already noted is a common criticism of poststructuralist scholarship. Although his pages do not scream of flames of postmodern hell or of ethical and moral chaos, as do those of Turner and of Hill-Collins, Ritzer too fears that poststructuralism means the end of political responsibility among sociologists who give in to its temptations.

In his concluding chapter, "Criticisms of, and the Move Beyond, Postmodernism," Ritzer collects, organizes, and gives voice to critics who pronounce what they believe to be the impossibility of ethical responsibility in poststructuralist sociology. "Lacking a normative basis, postmodern social theory tends to encourage a babel of tongues. Such a babel of co-equal voices serves the interests of those in power. . . . With so many conflicting viewpoints and no clear adversary, those in power are better able to stay right where they are" (1997:247).

Ritzer and those he speaks for lament that poststructuralists "lack a normative basis." Yet because Ritzer has certainly collected and read the writings of the many thinkers (that he here labels "postmodern"), it is reasonable to expect that he recognizes the explicitly partisan and specifically political (normative) qualities of many, if not most, of these writings. And, indeed, he takes us on a rich tour of the particular political projects of several of these "postmodern" theorists.

So, given Ritzer's quite forthright replication of the specifically political (one could even say polemical) intentions of these "postmodern" projects, we can read his frustration ("lacking a normative basis") as signaling a disappointment over a lack of a *general or comprehensively foundational* basis for knowledge and therefore, he thinks, for doing politics. Ritzer wants some location for certainty, some "bottom line," an absolute reference point from where to assess how sociologists are fairing in our responsibility to improve lives. He desires a depiction of a proposed perfection, a centering teleological endpoint (the perfect society, perhaps) that our scientific responsibility ought to be dedicated to achieving.

Recall he tells us that poststructuralists have "no clear adversary." Once again, we have to suspect that he means an adversary who is adversarial because s/he works against some larger, ultimate, and good (normative) society. For, as we just noted, it is clear that he recognizes the specific political antagonists of, for example, Michel Foucault. ". . . the reader has no theoretical idea why Foucault is so upset at what he finds in the realms of madness, crime, medicine, and sexuality. That is, in formal terms he fails to offer us a vision of the normative framework" (Ritzer 1997:247).

Ritzer and I, and everyone else who knows Foucault's work, know that the thoroughgoing analyses in those texts are devastating attacks on power precisely because they extend into the most mundane minutiae of the daily lives of those for whom Foucault advocates. Clearly, then, Ritzer believes that such rigor is insufficient in and of itself. It is not enough to advocate with an inexhaustible attention to detail for specific victims of specific circumstances, to attack power as it functions exactly and immediately in the lived moments of tangible people. (Foucault writes of the political and disciplinary manufacturing of subjectivities including the medicalized, the criminalized, and the sexualized.)

Rather, Ritzer wants to know what credo Foucault champions. What grand vision are his analyses meant to substantiate? Like theology, sociology cannot tolerate "so many conflicting viewpoints." For sociologists to be responsible to our calling, we need "formal terms" that "offer us a vision of the normative framework," and "clear adversaries." It is not enough to analyze or even to take up intellectual arms against particular applications of power. We need, Ritzer seems to say, some final scoreboard that announces which power is good and legitimate and which is not; otherwise, "such a babble of co-equal voices serves the interests of those [already] in power." After a manner, then, that is thoroughly Christian. Foucault is criticized for not explaining what final end his work serves. To whom or whose comprehensive and centered plan is he responsible?

With his insistence that Foucault must provide a structured center, Ritzer unwittingly replays his Christian predecessors' devotion to Christ on the cross. He longs for the same metaphysical certainty promised through the memory of Christ's sacrifice and the eschatological pledge to ultimate understanding that will be revealed with his return.

Ritzer's structuralist aspiration for metaphysical certainty mimics Christian confidence in the redemption of the faithful, those who persevere through personal discipline and responsibility in the face of (now "postmodern") heresy. Monotheism (the anxious desire to hear God's single voice/logos/logic) is at the root of this fear of the complexity that necessarily follows the poststructuralist abandonment of the quest for one big normative structure. The search for the logic of the Creation is the cultural precursor of the structuralist dream of uncovering verifiable laws governing the social world. Like their Christian ancestors, structuralist sociologists continue to insist that (with sufficient discipline) the one will finally supersede the many (those whom the frightened must reduce to a "babble").

But do we really still need such simplicity? Must we continue our incessant longing for the essentially right and the absolutely wrong? And are we doomed to continue fearing anything but a promise of (or at least an unrelenting and driving desire for) absolute and grand coherence? What if we leave God behind? What if we forget the quest for the master plan? What might happen if we begin throwing off twenty-four hundred years of guilt born of an inability to ever know the deity's essential narrative? Can we reconstitute responsibility as

something other than a desperate duty to an ultimate end and, indeed, an ultimate end that involves (and thus essentially defines) all of us with equal force?

De-centering subjectivity means recognizing and abandoning our faith in a biblical God who continues, unexamined and unrecognized, to dictate structuralist sociologists' sense of responsibility. If responsibility is no longer conceived of as a duty to know some underlying theological or sociological structure, some Holy Plan or "vision of a normative framework," then responsibility is a far more complex and difficult issue to consider.

Rejecting theology that centers all persons by cementing them into a personal relationship with a hard-to-know yet singularly authoritative God is not the same thing as ending all sociological interest in the self. This is an important point because Ritzer and many others conclude that a de-centered sociological subjectivity lacks any basis for responsible political activism. Even as they drop any conscious appeal to Christianity's one God, these sociologists insist that something God-like must save them from the "babel of tongues." Some metaphysical foundation must be found to fill the void that deism no longer protects them from. The theological structure depicted in the story of Abraham and Issac (a subjectivity defined finally and ultimately by its unwavering faith in, and relation to, a master plan) remains intact.

Ritzer (1997:248) reads the poststructuralist rejection of centered subjectivity (of the theological self) as a "rejection of an interest in the subject and subjectivity." Because poststructuralists "lack a theory of agency," he surmises, we "generally lack any vision of the future" (248). I remind readers that it is not Ritzer alone who is responsible for these extreme sentiments. His accounting reads as a kind of synopsis of the outrage ("an enormous amount of heat") felt by a long list of sociologists, many of whom Ritzer quotes in considerable detail.

How could so many accomplished thinkers conclude, and in unison, that the intellectual practice of decentering subjectivity spells a wholesale "rejection of interest in the subject and subjectivity" and that this supposed rejection can only equal a "general lack of any vision of the future"? It seems that the only viable answer to this question is that a strong theological hangover continues to make such extreme sentiment appear merely practical? The Christian foundations of sociologists' scientific subjectivity, it would seem, remain shamefully poorly examined.

Thinking critically about this theological desire for a centering metaphysics, we might read Ritzer's (1997: 249) accusation that "[p]ostmodern social theory leads to profound pessimism" in reverse fashion. Embracing what need not be an ache of uncertainty, we can assert, with Friedrich Nietzsche (1895/1968:182), that "with the 'Beyond' one kills life." Why after all must I accept that responsibility to some phantom certainty must be the dutiful source of my motivation in life and as a sociologist? With Nietzsche (1895/1968:182), I can turn the table on this structuralist pessimism and propose that "[n]ihilist and Christian: they rhyme."[4] It is correct to say

that poststructuralists have lost interest in sociology that pursues a *general and centralizing* theory of subjectivity (a humanist "theory of agency"), but this is better understood as a liberation that encourages celebratory investigation of elaborate and multifaceted subjectivities—without the constant threat of "the Beyond." I need not "kill" the infinitely unpredictable (living) qualities of those I write for and about by reducing them to a fear-inspired desire for ultimate order in the cosmos. If there is nihilism about, it is surely found among sociologists who inherited a need to reduce life to a finally knowable structure from their Christian ancestors.

The supplement to Christian and structuralist nihilism will be a rigorous, ongoing, advocatory (creatively political) interrogation of complex subjectivities (and they are all complex) that are alive and earthly. Killing the biblical God in sociology means abandoning even the desire for a comprehensive road map to an essential and thus empirically available reality. Only guilt, fear, and failure follow from such desires. Because our responsibility is to real, mortal people (like Bob and Margaret from chapter 1) in all of their capricious complexity, and not to the pursuit of some thematic and fundamental set of principles, poststructuralists' words *are* political (normative) acts.

Embracing Complexity

Derrida (1968/1982) has long since proposed that structuralist desire can be undone by the play of what he calls *différance*. The term *différance* is a French language neologism (an invented word) incorporating the English "differ" and "defer." The quest for essences, he argues, is untenable because no definition can be referenced except through an economy of differences and deferrals.

For example, the computer that I now sit in front of is an old Macintosh machine. My machine is recognizable and has meaning for me because I know that Bill Gates's company did not manufacture it. The machine and Macintosh (the company) are different from Microsoft and their computers. It is recognizable because of what it is not. Since my old machine is the one I work on while I am at home and home is where I do most of my writing, I am sometimes faced with university machines that will not run my old Macintosh software. On these occasions I am forced to find my way around another computer environment by understanding how it differs from what I do at home. Thus I start my work at the university not by starting from some unbiased beginning point but only by asking myself, "how is this different from what I know already?" My computer and everything else that "is" can have meaning only through its differences with every other thing that "is." A simpler example might be to say that I can only know what a cat is because I understand how cats are different from dogs. Thus my old Macintosh is what it is on any given day precisely because it is different from whatever new technology I am struggling with on that day. Likewise, cats are cats because I understand how they

differ from not only dogs but from mice and birds. Again, then, all things inhabit an "economy of difference," and these perpetual relations of difference are part of what Derrida intends with his "différance" neologism.

As they differ or are spaced in language, meanings also actively defer to or call upon still other meanings. My computer is an old Macintosh but a Mac nonetheless. It differs from the machines made by Microsoft, but it is also not wholly unlike (it defers to) newer Macs. Similarly, a dog is different from a cat, but I also know what a dog is because I know how it is related to (defers to) a puppy. That this economy of differing and deferring is the very possibility of meaning making can be shown by looking at the most foundational of meaning-making directories, that is, a dictionary.

Looking up "dog," I find this definition: "a domesticated canine mammal related to foxes and wolves." To be "domesticated" means to be of the home, to be tame, and to be safe. Thus the term *domesticated* and thereby "dog" function by deferring to notions of protection, safety, and comfort. On the other hand, "domestic" also means what it does because we know how it differs from that which is wild, untamed, and fear provoking. Every definition of anything can be understood using the Derridean tool of différance.

Différance also incorporates time and thus the impossibility that anything can be absolutely present or wholly *in* the moment. If my computer is knowable because of différance, should I imagine that this economy of differing and deferring can be made to cease functioning? The computer is "old": an LCII. But this "oldness" can be, indeed must be, continually reassembled from long chains of différance. When I bought it, my old Mac was much newer than the Commodore machine that my grandmother bought to get me through graduate school. It was obviously and vastly different. However, now it seems to have much more in common with my old Commodore 64 than with the new Macintosh G5 that my university just purchased for me to use. And because the newer Macs are increasingly more compatible with the machines and software that Gates's company sells, the differences that I used to rely upon to give my machine meaning are fading. In another twenty-five years my old machine may share a museum shelf with a slide rule and an abacus. The relationships of difference and similarity that allow my machine its significance are always being altered, are constantly regrouping differently, and therefore remain unstable.

These ceaseless reweavings of differences and deferrals make the passage of time interpretable. I think in time using différance. I understand that time is passing because the economy of differences and deferrals (like those that continue to rewrite the reality of my old computer) are shifting as I sit writing. The temporal (time) quality of this thinking is hinted at in Derrida's (1968/1982:3) analogies comparing différance to "the complex structure of weaving," to a woven "sheaf," and later to a "text" as in textiles, and to a "tissue of differences" (1972/1981:33). This weave of meaning-making text, then, can be understood as ". . . an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning—or of force—to go off

again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others" (1968/1982:3).

Time is recognizable in this change of directions. I often make this thinking available to my students by reading from an etymology dictionary. Words evolve and their "lines of meaning" change. Their relations of différance are in constant flux, always poised "to go off again in different directions." For example, looking up the word "computer" in my etymology dictionary I find that it comes from the word "compute" which is related to the word "count." To count, this word history says, is to keep an "account" or to "recount" as in a reassessing or as in an additional evaluation or narration. All of these related meanings stem from the Latin *putare* which means "to prune" or "purify" and thus to "correct."

What I have just done is to trace a history of consciousness. While I certainly would never have made the connection between what my wife Cheri does to the shrubs in our yard and the function of my computer, until I picked up my dictionary, I can now readily understand that a central function of particularly early computers was to run computations, that is, to account for additions and subtractions and to recount how scenarios might be different with these figured into a particular computation. I can intellectually, then, also make the connections between computer computations (and the corrections that inevitably follow) and the accounting of shrubs that Cheri does before she prunes and "corrects" them once every year. Derrida and his followers will say that the meaning of "computer" contains textual "traces" of the older meanings I have just described. In this sense, the present is always also the past. The computer is never fully in the present. Its meaning is made up of relations of différance that extend backward in time, to other economies of différance. (Latin was a language also made up of evolving differings and deferrals.). Thus my computer contains "traces" of meanings that are now only recognizable with the aid of etymology.

Imagine for a moment a woven sweater. Imagine further that I snip a piece out of the top of the sweater so that the threads begin to unravel in more than one direction. Eventually, the entire sweater could be unraveled. If we see the threads of the sweater as analogous to etymological lines of meaning, and if we see the overlapping and interdependent weave of these threads as analogous to the structure of a narration that is made up of interwoven, evolving lines of meaning then we begin to understand what Derrida means by "text." We can see how each thread in the sweater is recognizable because of its relations with all the others; we understand that any observed thread contains "traces" of the others inasmuch as their meanings (the other threads' meanings) are the possibility of understanding any single thread. Each part of the sweater (and of any economy of différance) necessarily contains traces of all the other parts. No one part has "its own" essence or structure.

These "lines of meaning" that always threaten "to go off again in different directions" make time available to us because they are how we are conscious of

changes in the (différance-generated) significance of our existences. If we could avoid thinking of change as a thing (as something with a definable structure), we might say that différance is change. But things are still more complex.

Time passes. However, the recognition of time passing is never as simple as tracing a neatly evolving trajectory of différance. Time is not reducible to structure (beginnings and endings/eschatologies and teleologies). Différance is not a theme. It is not a ghost of history nor ink for the written recounting of the march of progress; nor is it the hidden logos that can reveal the gradual unfolding of God's plan. Undoing structure, remember, is the strategic purpose of différance. In Derrida's (1968/1982:6) words: ". . . there is nowhere to *begin* to trace the sheaf of the graphics of différance. For what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principal responsibility" (emphasis in original).

Derrida says that there "is nowhere to begin." I cannot speak in simple terms of the evolution of meanings through différance (of marking time in this way) because différance is at work even as I try to recount any history of différance. Let me illustrate with an example.

My family and I are devoted fans of the Star Trek television series. We sometimes compare the various incarnations of Star Trek that have appeared through the years, beginning with the 1960s version and episodes. Anyone who looks even casually at the old episodes with Captain Kirk, Spock, and the first Enterprise ship, will notice that the imagined twenty-third century of this program has a distinctly 1960s America tenor to it. The shows producers tried to create characters whose appearance was futuristic. The actors speak into "com' badges" that double as symbols for a future "Federation of Planets," have an evolved capacity to argue playfully over the merits or detriment of absolute rationality (Spock's "logic" and McCoy's dislike for it), and regularly use terminology that is meant to infer a far-advanced scientific understanding of the cosmos ("a rip in the space/time continuum!"). Yet, the women wear the miniskirts and beehive hairdos popular in the United States in the 1960s. The men wear large-heeled boot-like shoes, also fashionable in the era the program originated, with bell-bottom pants tucked neatly into them. Clearly this is a future created from a 1960s departure.

Still more telling are the moralizing themes. In one episode the crew discovers a planet full of otherworldly and otherwise named Native Americans who look, speak, and act like the images of Indians that were romantically and routinely recounted in 1960s American popular culture. In another episode, the crew saves two dissimilar groups of aliens from what looks a lot like the racial discord of the American civil rights era.

From this example we can glean something of the impossibility of mapping time's passing through an expectation that différance functions as an empirically available structure. The creators of the original Star Trek imagined the future. From the styles and cultural lessons contained in the show, we recognize how they imagined the twenty-third century from (as Derrida just said) a

"point of departure." Yet part of this imagined future was a simultaneous re-creation of the past, also from a "point of departure." You will notice that in the last paragraph I referred to the depiction of Native Americans as "romantic." Captain Kirk's encounter was with noble and awe-filled villagers who loved and understood a planet in an overly simple but nonetheless wisdom-filled way. By the time of the captain's encounter with these children of the forest on prime-time television, loving the planet and respecting the natural world was all the rage in American society.

But could this episode have been made a decade earlier? How would a mid-1950s American population have reacted to romanticized, even aggrandized depictions of those who were obviously recognizable as American Indians? After all, from the very dawn of colonial times, Europeans have always understood those they killed and enslaved as being close to nature. Indeed, this was a fundamental part of the discourse of justification for conquering those who were "savage," "uncivilized," and in need of saving. Thus although still thought to be "close to nature," popular understanding of American Indians *circa* the 1960s and 1970s amounted to a rehabilitation (and not necessarily for the better) of us by a society that was learning to think of itself as ecologically aware.

The Indians portrayed in the episode were not 1960s Indians. These depictions were of the people encountered on the frontiers of the new American republic generations earlier. It was the past (Indians of an earlier era), then, whose textual "assemblage" was "going off again in different directions," "tying itself up" with "different threads and different lines of meaning." The textual creation of a wiser twenty-third century (one that would recognize the wisdom of these extraterrestrial Indians) depended upon the textual re-creation of the American nineteenth century in terms supplied by 1960s popular culture. The writers of the Star Trek episode understood their present by rewriting the past in terms supplied by their present. They then projected this past, created in their present, into the future. Their notions of the past (notions dependent on 1960s era understandings of the mistakes of the nineteenth century) were the possibility of their self-recognition as the smarter beings of their present (smarter than those from the past who called the Indians "savages"), and also consequently of their projecting the terms of this supposed, ever-progressing enlightenment into their future.

I can say this more simply. The show's creators' past was made possible by a particular economy of différance (Indians, nature, racism, ecological destruction, etc.) functioning in their present. They then recollected the distant past from within that present. Their 1960s views of the nineteenth century was also the possibility of their imagining their twenty-third century.

Finally, and to add one last level of complexity to this example, if they understood the past and the future using their present, then these notions of history and of years yet to come were also the very differing and deferring that provided their own present. By re-creating the past and thus imagining

the future, they gave significance to their present. They knew who they were because they could describe how they differed from some who came before and how they were like some who were yet to come.

"There is nowhere to begin," Derrida says. This is because every moment owes its interpretability to traces of other meanings from other moments. Some of these meanings are weaker or stronger in their current influence; some are closer in time or more distant. But there is no center, no beginning point, "no absolute point of departure."

Once comfortable with the realization that no deity is going to tell me who I "really am," and after the belief in a centered, empirically verifiable, structured existence where I can find myself begins to appear simplistic, subjectivity and responsibility take on the decentered, différance-laden qualities of poststructuralism. As Derrida (1968/1982:6) writes in the previous quotation: "what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principal responsibility."

Post-Christian Responsibility in Sociology

Because a poststructuralist's responsibility has no stories of "rightful beginning" to be dutiful toward, no finality born of a Second Coming or from a some-day-to-be-arrived-at perfect society to dream of, the sacrifices we make are not justified in the name of metaphysical principals. Unlike Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac to his God, our sacrifices carry *the much greater weight* of responsibility to the earthly. Every choice of an intellectual project, every analysis that I could have come at differently, and every potential effect of the analyses I do, amount to the sacrifice of all that I did not choose to study and of all those who might be affected by my choices and by the method and scope of analysis that I bring to a social problem or issue.

> In terms of the moral of morality, let us here insist upon what is too often forgotten by the moralizing moralists and good consciences who preach to us with assurance every morning and every week, in newspapers and magazines, on the radio and on television, about the sense of ethical or political responsibility. Philosophers who don't write ethics are failing in their duty, one often hears, and the first duty of the philosopher is to think about ethics. . . . What the knights of good conscience don't realize, is that the "sacrifice of Isaac" illustrates the most common and everyday experience of responsibility. (Derrida 1995:67)

A poststructuralist's duty or responsibility is not to any essential subjectivity or to any battle on behalf of absolute subjectivity. Our politics are not humanist in the sense of working toward a society based on some theory of a human nature. Poststructuralist work is more akin to strategic intervention. While our work may be rigorously empirical, this research is aimed at understanding the

textual complexes that animate the politics that we are set to intervene in. In chapter 5, I do not ask, pursue, or show any interest in discovering the "real meanings of Native American remains." I have a heartfelt, even angry outlook on this struggle, but I am not out to overturn "error" in the service of "truth." My responsibility, here, is to the struggle of living Indians to take back the remains of dead Indians. Proposing and assuming responsibility for this analysis is a worldly and thus very weighty endeavor.

For example, how do I begin knowing how to narrate these "Indians" that I claim to have some responsibility toward? Who are "they," and who suggested that I have any right to think that I have any such "responsibility"? And doesn't assuming that I have such a responsibility do at least as much for me as it does for them? Doesn't narrating a "them" make Indians into a kind of gift to me, for me, the one who claims to know and to advocate *for them?* The tribal members I interviewed submitted to my tape recorder; they read a draft of the chapter sympathetically and not with hostility that they have every right to feel toward ever-present and pestering academics; and, most graciously of all, they allowed me to present them (through my editing, context building, and publishing) publicly! Who, then, is giving what to whom?

Because my analyses can assume no "real Indians" (I propose no "theory of agency"), no "reality of the remains," no duty to essential truth, my formidable responsibility lies in recognizing that the analysis constitutes both them and me as it intervenes in a textual terrain much larger than itself. My narration is part of an ongoing economy of différance that provides author and authored with significance. This is intense responsibility, one that is necessarily greater than that to any faceless God or forever-unobtainable finality of understanding. I am not responsible to any metaphysical ideal or to any structuralist dream. I am responsible to people who can and will speak to me about the work that I do. But the greatest burden of all comes with my recognition that I will lose control over what I can never assume is "my" analysis.

My intervention in the competing narrations over the significance of dead Natives is perhaps better understood as an interruption. I endeavor to interrupt textual narrations, strategically, where the assumptions that we (and this "we" of "we Indians" is itself a strategic and textual maneuver; I might have continued to speak, as I already did in the previous section, as an academic) find most offensive are most vulnerable. I have to weigh the strength of current pronouncements (the power of popular and scientific claims understood as text) and move to send "the different threads and different lines of meaning . . . of force . . . off again in different directions."

But I am also aware that my political articulations can be re-used, associated differently with different text and thus turned in ways I had not anticipated. Politics are ceaseless and no completely present truth or God can arrest these struggles. Because political narratives create subjectivities (e.g., "superstitious Indians" holding up "important scientific work" or "affirmative action cases" fighting for "special privileges"), poststructuralists' responsibility is to

subjectivities whose identities must remain interminable. All subjectivities are political and I must recognize the responsibility that comes with interrupting functioning political narrations and steering them in directions that can never be fully anticipated or controlled.

Who does my work ignore? What interests do my analyses relegate to the margins? Who do I simplify and thus establish some narrated political control over? Who am I sacrificing and for what ultimately unknowable ends? ("What the knights of good conscience don't realize is that the "sacrifice of Isaac" illustrates . . . the most common and everyday experience of responsibility.") With the Christian God dead and sociologists relieved of the burden of a Beyond, our human responsibility is now to each other and to our planet. Doing academic work as a political participant who recognizes and embraces this complexity is how a poststructuralist understands responsibility. There is no more single voice of God for Abraham to obey. Responsibility for our lives cannot be reduced to the logos or to any thematic and normative logic. There can be no more theology. "Who will dare call duty a duty that owes nothing, or better . . . that *must owe nothing?* It is necessary, therefore, that the decision and responsibility for it be taken, interrupting the relation to any *presentable* determination but still maintaining a presentable relation to the interruption and to what it interrupts. Is that possible?" (Derrida 1993:17, emphases in original)

To interrupt a metaphysician's claim to a truthful telling, but not by arguing for a better, more accurate truth is to interrupt without trying to establish a "relation to any presentable determination." I want to interrupt what the archaeologists say about Indians, but I do not want to fight anymore on their cultural terrain than I have to. I will not argue over science, over "presentable determinations" of "truth" with them; but I will present their scientific narrations in terms that make sense from "another point of departure." I *will* interrupt their narratives, and my renarration will constitute an alternative relation "to what it interrupts" (archaeological claims to Native dead). My battle is a political battle (a "presentable relation") that "owes nothing" to fantasies of extra-political truth. Another way to say this is that I intend to interrupt the archaeologists' privilege. I intend to attack their assumed and taken for granted power to narrate. As Foucault has taught us, power works by naturalizing the terms of its own gaze, by instituting its meaning making procedures as a "regime of truth" (Foucault 1977:133).

Closing the Missions: Beyond Good and Evil

Because Greek philosophy and Christian theology teach that existence is tolerable only to the extent that it can be reduced to metaphysical themes, too much of the past twenty-four hundred years of intellectual work has been devoted to delineating who are friends of truth and to defining what it is exactly

that makes one a foe of all right-minded people. Understandably, these quests spawned brutal and bloody struggles. (They are still giving birth to "an enormous amount of heat.") Describing this incessant desire to simplify at all bloody costs as "crudity and naiveté, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy," Nietzsche (1882/1974:335) asks: "Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this—reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians?"

For Nietzsche and Foucault, the reduction of existence, and thus the simplification of human beings in terms of these reductions, is the most base and dangerous invocation of power. Power, we learn from these philosophers, is not some imposition from an identifiable source. Power is not a thing wielded by someone (a "clear adversary") who censors, represses, or conceals. On the contrary, Foucault (1977) argues, "normalcy" (Nietzsche prefers to say "good and evil"[5]) is the result of "technologies of power." Will to truth, and will to tell it methodologically (as technique, as "techno-logic") from some principled and disciplined place of intellectual privilege that is removed from the lived and diverse experiences of pride, pain, and joy (knowing as "an indoor diversion for mathematicians"), represents always, Nietzsche (1901/1967) counsels, a will to power, which, coincidentally, is the title of his last book.

Structuralist and theological knowing is aggressive. It seeks converts and party members who will recite "normative frameworks." Missionaries "work" to "frame" the subjectivities of both the converts and of those not yet dominionized. But because the frameworks can never contain (control, encircle, or fully account for) différance, intellectual wars and the literal spilling of blood continue. The struggle to narrate existence is a political struggle over power. "Final conclusion: All the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which then proved inapplicable and therefore devalued the world—all these values are, psychologically considered, the results of certain perspectives of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination" (Nietzsche 1901/1967:14). As long as the sociology of our era remains uncritically Platonist and unwittingly Christian, knowing and controlling—in the service of "responsibility"—will remain fundamentally related.

Intellectual history, as a history of metaphysical desire, appears to poststructuralists as a complex web of power grabbing, of power grabbing built upon earlier and multiple contestations between regimes of truth. Telling "the truth" has always only been about "values," about "rendering the world estimable for ourselves," and thus about "maintaining human constructs [subjectively created fantasies] of domination." For poststructuralists, the death of God must also spell the end of his priests and missionaries, those who would claim power in the name of these culturally inherited, metaphysical ideals and goals.

Like Nietzsche, Foucault argues that truth always has history. Truth, he says, is "a thing of this world" (Foucault 1977:131). As is Derrida, he was concerned with the affects and effects of language, but Foucault also sought to

elucidate specific domains of language ("discourses") that produce "normalcy." Power lies precisely in the efficacy of these discourses, in their ability to constitute subjectivities and to establish relations based upon these narrated versions of personhood. As he wrote, "it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays" (133). History, for Foucault, is not some gradual unfolding of human potential. Human existence has never amounted to a linear unfolding of logically interconnected occurrences; it has no pattern or constant agent that would permit "progress" to be measured. Rather, history is about struggles for the right to narrate reality, about interpretations heaped upon interpretations and about the real-life effects ("a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays") of these narrations.

Empowered discourses define people as they facilitate what appear to be mere self-definitions. Discourses order the world, including one's place in it. At the most mundane and daily levels people learn to assess themselves, to apply "corrective" measures, and to feel that they are good, bad, healthy, or productive by referencing functioning discourse.

For example, when students receive grades on their exams or report-cards, they are being provided with a means for what they believe to be *self-assessment*. There is a whole domain of language and meaning making at work that includes, for example, notions of intelligence, of the value of hard work, and of the importance of education. This textual weave of meaning-making-terms is held together by a logic that relates each piece to the others. For example, "hard work" produces "good grades" that indicate an "intelligence" that needs and desires "education." This text of différance that provides significance to "grades" becomes a technology used like a lens or grid for diagnoses of achievement, of ability, and therefore also of lack of potential, or lack of applied effort. We teach students to take up this discourse, to make it their own, and to narrate life in and around educational settings in terms of this perception grid that orders, normalizes, and pathologizes.

Alternative discourses are always possible. For example, there is no law in history that says that human beings will evaluate their worth based upon examinations of academic knowledges that have grown up within an institution that is itself a complicated amalgamation dating back at least to Plato's Academy. Viewed in contradistinction to all of the other possibilities for understanding oneself that might have developed and that did develop particularly among non-Europeans, modern test taking and grading is an arbitrary and socially arrived at outcome. Things might have been otherwise. To assess power, then, means to understand who benefits from the habitualization (the reification or normalization) of discourse about education, and, therefore, from the institutionalization of subjectivities (professor, student, or "good" or "poor" intellect) maintained in and by this discourse.

Consider that the importance of "good grades" still varies across American subcultures. Some fathers are more concerned with how well their sons hit

baseballs or with how "virtuous" their daughters are perceived to be. Self-assessment in these households is carried out by reciting a rather different domain of language. In each of these instances, though, the subjectivities of fathers, children, students, and teachers is constituted by narrative discourse (by domains of textually related language deployed as grids or lenses that are taken up and peered through) used as technologies that produce the significance of people and their relationships.

The relative strength or power of particular subjectivities, then, is manufactured through socially learned and socially acquired discourses (by the importance assigned to the different statuses accorded to those who fare well or poorly on exams, to those sons who know how to hit a baseball and those who do not, and to those daughters whose moral stature remains beyond reproach and those who appear too interested in "immoral" pursuits). Discourse constitutes that which is "moral" and "immoral" as well as what is quickly recognizable as "ability" or "inability," and this power to generate, emphasize, and maintain the scorecards where subjectivities are taught and learned is precisely the constitutive (as opposed to the merely sanctioning, negating, censoring) power that interests Foucault.

I sometimes try to illustrate the political power contained in discourses by asking my students to consider the history of their own self-assessments. For example, what does it mean to be a "self-starter," "kind of smart" (emotionally) "strong," or "open-minded." Where did these characterizations come from, historically? Are they related to the liberal notions of personhood that appeared with the birth of capitalism? (Or has everyone everywhere always associated strength of personal character with an ability to display innovation and perseverance in the pursuit of wealth?) Do they have anything to do with the complex history of gender? (Why is it still the men in the classroom who understand immediately that emotional vulnerability is not a desirable accounting of oneself?) Does the political history of the European Enlightenment continue to work behind-the-scenes in those self-celebrations ("open-minded") which enjoy not being associated with "prejudice" and "irrational fear," pathologies that probably became recognizable as part of the Enlightenment era's "overcoming" of Europe's so-called Dark Ages?

Even the imprecise history that I have alluded to here suggests whole hosts of bitterly contested political battles whose outcomes constitute discursive conditions of possibility of my students' self-descriptions.

Political Responsibility as Genealogy

The fights over "truth" found in these histories are, as Foucault and Nietzsche say, the "genealogy" of the contemporary discourses that these students rely upon to describe "who [they] are." "Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the

beginning—numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by an historical eye. The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events" (Foucault 1971/1977:145–46).

Understanding the conditions of the possibility of functioning discourse (of technologies of power that are able to write particular forms of subjectivity into existence and to even force subjects to discipline themselves according to the strictures of these discursive narrations) requires, Foucault tells us, "liberating a profusion of lost events."

When a genealogist hears authority claimed in the name of the pursuit of truth, s/he wants to recover the lost events that will restore the political scars that such pursuits always try to wash away and to forget. Here we see what Ritzer, and so many others, miss in Foucault's critique of subjectivity. When he argues that sociologists need "a theory of agency," he means to say that we need a theory about the nature of a truthful subjectivity that precedes and exceeds mere political battles.

But there can be no (general) theory of agency when all subjectivities can be traced to focused concerns found among specific antagonists who were part of "lost [we might say strategically forgotten] events." The purveyors of these general truths have to forget, to "fabricate," and to "pretend" that their pronouncements are not born in the dirt and blood of earthly politics because remembering would not allow them to claim "unification" and "coherence" for some universal human agency. To recall (as a proponent and ally would insist upon recalling) those who struggled against the victors and the victors' narrations would mean admitting a suppressed difference within such "fabricated" and "coherent identity."

To "liberate a profusion of lost events," then, is to recover the dissent that has been narrated away or tamed in the discourses spoken by the victors and by the grandchildren of the victors. It is to "dissociate" and "displace" what has always only been an "empty synthesis" conjured by those with the power to spin truths. A genealogist wants to reappreciate the sites of struggles (the "numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by an historical eye") because s/he wants to reconnect these truth stories with the often-wretched politics that spawned them. Understood as "a thing of this world," truth-telling discourse can be confronted by those whose "normalcy" it tries to institutionalize. Genealogy exposes the power to narrate existence as a political inheritance.

Those who project a single form of human subjectivity (e.g., a "soul," "species being," "human nature," or "theory of agency") across the cornucopia of ages, cultures, and languages (promulgating an "empty synthesis"), and thereby find some culmination of progressing development outlined in their own structural narrations, irresponsibly fail to interrogate this inheritance. "In placing present needs at the origin, the metaphysician would convince us of an obscure purpose that seeks its realization at the moment it

arises. Genealogy, however, seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault 1971/1977:148).

Discourses change. The narrated significance of the present undergoes constant revision, and understandings of the past are altered accordingly. In imprecise and muddled layers, stories are built upon stories, and "present needs" inevitably see themselves reflected "at the origin." The competition to find structural coherence in history means that new narrations subsume older narrations, twisting them toward what are always believed to be better, more advanced, more comprehensive revelations of heretofore "obscure purposes," logics, and patterns. Like an episode of the children's game "telephone" (where simple messages are passed from one ear to the next across long lines of kids) that has been extended across centuries, sometimes parts of the past stories are left out entirely while aspects of still older, almost forgotten accounts are imprecisely retrieved and put to use in current explanations.

The one constant in any of this is power, the power that is the right and privilege of having one's narrations taken seriously and adhered to. Beyond this endless substitution of dominations, there are no metaphysical landmarks, no absolute points of reference, only power wrested from earlier rulers. Nevertheless, and as we shall see in the remaining chapters, the pursuit of metaphysical ideals continues to generate those who claim to be "on the right path."

Not wishing to continue or "reestablish the various systems of subjection," poststructuralists intervene in discursive systems of domination, and one way that we accomplish this intervention is by making a genealogical understanding (a history of the "hazardous play of dominations") available to those who continue to be subjected to them. Genealogy is a repoliticization of discourse that is current, working, and empowered and is one way in which poststructuralists assume political responsibility.

Power, Assessment, and Terror

When discursive accounts are institutionalized, enforced, and believed, they are inscribed on the day-to-day lives of everyday folks. One need only consider the history of being black, brown, female, or gay in the United States to understand that the power to define "normalcy" is an immense one. The history of truth is a history of terror. Truth has been the basis of every racism, sexism, homophobia, and political witch-hunt. Slaveholders did not justify their ownership of other human beings as simply the result of greater military power or as a strength born of superior numbers. These racists believed that they possessed truth about "the races" and justified the horror they produced with science and religion. The bigots claimed (as they do today) to speak *on behalf of truth*.

The most horror-filled murders and indignities have been visited upon the persons of those who succumbed (as the biblical Isaac almost did) to those who believed (like Abraham) that they had a responsibility to truth. Women being "naturally unsuited" to working outside the home, to enduring strenuous athletic competitions, or to pursuing higher math and science was "truth"—not politics. Claims that gay men and lesbians make "unfit mothers and fathers" are still justified as "truth"—not politics. Claims that Indians do not understand "the value of archaeology" are asserted as truth—not politics. Claims that affirmative action equals "special privileges" for people of color are everyday awarded the status of truth—not politics.

Truth is dangerous, then, precisely because its tellers seek to relieve themselves of their political responsibility. By insisting that an extra-social and extra-political center demands their devotion, they minimize the far bigger burden that poststructuralists are willing to bear.

Overcoming the history of terror fomented by pursuits of structuralist truth means recognizing that *all assessments are political acts*. Making sense and asking others to listen to that sense-making is an invocation of political power. As I have already said, this request brings grave responsibility. It brings a sense of responsibility that can no longer tolerate deferrals to some metaphysics—which amounts to an irresponsibility, a cowering and hiding from the immensity of post-Christian responsibility. To know is to participate in the ceaseless rendering of existence. A poststructuralist has to understand something of the conditions of possibility (the genealogy) of his/her narrations and to be aware of what effects might be set in motion by her/his analyses.

As a poststructuralist, the whole point of my sociology is the possibility contained in a political transgression.

> . . . criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. . . . And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. . . . It is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. (Foucault 1984/1997:125–26)

Freed from the obligation to pursue unobtainable structure in existence, sociologists can turn all of our attention to the study, interrogation, and manipulation of productions of truth ("events that have led us to constitute ourselves . . . as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying") that adversely affect those we care for and want desperately to defend. Think of the amount of time and energy that has been spent chasing what never existed!

How much more productive (in terms of focused advocacy for the poor and for victims of discrimination) we might have been had we not always sought to justify our work by dreaming of metaphysical validations ("the search for formal structures with universal value").

The possibilities are endless. If you are of a marginalized population, take a moment to contemplate all of the family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances who are or have been "welfare mothers," "born out of wedlock," "ex-con's," "convicted felons," "unskilled laborers," "human capital," "downsized," "illegal aliens," "affirmative action cases," "eco-freaks," "thugs," "sinners," or "anti-family." Because I am no longer compelled to compare the inaccuracies of these labels to some "really real" persons who precede and exceed the subjectivities constituted in the discourses where these labels function ("will not deduce from the form of what we are"), I look to intervene from within offending discourses. Because I understand that these family members, friends, neighbors, and fellow human beings *are created* in and by these labels and the textual discourse that allows them to function ("the contingency that has made us what we are"), I need not fight for their salvation in the name of some never obtainable, extra-social "soul" or "true self" or sociological "agency." My fight begins not from esoteric discussions of methodological validity but from the particular discursive terrain already staked out in the details of political combat.[6]

A poststructuralist attacks by rereading the pronouncements of power in ways that question the integrity of the empirical structure they claim to reflect. If I can show the social and political and historical (thus ultimately arbitrary) qualities of the assumptions and supposed moral imperatives of my opponents, I can turn the entire tide of political battles. Altering the narration by pointing to the political underpinnings of structuralist truth tellings alters self-assessments as it disputes the power of the (narrative) accusations that heretofore had their way in the production of subjectivities (those of my family, friends, and political allies). The goal, then, is to open up the possibilities of alternative understandings and thus of avenues to pursue progressive political work.

With intellectual tools borrowed from Derrida, Foucault, and Nietzsche, poststructuralists can help those we care about confront regimes of truth that enslave them in disempowered subjectivities ("separate out . . . the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think").

Assumptions most vulnerable to attack are often those believed to be least in need of defense. Almost by definition, structuralists rely upon the most reified and naturalized of their suppositions to act as intellectual bedrock for their narrations. Such extreme reification provides these foundational assumptions with the appearance of "common sense" in their purveyors' eyes. Power, as we shall see in chapters 5 and 6, is most visibly displayed in that which it takes most for granted.

Summary

Biblical estimations of responsibility have now been added to our earlier gene-alogical accounting of the founding assumptions that continue to constitute the subjectivity of modern sociologists. Claims of political paralysis suppos-edly brought on by poststructuralist philosophy reflect the unexamined and metaphysical desires inherited from Greek philosophy and Christian theology. These inheritances have been taken up in detail in this chapter. My strategy has been to turn the tables on structuralist declarations, arguing instead that aspirations for sociological agency, normative frameworks, and essential cen-ters of power are overly simple, faith-based longings inherited from theology. Such reductions work to deny the abundance of possibilities that make life rich with never fully estimable experiences.

On the other hand, an appreciation for poststructuralist arguments accom-plishes exactly what the critics fear will be lost. The capacity for, and aware-ness of, civic responsibility is dramatically increased with the demise of Christian-derived notions of responsibility to fanciful, metaphysical ideals. Poststructuralists have a much greater chance of effecting real political change because we understand all knowledge to be political and therefore as-sume political work to be our first and most important intellectual activity. We no longer harbor even the distracting desire for the old notions of objectivity in the pursuit of an extra-political social structure in existence. This chapter renders the power that these structuralist cultural inheritances wield in the lives of contemporary sociologists less compelling because, as C. Wright Mills (1959:12) wrote, we can now "grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society."

Although no longer interested in, as Foucault (1984/1997:126) put it, "seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science," we continue to be very much interested in making the history of power available to those who continue to understand themselves (unwittingly) only as the marginalized effects of its narrations. Thus we intend "to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom." Chapters 5 and 6 are examples of a sociology informed by poststructuralism. Each takes respon-sibility as a political intervention on behalf of racialized, ethnic, and cultural minorities in the United States. However, before engaging in that political work, we will take the time to reread the American sociological debate of the 1980s and 1990s, using the insights to poststructuralist philosophy that we have gained in chapters 1–3.

4

THE AMERICAN DEBATE
ON "POSTMODERNISM"

It is in view of justice and ethics as undeconstructible, as experiences
of the impossible, that legal and political decisions must be made,
empirically scrupulous but philosophically errant.
—Gayatri Spivak (1999:427)

Instead of appealing to reality to judge the truth of my
social discourse, I propose that we judge our
social stories by their consequences.
—Steven Seidman (1991b:188)

In the 1980s and 1990s, American sociologists embroiled themselves in an anxious and bitter discussion of poststructuralism and what it meant for the discipline. Yet, the voices of ethnic and racialized minorities were conspicuously absent from these conversations. This "debate" mostly consisted of denouncements and attempts to control damage to the status of sociology as disciplinary science. Almost always, these writings were the outcome of hurried readings that missed the more radical elements of Foucaultian genealogy and Derridean deconstruction. Consequently, a tremendous opportunity to open up professional sociology to a far more diverse audience was missed. During the same period, Cultural Studies scholars and Postcolonial Critics—many of whom were racialized, ethnic, and cultural minorities wielding tools gleaned from reading Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida—had begun intense and productive discussions with American and British anthropology.[1] But American sociologists rarely saw these new fields as anything but threatening. Indeed, the reactions of American sociologists routinely treated the tenets of structuralist epistemology as if they were so obviously necessary as to be beyond the pale of serious discussion.

Although unable to recount the entire debate, here I work through some of the major appraisals made by some of the most prominent American theorists.[2] These years saw a series of pronouncements about the dangers or limited utility of "postmodernism." I begin with arguments published in one of the discipline's most prestigious journals, the American Sociological Association's *Sociological Theory*.[3] I then critically assess writings by Patricia T. Clough (1992a, 1992b), Norman K. Denzin (1986, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2001), Charles Lemert (1997), and Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin (2000). The combined influence of these works on American sociologists is hard to overstate. These discussions *became* "postmodernism" in American sociological circles.

The Sociological Theory Debate

A central concern of these thinkers was to define difficult poststructuralist works. If they were to be controlled, the challenges presented by poststructuralist philosophers had to be definitively assessed and mined for any possible positive contributions. Thus Richard H. Brown (1990) announced what he termed "the postmodern turn in sociological theory" and wrote of "hope for the creation of a new ethical ontology and normative epistemology" (188). Here we see the now familiar structuralist assumption that meaningful sociological analyses require an epistemological center. Brown suggests the necessity of a new and postmodern center as the potential foundation of any moral society that this difficult philosophy might help us to build. ". . . even after deconstructive criticism has done its work, we still are faced with the challenge of establishing cognitive authority and inventing positive values as central elements of any rational moral polity" (1990:188).

Brown has missed the more radical features of deconstruction. He seems unaware that it is the very notion of an epistemological center that is under attack in Derrida's writings. Nor does he seem to appreciate the contradiction between his call for "inventing positive values" that would govern "any rational moral polity" and Foucault's devastating attacks on authoritative productions of "healthy," "sane," and "moral" subjectivities.

Indeed for Brown, the Platonic and Cartesian self—understood as a self-contained and complete presence, as a self-directing "agency"—remains wholly intact. "Because individuals are the *loci* from which practices take their empowerment," Brown (1990: 193–94) tells us, "the ontological status of human agents is a central condition for rhetorical awareness and practice."

Poststructuralism, as it is articulated here, amounts to little more than a new addition to an already well-established Interactionist tradition in American sociology. In fact, Brown explicitly links what he labels "the rhetorical or textualist metaphor" (1990:194) to the writings of George Mead, Erving Goffman, and Harold Garfinkel. Reality, in this tradition, is "an accomplishment,"

based on recognized sets of meanings that are negotiated in interactions among sociological agents in any particular setting. This reduction of poststructuralism to Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology makes it clear that Brown completely misses the de-centering of subjectivity contained in Derridean and Foucaultian philosophy. Consequently, he also does not recognize the serious challenges that this deconstruction presents to the empiricism of Interactionist sociologies.[4] He does not see that the epistemological discipline demanded by ethnographic methodologies is under serious challenge and so offers no real discussion of it.

In contrast, much of the ensuing struggle unleashed in the pages of the nation's preeminent theory journal can be read as reactions to the poststructuralist affirming provocations of Seidman (1991a, 1991b, 1992). Seidman clearly "gets it." He grasps not only the details of difficult philosophy but also the consequences for institutionalized, American sociology. "To revitalize sociological theory requires that we renounce scientism—that is, the increasingly absurd claim to speak the Truth, to be an epistemically privileged discourse. . . . Postmodernism gives up the modernist idol of human emancipation in favor of deconstructing false closure, prying open present and future possibilities, detecting fluidity and porousness in forms of life where hegemonic discourses posit closure and a frozen order" (1991a:131).

Although Seidman does not go so far as to label the search for "closure and . . . frozen order" a structuralist "superstition," as I did in chapter 3, he nevertheless understands this quest for structure as an impediment to furthering the political relevance of sociology. Indeed he refers to the dubious idea that the discovery of structure will one day bring about "human emancipation" as a "modernist idol."

Seidman's writings from this period had a huge impact on me as a newly minted Ph.D. and assistant professor. As I have already disclosed, the sociology I had learned to that point was of no real concern to the loggers and Indians that are my family. Sociology might help me understand them from a different vantage, but it was largely irrelevant within the conversations about things that mattered to us. Speaking and thinking the language of theoretical abstraction was more hindrance than help. Esoteric concepts created social and cultural gulfs where none existed before.

My family has never made any secret of their pride in my academic accomplishments. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends came from as far away as Montana to attend my oral defense, and the party afterward lasted through the night and well into the next day. However, they are also quite clear that they do not need my "book learning" to make their problems relevant and real. I will never forget the reaction of one of my best friends from home to an academic analysis offered by a fellow graduate student during the festivities following my graduation. I saw it coming from across the large table but chose not to intervene in the five-minute long academic oratory being displayed for

eight to ten Indians. Finally, my friend Raven had had enough. Taking a big swig of beer and setting his glass emphatically on the table, he proclaimed: "you don't know shit!" The Natives erupted in laughter, the graduate student looked embarrassed, and the conversation quickly veered in a new direction.

Seidman's poststructuralism spoke directly to this cultural gap between professional sociologists and the populations we all hope our work helps. As he wrote, "When one appeals solely to the truth of a discourse to authorize it intellectually and socially, one represses reflection on its practical-moral meaning and its social consequences. A discourse that justifies itself solely by epistemic appeals will not be compelled to defend its conceptual decisions on moral and political grounds" (1991a:135).

Seidman pointed to the cultural and discursive properties of sociological writings. As narrative, he argued, sociology is inherently no more correct than those supplied in the languages of other cultural representations. Seidman understands that sociologists' political and civic efficacy are compromised by insisting on the centrality of our own discourses (by continuing to insist on the possibility of epistemology). And, he pointed to the logically subsequent understanding that claims to speak the truth on behalf of all of humanity have always been inextricably linked to colonialist politics.

Although Seidman writes convincingly in these journal articles of the benefit of abandoning the fruitless search for essential and universal human agency, his critique remains dependent on the imagery of a rational, free-thinking, individualism. Consider the following quotations: "We need to shift from an essentialist language of self and agency to conceiving of the self as having multiple and contradictory identities, community affiliations, and social interests" (1991a:142). And then, "Our value would be both in providing socially informed analyses that would be useful to partisans and in promoting uncoerced public moral discussion in the face of various partisans who repeatedly act to restrict such elaborated discourse. We would become defenders of an elaborated reason against the partisans of closure and orthodoxy, and of all those who try to circumvent open public moral debate by partisan or foundational appeals" (143).

But how can one have "multiple and contradictory identities" and also be "uncoerced"? The latter quote seems to suggest some neutral site for conversation, some place where "elaborated reason" would be uniformly recognizable and appreciated by all those championing "open public moral debate." Yet, if Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are correct, there is no uncoerced space, no centered forum of "elaborated" reasoning where "open" debate can happen. All reasoning functions textually and genealogically. All persuasive articulations are fundamentally political. Indeed, this is precisely why we have "multiple and contradictory identities." We exist in multiple and competing social relationships, and those relationships, maintained textually and discursively, are the possibility of any agency.

Arguments ("public moral discussion") must refer and link themselves, again textually and genealogically *and strategically*, to other meanings, logics, and imagery if they are to carry the political day. And this "elaboration" is potentially infinite, always open to extending beyond what participants in such a forum might deem properly "moral" debate.

I would suggest that Seidman's deference to "uncoerced public . . . discussion" takes its appeal from the European and American celebration of individualism. The victories of the European Enlightenment institutionalized a particular form of human subjectivity—a Cartesian intellect awarded the political rights of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie. This subjectivity, one that became the basis of modern republics, was of course drawn (genealogically) from the Renaissance fascination with classical Greece[5] and from Christian theology. In this sense, then, Seidman's allusion to "uncoerced" space holds out hope for what, only a few pages earlier, he called a "modernist idol of human emancipation." As poststructuralist sociologists, I believe we are better off figuring *any* subjectivity as a consequence of "the hazardous play of dominations," as we heard Foucault suggest in chapter 3. There will be no end to politics. And political acumen is what professional sociologists should develop. There will be no extended rest in any extra-political center and discursive contention is forever with us.

Although she goes on to draw quite unwarranted conclusions, Mary F. Rogers (1992) quickly identifies and attacks this inconsistency. Accusing Seidman of "retain[ing] modernist hopes while rejecting modernist methods," Rogers (233) asserts that he "localizes 'objectivity' but does not erase it as an achievable end." "Postmodernism," she says, "promises little more than to miniaturize modernist hopes" (234). Ultimately, she concludes, Seidman's case for a more politically responsible sociology "rests on a vision of 'community' emblematic of the narrator's desires" (232).

These are serious charges, but they quickly spin into what would become in subsequent years very common and shortsighted assessments of poststructuralist philosophy. Rogers reasons that Seidman's claim that scientific sociology has become increasingly removed from the everyday problems of those he cares about says far more about his elite status and access to elitist theory than about anything related to the actual political relevance of structuralist sociology. In tones of martyrdom, Rogers indicts Seidman, and presumably poststructuralists everywhere, for abandoning the real work of the undergraduate classroom in favor of obscure, removed, poststructuralist philosophy. "I leave the metatheoretical storytelling to those at some sort of heady remove from the backwaters of higher education, where enchantment comes hard but does come, even in theory classrooms" (1992:240).

As I have noted, poststructuralist philosophy can be quite difficult to read. Many American critics of the last decade jumped to the conclusion that this difficulty signals snobbishness and pampered retreat into intellectual enclaves not available to mere mortals. Thus for Rogers (1992:231), poststructuralist

writings amounted to "rhetoric and metatheoretical gesticulations" best explained by poststructuralists' own "professional locations, including their relative disengagement from undergraduates."

Given the well-documented attraction of many racialized, sexualized, ethnic, immigrant, and cultural minorities to poststructuralist writings, this was, and is, a brazenly uninformed attack. Indeed, Rogers has to all but ignore Seidman's (1991b) extended and eloquent explanation of why and how poststructuralist philosophy helped him conceptualize a more sophisticated and egalitarian political understanding of the diversity in gay communities. His analysis is explicitly and rigorously linked to the gaps he finds between "on the ground" political organizing in these communities and the content of professional sociology journals and meetings. And, Seidman (1992:255) points out, the most emphatic structuralists are themselves famous precisely because of their "tie[s] to the elite conference/journal circuit."

This said, Seidman's (1992) response to Roger's more substantive criticism is not entirely satisfying. He reads her attack as being primarily about "linguistic inconsistency" (1992:256). "Modernism" and "Postmodernism," here, appear as two distinct and discreet historical periods whose constituent languages, in a perfect academic world, would be clearly separated one from the other. Thus he admits to being mired in language and concepts that he nonetheless hopes one day to leave behind. "Rogers, I think, would agree that a discursive strategy whose aim it is to depart from the dominant conventions will often draw on these conventions. This is so because there is often a lag or a strain between conceptual innovation and linguistic usage" (256).

No such disjuncture is possible. We cannot escape "the modern" and remove ourselves to a purity of "the postmodern" anymore than we might render ourselves definitively "post-Christian." The desire for escape to a place of new clarity is more productively understood as a replaying of Greek and Christian metaphysical aspirations (as well as what I have called "self-loathing"), and precisely at the moment when these faith-based desires should be thrown into crisis. The quest also implies that as theorists we might adopt some disciplined (epistemological) vantage from where to assess what is "modern" and what is "postmodern," not unlike some Marxian claims to assess "modes of production" from a privileged site of "dialectical totality."[6]

Jeffrey C. Alexander's (1991) contribution to the *Sociological Theory* debate might be considered the prototype for another of the recurring structuralist attacks of later years. His claim is that structuralists' epistemological beliefs are equal to the very possibility of meaningful knowledge and therefore politics. Labeling the challenges from poststructuralist philosophy as a "discourse of suspicion" (149), Alexander insists on a thoroughly indefensible line of demarcation between "the theorist's particular lifeworld and the particular perspective of his or her social group" (147). Maintaining that the policing of this separation is basic to any "claim to reason," and thus to "the real nature of sociological theory," he argues that within this (metaphysical) dream lies

sociology's hope for "contributions to empirical research" and to "society at large." Alexander is concerned that "knowledge" could be reduced to perspective. The disciplined sociologist must maintain his quest for an extra-political vantage, because only through this separation can sociologists "achieve a perspective on society which is more extensive and more general" than the layperson whose views are hopelessly prejudiced by her own "social group" (147).

But how can a theorist expect to definitively distinguish between his "particular life world" and the "perspective of his or her social group"? And where do we begin to erect the borders said to define any social group? The problems of defining what constitutes a social class are notoriously intractable, particularly among Marxian sociologists. Race is certainly a no less contested notion. One does not have to be an expert in feminist theory to recognize that quite brilliant women share precious little agreement about "the feminine." Who is in and who is out of a group can only always reflect social prejudices and politics.

If neither the "social group" nor the "particular life world" (of the disciplined individual sociologist) has an inherent structure—if neither have essences that can be placed beyond their extended genealogical generation—then their status as isomorphic structures is a fantasy.

The basic premises of Alexander's analysis belie a failure to comprehend the radical critique of structuralism's subject/object binary. For Alexander, poststructuralism exists *within* the age-old struggle between subjective and objective understandings, and therefore is nothing particularly new. Instead of recognizing that the binary itself is being de-centered, Alexander sees only a misguided attempt to institutionalize the subjective side ("solipsism") and to abandon the objective side. "Power and desire are the sole basis for knowledge only if the subjective and objective dimensions of knowledge are sundered one from the other. If impersonal understanding is cut off from personal knowledge, neither can be connected to the traditions or institutions that sustain universalism. The effect is to undermine the theoretical project to humanize the world. . . ."(1991:149).

How can one have carefully read Derrida, Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, Spivak, or Homi K. Bhabha and still uncritically invoke Cartesian notions of "subjectivity" and "objectivity"? Alexander's reaction to poststructuralist philosophy assumes the very premises that poststructuralism undermines. He does not say that "subjectivity" and "objectivity" must be defended against those who embrace their deconstruction; rather, he assumes their ontological status and then objects to what he imagines is merely an attempt at their separation ("sundered one from the other"). Predictably, his prescription amounts to a reinvigorated effort to police the binary's untenable borders.

Alexander (1991:150) understands challenges to his authority to be "not only anti-intellectual but downright dangerous." If he is stripped of his power, if his insistence that structuralist depictions of existence are "impersonal" and "outside discourse" is effectively challenged, then social criticism will be reduced to "the rule of force" (151). But again, Alexander has missed

the fundamental point. *Force is all there has ever been.* Empiricist claims to objectively describe the real ("impersonal") in existence have *never* existed outside the parameters of power. On the contrary, the far-reaching, permeating power of structuralists' "rule of force" can still be measured by the extent to which this ruse goes unquestioned.

To claim that one's ways are what should be natural and normal for everyone is to claim great power over others, and such claims are a foundation of colonialism. Surely, ethnic and cultural minorities of many marginalized stripes are justified in asking: how dare Alexander refer to social science that has categorized us, defined us, and brutally governed us as "impersonal"? The power that colonizers enjoy has always been justified through their ability to deny the cultural and political qualities of their own narratives.

Robert J. Antonio's (1991) reaction to Seidman's provocations, published in the same round of *Sociological Theory* editions, represents a more careful reading of poststructuralist challenges. Antonio understands what is at stake. Nevertheless, he tends to echo Alexander's assumption that structuralist epistemology is the only possible basis for civic efficacy among sociologists. Antonio's response can be read as what would become still another standard reaction by American sociologists to poststructuralist writings.

Antonio is not bothered by poststructuralist philosophy per se; rather, it is the consequences of "the postmodern turn" that he finds unacceptable. Much of his reaction, then, is focused on articulating the dangers of poststructuralist criticisms and the consequent need to encircle and contain them by protecting established sociological epistemologies.

Antonio's initial and most forceful move is to tear what he calls "radical postmodernism" away from other less frightening theorists. Although he points, only in passing, to "scholarly circles" that embrace "truth-seeking norms," scholars who might therefore "forge an authentically postmodern attitude," he never tells us exactly who these less than radical postmodernists are (1991:159). And we are left to wonder what the self-contradicting phrase "authentically postmodern" could mean.

For Antonio, the attack on essentialist subjectivities and pursuits of objective truth is "radical postmodernism." Despite the fact that these sentiments are broadly shared by many poststructuralists from various academic disciplines, Antonio proceeds as if this "radical" strand is reducible to the works of Jean Baudrillard (1983a, 1983b, 1987). We can get a feel for the flavor of Antonio's objections by quoting a long passage in which he summarizes "postmodern culture."

> The explosive and nearly random production of signs, information, events, and spectacles in the new media-generated semiotic orders transforms culture into a mere "precession" of images detached from any underlying social realities. History, politics, power, and social reality itself are all dissolved in the vortex of disembodied "simulacra." Normative and empirical truth claims

have no "referents" and therefore no meaning or authority. In this sense, the radical perspectivism of the storytelling approach to knowledge is itself immanent in the ever-changing, superficial, fragmented, and vacuous pastiche constituting postmodern culture. (1991:155–56)

Antonio cannot help but associate the loss of epistemological certainty with frightening ("explosive" and "vortex of disembodied") chaos. Instability in textual economies of meaning becomes a "nearly random production of signs." But Antonio is wrong to suggest that a lack of certainty equals randomness. Foucault and Nietzsche certainly intended no such conclusion. Indeed, the opening sentence of Foucault's essay on genealogy begins: "Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary" (1971/1977:139). Likewise, Spivak (1999:427), in the epigraph to this chapter, describes "political decisions" as "empirically scrupulous." Documenting the history of European cultural phantasms *is* rigorously empirical work, and this important interrogation *does not* mean that these elaborate creations lose all power to signify.

Disputing the Platonic, Christian, and Cartesian subject/object ontology is not the same thing as claiming that all is random and relative. Just because I come to understand that this binary and its many replications are always social constructions does not mean that all commonly shared understandings suddenly and summarily dissolve. Although the subject/object ontology might at first glance seem like something that smart people cannot do without, the alarm in Antonio's reaction is more productively understood as a loss of comfort. Disrupting the ontological status of this binary is not, as he portends, the end of all human reasoning. If the debunking of imaginary centers were as devastating as Antonio believes, atheism would have long since destroyed the world. The nineteenth century's scientific successes were built on teachings of seventeenth century philosophers whose motivations poured forth from the depths of their theological aspirations; yet, the later thinkers' open attacks on God did not result in a "random production of signs."

Similarly, poststructuralists teach that the disciplined search for foundational epistemology is an unrealizable and faith-based quest; but we do not accept that the critique of its metaphysical premises results in a normative void ("no meaning or authority"). In fact, it is precisely the "meticulous and patiently documentary" study of these European superstitions that allows poststructuralists' work to resonate with intellectuals from marginalized communities. The poststructuralist critique of structuralist social science will result (is already resulting) in supplementations of older assumptions, but it would be foolish to think it will or should result in some *pure* poststructuralism ("postmodern culture"), purged of all that was structural.

Our ability to doubt the Christian God's status as "underlying . . . reality" remains the condition of possibility of our intelligent examination of the political consequences of others' faith in this God. And, the deconstruction of essential subjects and objects is the possibility of our productive analyses of the

consequences of belief in this old binary. If we simply assume the necessity and correctness of these Greek and Christian inheritances (as Alexander and Antonio do), we relinquish our ability to think critically about epistemology and its effects. This, it seems to me, is irresponsible. And, again, our interrogations will not lead to a relativistic inability to share signs, symbols, and meaning.

Antonio extrapolates the loss of epistemological certainty to "a vortex of disembodied simulacra." A vortex is a centered place of violent swirling water or air where things disappear and are lost. A reality of material subjects and objects may still exist, Antonio warns, but they are in danger of being swallowed up and lost to a postmodern swirl of unstable discourse. Simulacra are images of other images. So, Antonio is upset that the presumed distinction and relationship between mere images (signs, symbols, and phrases) and the real, essential, physical pieces of reality that they are said to represent is being questioned.

As I have already said, Antonio does not argue with poststructuralist analysis per se; it is the outcome that scares him. The subject/object binary is now written as ideal/material. Objectivity, here, is said to exist not in the abstract world of ideas but in the material experiences of the physical body. Many structuralist sociologists, most notably Marxists, who are themselves indebted to Aristotelian attacks on Platonic idealism, have reversed the order of preference in the binary. In either instance, the premises remain the same. Antonio might well lament the loss of a very old cultural presumption, but he should not imagine that the material/ideal binary is basic to our civic future. To fear that all will become "disembodied simulacra" is to cling to an ancient theological duality that it is high time sociologists learned to seriously question.

Labeling poststructuralism "radical perspectivism," Antonio worries that the loss of centered epistemological foundations reduces sociology to the "superficial" and "vacuous." Without its Greek and Christian cultural inheritances, sociology becomes "primarily . . . a projection of assertive self-expression giv[ing] license to undisciplined, self-indulgent, whimsical, and grossly partisan points of view" (158). This loss of substance, in turn, cannot help but foster a climate of "ennui" (1991:155). Like Alexander, Antonio maintains that sociologists' political efficacy is tied to a successful defense of structuralist epistemology. Without the status and power that comes with placing their cultural inheritances beyond doubt, cynicism and despair ("ennui") follow.

Another way to think critically about these accusations is to turn them back on the accusers. For example, as we will see in chapter 5, these sentiments sound a great deal like those of American Indians who are outraged by what they perceive to be white scientists' arrogance and narcissism. Native activists have no difficulty labeling scientists' claims to being the sole proprietors of truth as "self-indulgent" and "grossly partisan." And *ennui* is far too tame a term for the deep despair that Indian people feel over European American scientists' refusal to return our dead to their graves—a refusal that scientists locate firmly in the assumed priority of their quest for objective

truth. If cultural others do not accept European American scientists' claim to being the authoritative providers of "normative and empirical truth," does this make us "whimsical" and "undisciplined"?

As we shall see, there does not seem to be any two ways about this. Either Antonio and like-minded defenders of Greek/Christian metaphysics are justified in their claims, or these Indians are culturally backward. How else are we to read Antonio's (1991:159) claim to "nurture[e] the cool detachment from the self necessary for sober calculation of consequences and for empathetic attention to the views, needs, and suffering of others"? Either structuralist epistemology is a cultural universal that scientists rightly employ in "empathetic attention" to Indians' "suffering" or Antonio suffers from an inability to think reflexively about his own cultural inheritances.

Seidman's (1991b:159) response to Alexander and Antonio makes exactly this point. ". . . if pressed to justify particular social norms and ideals, we can reply only in an ethnocentric mode that they promote the kind of society we value and want to perpetuate, ultimately because it is our society. In my view, we cannot give compelling reasons for the kind of society we want beyond saying that it is our society, that its history, traditions, and conventions have given us a sense of identity, coherence, and purpose." Assuming Seidman is right, the moral thing to do is to expand the "our" of "our society" to include not just American Indians but marginalized peoples of many kinds. Admittedly, this takes courage. (Recall the epigraph from Derrida that opened chapter 3: "Who will dare call duty a duty that owes nothing, or better . . . that must owe nothing?").

Spivak is making much the same point when she says, "It is in view of justice and ethics as undeconstructible, as experiences of the impossible, that legal and political decisions must be made, empirically scrupulous but philosophically errant" (1999:427).

The ancient Greeks and the Christians who came after, wanted epistemic and moral foundations. This was the whole purpose of philosophy and theology. Their "duty" was to these foundations, foundations that were to be the basis of "legal and political decisions." Because Derrida and Spivak recognize that no such foundations exist, they also see that "justice and ethics," and our "duty" to them are antithetical to the quest for philosophical certainty. In fact, justice and ethics, if they are to include all of us, *must* be "philosophically errant."

How are those of us who are decidedly not Christian, those of us who science labels "irrational," to get "justice" from those whose foundations we are made to struggle against? Years ago, before I read Foucault and Derrida, I was asked by a fellow graduate student if I knew Indians who "still believed in ghosts." In the midst of a graduate seminar in Hegelian Marxism and on a night when "ethics" and responsibility to cultural others was the topic of our discussion, the question was meant to elicit an example of the need for cultural sensitivity, even as, classroom sentiment held, the workers' revolution would press ahead. I was caught off guard, but I muttered an unapologetic

endorsement of individual Indians who I admire, think to be intelligent, and who believe not only in ghosts but also in the proclivity of the dead for visiting in nocturnal dreams. The result was a shared embarrassment—my classmates' for me and mine for over my own confusion.[7] If I had any lingering doubts, after that moment I never again failed to recognize sociology as a thoroughly cultural enterprise.

Can I believe that my oldest and dearest friend, who has been dead for years, visits me in my sleep, *and* be a sociologist? If being a sociologist means that I must spend my life in pursuit of an objective truth that all right-minded intellectuals can see and verify, then the answer is a resounding no. How could sociologists like Alexander and Antonio ever accept the veracity of my dead friend's visits? *Their* faith demands that they not believe in what they cannot recognize from within the dictates of their own disciplined epistemology. What then of a cross-cultural "duty" to "justice and ethics"?

When my young nephew died, one of our Klamath elders stood before his still open grave and spoke to a group of about fifty Indians and white folks who know and understand Klamath people. He told us my nephew would "guide his mom and dad if they would let him." My brother and our father nodded appreciatively. No one laughed. No one snickered. No one whispered any doubts. If anyone thought our elder primitive or backward, they didn't give any indication that they felt that way.

How could the findings of structuralist sociology ever center a "just and ethical" society that could treat these Klamath Indians as other than curious outliers with no real capacity for serious work on serious matters? Sociology that insists on the primacy of its own extended, cultural inheritances will never be able to treat cultural others as equals. The issue has never been truth and falsity, as Foucault repeatedly and carefully ("scrupulously") documents. The crux of the matter has always been raw power. Alexander and Antonio are protecting a "regime of truth" (Foucault 1977:133). They are protecting their privilege, their power, and their dominance over other peoples. As such, they should not imagine that they are substantially different from the many colonial truth tellers who preceded them.

"Justice and ethics," as they must be thought where inclusion of difference is genuine, cannot be the exclusive domain of Alexander, Antonio, and their structuralist colleagues. Moral laws cannot be formulated; morality, where cultural others are present, cannot exist as a calculus or centered system. As Greek, Christian, and social scientific foundations, "justice and ethics" are impossible. Moral and ethical behaviors in intercultural domains are, structurally speaking, "experiences of the impossible." When Indians and anthropologists sit down to talk as equals, they do so in open-ended, discursive spaces, and these interactions take place without guarantees. They are never reducible to philosophical laws, to centers. They are "undeconstructable" because they defy a concrete, extra-cultural, extra-political location.[8]

When Klamath people make decisions with the help of the dead, decisions that can sometimes be said to be about "justice and ethics," Antonio would no doubt label these "whimsical," "undisciplined," and as lacking respect for "normative and empirical truth." Yet to be "empirically scrupulous," as Spivak intends, is to closely observe and genuinely respect differences. Refusing to honestly (scrupulously) explore and accept the value of other peoples' ways of knowing will only further the intercultural *insignificance* of American sociology.

I see no reason for structuralists to expect that their assumed privilege as unique purveyors of universal truth should continue. It is no longer sufficient for them to simply state their disdain and fears over the loss of their epistemological center. The debate should turn away from "appeals to reality to judge the truth" of their epistemology and toward assessments of the "consequences" of their "social stories," as we heard Seidman suggest in the second epigraph to this chapter.

Lemert: Kissing Postmodern Freaks and Frogs

Lemert's (1991, 1992, 1997) writings on poststructuralist challenges to American sociology are well known and widely read. Although he contributed to this journal debate, I have chosen to focus my remarks on a later book, where his thoughts about "postmodernism" are more comprehensively provided. In *Postmodernism Is Not What You Think* (1997), Lemert assesses the tremendous hostility with which poststructuralist philosophy was rejected in American sociology departments in the 1980s and 1990s. In his opening chapter, "Beasts, Frogs, Freaks, and Other Postmodern Things," Lemert outlines and chides these attacks for being overwrought, overdone, and somewhat misguided. "Though the number of professional sociologists who claim actually to be postmodernists is small in ratio to the whole, the number of occasions upon which the subject is mentioned, often oddly out of context, is great. It is not uncommon for solicited reviews of scholarly articles or books, even of tenure and promotion cases, to contain unsolicited evaluations judging the merits of a case by the degree of its perceived proximity to (bad!) or from (good!) postmodernism" (1997:5–6).

Lemert wants his colleagues to stop being afraid of these writings. He thinks this rashness that often is expressed as a loathing stops American sociologists from learning from cultural others writing outside of sociology departments. (He singles out Edward Said as one example of these important thinkers.) This fear is rooted, Lemert surmises, in a lack of careful, sociological assessment.

Like myself, Lemert invokes Mill's concept of the sociological imagination as a method for reading the fierceness of the American attack on French poststructuralism. He recognizes that a loss of privilege is underway, and he even suggests Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"[9] as the moment when this de-centering of privilege was announced.

Structuralist social science *was* centered in the experiences of white, middle-class, men. Consequently, Lemert maintains, the subsequent assault on supposed epistemological agreement—carried out by cultural others wielding weapons provided by Derrida, and his teacher, Foucault—was inevitable. In the tradition of Mills, Lemert wants his privileged colleagues to understand their hostility as an outgrowth of larger social and historical circumstances. "We who are thus set apart, having formerly set ourselves above, watch with fear, anger, or anxious understanding the others—those peoples who, having suffered the indignity of the dominant culture's imposition of its culture on them, break the silence: feminists, ethnic rebels, gays and lesbians. . . . Identity politics, even when not called by this name is a near universal possibility whenever an imperium, having succeeded for a while, even a long while, loses its grip on the silence in which it once thrived" (1997:130–31).

But Lemert resigns himself to the disruptions brought by these new voices only begrudgingly. He hopes for "a third way." He shares in the lament of "the nostalgics" who wish for a return to an "ideal past," but he also respects the "epiphanies" of the "feminist, queer, race-based, ethnic . . . identity politics" which he playfully but paternalistically labels "postmodernish freaks and frogs" (1997:148).

The alternative is what Lemert calls "prophetic visionaries" (1997:152–53). These third-way prophets are said to be visionary because they successfully merge the competing visions of cultural others with the old, liberal dreams of unified, moral structures. These thinkers (the most well-known among sociologists being William Julius Wilson) are said to embrace "practical reason" and "the entrepreneurial rationality of the modern order" (152–53).

Although Lemert concludes his text by acknowledging that "postmodernism cannot be thought through" (1996:164), the book nonetheless reads as an attempt to define, and thereby contain, the poststructuralist impulse among marginalized peoples. The "postmodern," for Lemert, is little more than a large and pain-inflicting bump in the historical road traveled by the glorious Western civilizations. And he can invoke this tone only because he hears the protests of the marginalized as a recent awakening ("epiphanies"). Our silence, Lemert suggests, was ours and it was self-chosen. He seems not to understand the very real difference between silence at the margins and systematically maintained deafness at the center.

People of color have always spoken and spoken loudly and strongly. Lemert mostly misses this history. He suggests, and this feels patronizing, that all will be well if his privileged colleagues will just invite the margins into the center. As he says, "they are the frogs that might become the princes of some other good world, if only we could kiss them" (1997:164).

The liberal dream of *e pluribus unum,* then, can be renegotiated and reinvigorated if the big tent of the republic, and American sociology, can simply be expanded. Again, this means that Lemert and other privileged members must do their moral duty and help those of us from the cultural wilderness find

our voices. "The colonized—whether natives of our lands like those in the United States confined to reservations of economic deprivation, or those similarly marginalized in Europe's former colonies—must learn over time to awaken themselves to a world in which questions and talk are, at least, relatively free of risk" (1997:124). As this passage indicates, by the last fifty pages of the book, Lemert seems to have forgotten his earlier observation about the dangers of questioning epistemological centers. But tenure decisions and hostile reviews of one's scholarly writings are minor problems relative to the long history of colonial oppression underwritten by epistemology and normative truth regimes.

What of the long sordid history of bigoted attacks on so-called pagan peoples of the world? What of the self-appointed "civilizers" of the "backward" and "primitive"? How can Lemert, or Alexander, or Antonio miss the fact that the innumerable assaults on nonbelievers perpetrated under these banners were led by zealots who knew where the center was and were committed to defending it at all bloody costs. Even today, the exhausting and exasperating struggle against those who tell us that "we are one nation under God" or that "the Constitution means the same thing now as it did two hundred years ago" has to be fought on a daily basis. Forever, it seems, we are to be under attack by those who claim to know or to have discovered where the real center lies. If it is not their God speaking to them, then it is empirical reality self-representing in ways that only their disciplined eyes are qualified to record.

Lemert's prophets, it turns out, are not anything stunningly different from epistemological business as usual. Although not cited by Lemert, his answer to poststructuralist challenges is little more than an apologetic retreat into so-called standpoint epistemologies.[10] The quest for objectivity need only be expanded and clarified. The Greek dialectic survives and supersedes the poststructuralist challenge.

Lemert's last chapter reduces serious cross-cultural confrontations (and it is not exaggerating to say that we are speaking of life and death) to a metaphor that rhetorically minimizes the contest, reassuring his privileged colleagues that the assault from the margins can be contained. The discomfort, Lemert suggests, is not unlike moving from a familiar home to a new house. It will take awhile for us to get comfortable in our new dwelling, and the unpacking process inevitably yields "things long hidden from memory" that "escape from under sofa cushions or behind an old furnace" (1997:158). The "prophetic visionaries" *can* succeed in preserving a comfortable epistemological home; but to do so, Lemert counsels, they must "reject Audrey Lorde's famous beastly claim that one cannot rebuild the master's house with the master's tools" (153).

It is difficult to know whether Lemert's rubbing out of deconstruction's most productive lessons is intentional, because he too fundamentally misunderstands Derrida's most provocative teachings. Although too much to recount here, we can quickly recall that Derrida is pointing out why it is a mistake to

believe that the meanings of things reside within them (as inherent essences). He attributes this mistake to the apparent self-presence found in the voice ("logocentrism"). The knower (subject) and the known (object) are always only unstable outcomes of extended and never fully present text. Thus the spoken voice and the complete presence it seems to suggest also rely on writing-like relationships (*différance*) to other meanings that *are not* present. The pursuit of the "real meaning of things," then, can never be satisfied. It must be endlessly deferred. This unrealizable desire for essence is what makes the quest superstitious and metaphysical.

Lemert, though, reads something very different in Derrida's analysis.

> Derrida believes that the difference (take note) between speech and writing is that in writing the meaning of what is being said is "deferred." Americans really did not get the meaning of the Gettysburg Address until long after it was spoken. Most of those present on November 19, 1863 at Gettysburg could not even hear Lincoln. . . . A follower of Derrida, thus, might say that Lincoln's address was actually a piece of writing that called forth at a later time the "historical writing" or "inscription" of the moral meaning of the Civil War and its most famous battle in the American psyche. (1997:46)

Lemert appears not to understand that Derrida's work is not about actual or final meanings. He thinks that Derrida simply means that true meanings show up later, after the fact. Because he does not get that they *never* show up, he can hold out hope for a politically liberal sociology rooted in scientific, albeit more inclusive, epistemology. In Lemert's tamed and contained "postmodernism,'" we need only incorporate additional standpoints into the pursuit of objectivity and the moral order that he hopes will follow. "There is nothing particularly wrong with sociology that can't be cured. We need, first of all, to work through the collective representations that so exaggerate our limited capacity to be a real science, and thus come back to sociology as it was intended by its founders to be" (1997:136). Because Lemert misses Derrida's critique of Greek and Christian metaphysics of presence, he attempts to tell us what poststructuralism really is. He attempts to assess and document a structure in poststructuralism. He is not alone in this mistaken mission.

Denzin: Sociology in "The Seventh Moment"

Perhaps no American sociologist has written more about postmodernism and poststructuralism than Denzin (1986, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Lincoln and Denzin 2000). His writings are both philosophy of social science and civically applied arguments. Although I share both of these interests, the source of our motivations is quite different. My primary concern is to enhance

the political efficacy of marginalized peoples. Like Lemert, Denzin's goal is to further and protect the discipline of sociology.

Although Denzin sometimes claims to write as a poststucturalist, his work is far more indebted to the postmodernisms of Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard than to the deconstruction of Derrida or to the genealogies of Foucault. His analyses are more a sociology of the postmodern than an articulation of poststructuralist sociology. Although he certainly understands that what he perceives to be a condition or state of postmodernity has real and dramatic consequences for how sociologists go about our business. "Lyotard and Baurdrillard offer a challenge to American theorists . . . they ask that we retheorize the social so that our theories and understandings may be better suited to the postmodern period. Sociology no longer serves society. It has become swallowed up by the social. The challenge is to learn how to reflect on this condition so that we may better understand the current situation that engulfs all of us" (1986:203).

Denzin understands and embraces Baudrillard's and Lyotard's destabilizations of the old, modernist, and presumed border between the real and images of the real. Modernism, here, was a tale of coherence, of a unified and external reality that was depicted and discussed by competitive social scientists who believed that progress lay in the disciplined accumulation of facts about life and existence. Reality was objectively present but subjectively understood, and the goal was always to most closely approximate the former.

Competing and rapidly multiplying representations of the real, mark the postmodern era. Baudrillard (1988) writes of "hyperreality," that is, of spectacles, and images piled on top of each other, feeding and morphing into one other. Pointing to the old Marxian distinction between use value and exchange value, Baudrillard (1975) argues that the positing of use values—value assigned because objects filled real, material needs—is no longer adequate. Shoes are no longer, primarily, foot protection. Shoes are semiotically infected with the glitter of the National Basketball Association, and with all the other advertising that basketball heroes star in. What is consumed is not the usefulness of the shoes as shoes, but rather their use as identity and style that is constituted in the imagery and spectacular contexts surrounding the shoes in marketing campaigns. And life in hyperreality is one endless flow of overlapping marketing campaigns. We are markets for big business, but we also market ourselves to each other. We even market ourselves to ourselves in moments of self-reflection.

Advertising dependent medias race to communicate in easily discernible (recognizable), visually potent symbols that strategically recall already existing, popular images. We are sold and resold images of morality, glamour, heroism, success, and adventure, and these portrayals function with equal efficacy in the economy, in political campaigning, and in self-assessments. The real things of the world—including the real self with real personal qualities with real meaning—become images that rely for their meaning on still other

images. The line between reality and representation blurs and finally disappears. In the postmodern era, there are only representations of other and previous representations.

This is the sociological space where Denzin operates most affectively. His analyses of visual culture, particularly of cinema, are insightful, brilliantly argued, and politically useful (1994, 2001, 2002). In a reader friendly style, Denzin maps out where and how popular films draw upon already existing images (racializations, sexualizations, and gendered stereotypes) to produce story lines that are easily recognized. Drawing on Clough's (1992a) feminist and psychoanalytic poststructuralism (discussed in the next section), he underscores that these narratives produce closure and structured coherence in what is otherwise a postmodern onslaught of competing interpretive possibilities.

For example, Denzin points out that the main characters in the film *The Morning After* serve as semiotic links to existing and reactionary discourses about homosexuality, alcoholism, femininity, racism, and masculinity. The male hero is racist and homophobic, but he is also heroically masculine—a strong, stoic, protector of the tragic (alcoholic) female character. "In allowing these hegemonic readings to stand, the viewer (and the critic) become willing accomplices in support of a conservative feminism that pleads (yet hides) its ideological biases in the name of a story which locates a woman in the company of a good man who has flaws" (Denzin 1994:195).

Denzin's analysis teaches us that viewers want to identify with the struggles of the heroic male. Other narratives, those that question patriarchy, white privilege, or hetero-normativity are shut out by the empathy the audience has for this good but flawed man. The story grants a respite to those who pine for the old order. Reactionary attitudes are allowed to retreat, escape into the comforts of the film's familiar narratives, avoiding the postmodern, civic spaces where struggles to narrate differently take place. The difficult new world filled with cultural others is simplified and coheres in the experiences that the audience shares with the story's heroic male. The refuge provided by this simplification functions as a surreptitious validation of racist and homophobic patriarchy. It allows the audience comfort within the reauthorization of its politically reactionary story line.

This is valuable sociology. But Denzin's writings also betray a deeply structuralist impulse. He constantly defines and redefines what poststructuralism "is."[11] He creates long lists of characteristics that are said to encompass poststructuralist critique.[12] He assumes a supra-historical vantage from where he un-reflexively narrates the developing, progressing history of social scientific epistemologies. Poststructuralism and postmodernism become part of later "moments" within this narrative. In 1997, he proclaimed sociology to be "in the sixth moment" and by 2000 he announces the "seventh moment" (Denzin 1997; Lincoln and Denzin 2000).

Curiously, this circumscribing, evolutionary timeline of sociological development contradicts Denzin's own description of "the seventh moment."

"There is an elusive center emerging in this contradictory, tension-riddled enterprise. We seem to be moving farther and farther away from grand narratives and single, overarching ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigms. The center lies in the humanistic commitment of the qualitative researcher to study the world always from the perspective of the gendered, historically situated, interacting individual" (Lincoln and Denzin 2000:1047).

Denzin claims that there are fewer and fewer "grand narratives," but how is it that he does not recognize his own account as a "grand narrative," as a teleological tale that collects sociology's past into a coherent ("overarching") trajectory? He contains the poststructuralist attack on teleology by locating it within his own teleology. The attack on centers (and centering is, after all, what grand narratives do) *becomes itself* an "emerging" and "elusive center"—a center of there is no center.

As a structuralist strategy for containing the more radical elements of poststructuralist philosophy, Denzin's centering must preserve the "humanistic commitment" to the "individual." Much like Lemert's mistake, Denzin's response to the "hyperreality" of postmodernism is a retreat into the agency of pure subjective presence (humanism). This *is* ontology. And the "individual," albeit a "gendered and historically situated individual," *does function* as an epistemological foundation. So Denzin tells us that we are "moving farther and farther away" from "ontological and epistemological . . . paradigms," but in his next narrating breath he reproduces these paradigms.

Also not unlike Lemert, Denzin understands poststructuralist criticism as an outcome of challenges made by cultural others. He writes in tones that are both elated and foreboding of "the presence of the other" in sociology's "sixth and seventh moments" (Lincoln and Denzin 2000:1050, 1057). "Who is the Other? Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other, or an Other? And if not, how do we create a social science that includes the Other? The short answer to these questions is that we move to including the Other in larger research processes that we have developed" (1050).

This is certainly commendable sentiment and a tremendous gain over the hubris of the past. Denzin understands and regrets the embarrassing arrogance that fueled white, middle-class, sociologists' belief that they could speak with an objective voice about cultural minorities. But this regret leaves him no less concerned about the loss of an epistemological center. If not objectivity, then what? How do we "include the Other" while the foundations of sociology itself are under attack? Indeed, the entirety of the "Seventh Moment" essay is dedicated to summarizing new epistemological methods brought by the need to include marginalized voices. "Today no one takes seriously talk of 'going native.' In fact, its disappearance as a category of concern among sociologists and anthropologists is scarcely remarked, but like the silences between lovers, it is all the more significant for its absence. In its place looms the 'Other,' whose voice researchers now struggle to hear" (2000: 1057).

In the old days, "going native" meant taking on the beliefs and reasoning patterns of those being objectified, studied. It meant forgetting that one was a scientist in the service of knowledge and not a member of the peoples chosen as objects of sociological investigations. Now, in Denzin's new, center-less center of the "seventh moment," sociologists must acknowledge that their writings are interested, political, and power-based. Academics are a cultural group writing about another cultural group.

Yet, the lure of an "elusive center emerging in this tension-riddled enterprise" of sociology's "seventh moment" persists. Denzin understands the folly of presuming to speak objectively about cultural others, but he cannot give up his desire to hear the purity of their voices. Like Lemert, he welcomes "including the other," but (and this is the source of his foreboding tone) he senses the impossibility of finding the *real* other. ("Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other, or an Other?") This is why Denzin's Other is said to "loom." Sociologists are "tension-riddled" because they want to do the right thing. They "struggle to hear" "the experience of the other." But, they remain unwilling, or as yet unable, to question the Greek and Christian superstitions that they still imagine are indispensable to really knowing anything about anyone else. Denzin wants to bring the others into a big sociological tent, but he does not want them to tear down its walls in an attack on its central premises. Lorde's warning about "the master's tools" waits "like the silence between lovers" behind his longing for an epistemological center that can include all of us.

Denzin (1994) too misreads and ignores Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence. This shortcoming is readily visible in his overly brief analysis of T. Minh-ha Trinh's (1989) *Woman, Native, Other*. Because Denzin continues to covet an authentic, fully present other, he cannot help but reduce Trinh's text to merely another standpoint epistemology (1997:54). Describing and citing what he calls "the storytelling model of Trinh" (234), he claims that "these models are pivotal because they authorize the turn to narrative, offering methods that ensure the truth and accuracy of a text and its interpretation (see Trinh 1989:142–43)." Trinh's "method," Denzin tells us, is superior to that of older, "empiricist" sociologists who "do not hear the story as it was told." "The goal," he says, "is to recover these lost stories. . . ." (1997:249).

For Denzin, Trinh's "story-telling model" is an experimental method. It is an attempt to capture and accurately record "the experience of the other." As such, it is a good faith stab at "an elusive center." But Denzin misses that Trinh's (1989:142) postcolonial criticism aggressively attacks what she calls "nativist discourse." Turning to those pages of Trinh's text that Denzin identifies as his source, we find:

> "Looking for the structure of *their* narratives" so as to "tell it the way *they* tell it" is an attempt at remedying this ignorance of other ways of telling and listening (and, obviously, at re-validating the nativist discourse). . . . Rare are those who

can handle it by letting it come, instead of hunting for it or hunting it down, fill-ing it with their own marks and markings so as to consign it to the meaningful and lay claim to it. *They see no life/When they look/They see only objects.* The ready-made idea they have of reality prevents their perceiving the story as a liv-ing thing, an organic process, a way of life. (142–43, emphases in original)

What then of Denzin's insistence that Trinh is offering a "model" that can "ensure the truth and accuracy of a text"? How is it that from Trinh's explicit warning against seeking to "tell it the way *they* tell it" in "an attempt at reme-dying ignorance of other ways" Denzin draws the conclusion that sociologists need "to hear the story as it was told . . . to recover these lost stories"? Trinh's admonition could not be any clearer. Denzin's motive, she predicts in her text published nearly a decade before his, will "obviously" be an attempt "at re-validating . . . nativist discourse."

Perhaps if Denzin had more carefully read earlier pages of the chapter he cites, he would have understood why Trinh refers to the story as "a living thing." "My story, no doubt, is me, but it is also, no doubt, older than me. Younger than me, older than the humanized. Unmeasurable, uncontain-able, so immense that it exceeds all attempts at humanizing. . . . Truth does not make sense; it exceeds meaning and exceeds measure. It exceeds all re-gimes of truth" (1989:123). There is no metaphysics of presence assumed here. Neither the story nor the teller has an inherent, essential meaning. As is true of storytellers in many oral societies, Trinh's teller understands that the story is not really hers. She is not the author, in the sense of some-one who creates and owns. Rather, the story is the very possibility of her person-hood. The narrative, a very old, extended, "living," story, is the source of its tellers' significance. The story "is me," "but it is also . . . older than me."

The storyteller's people know themselves and understand their extended identities and histories, because of the stories. The stories cannot be "meas-ured," after the fashion that social scientists measure ("hunt down" and "con-sign meaning") to "objects." Because no one possesses the narratives, and be-cause they are far older than those who now tell and hear them, no one expects that the stories mean the same thing to everyone, everywhere, all the time. Rather, Trinh, teaches, these are the assumptions of "nativism."

The stories are "living," "organic" things that evolve and adapt as the peo-ple live and change ("younger than me"). But the social scientists "see no life." "They see only objects." Because they refuse to see that epistemology is *only* their way, the scientists insist on "filling the stories with their own marks and markings." In this way, they try to "lay claim" to what is "uncontainable" and "immeasurable."

Until Denzin and the other structuralists are able and willing to seriously interrogate their own metaphysical beliefs, they will insist on admitting cul-tural others to their conversations only on terms that reinforce, and do not

break down, the colonialist impulse in sociology. They will insist that when we "others" address them we speak as "authentic" scientific objects. ("Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other"?) And, as Trinh forewarns, they will claim that their arrogance "is an attempt at remedying this ignorance of other ways of telling and listening." Indeed, Denzin even imagines that Trinh is supplying him with a new epistemological "model" that will reconfirm what has inconveniently become "an elusive center." The progress of sociology, now in its "seventh moment," marches on.

The "freaks and frogs," the cultural others that "loom," are told that we "must learn over time to awaken [our]selves to a world in which questions and talk are, at least, relatively free of risk." But when we put poststructuralist perspectives to work in our own service, writings that finally, *finally* allow us to point out that the "master's tools" are his own cultural heritage, we are scorned and feared. As Lincoln and Denzin put us on notice, "Endless self-referential criticisms by the poststructuralist can produce mountains of texts, with few referents to concrete human experience. Such are not needed" (2000:1050). Denzin requires an other who will speak as an authentic presence.[13] He assumes epistemology. He does not recognize it as *one* set of cultural assumptions among *many* other earthly possibilities.

Denzin recognizes that cultural minorities are increasingly a part of academic institutions. It is "the institutionalized Other who speaks," he and his co-author tell us, as s/he "gains access to the knowledge-producing corridors of power and achieves *entrée* into the particular group of elites known as intellectuals and academics or faculty" (2000:1051). But when these others show up and speak, our texts, he apparently thinks, "contain few referents to concrete human experience"? Certainly Trinh is not anyone's academic lightweight. As Denzin's engagement with her text proves, thinkers of this caliber are hard to ignore. So why, given our increasing, and sometimes formidable presence in academic corridors, do Lemert and Denzin persist in *not hearing* those who question their epistemology, as "the Other"? Why is Lemert telling us that we "must learn over time to awaken [our]selves to a world in which questions and talk are, at least, relatively free of risk" while he and Denzin rush to define, minimize, and dismiss the damage they fear we might do to their science?

As I have said repeatedly, the answer lies in their refusal to de-center the Greek and Christian self. Before he wrote about postmodernism and poststructuralism, Denzin became famous as a preeminent Symbolic Interactionist. The integrity of a universal, selfsame, human agency is foundational to that tradition. Without the ontology of a free-thinking, self-contained individual, Symbolic Interactionism as an intellectual tradition falters.[14] It should come as no surprise, then, that Denzin can only tolerate those others who speak as a self-same, fully present constant that merely wears different identity hats (gendered, racial, cultural, class-based, etc.) in different settings.

Because Denzin conflates the poststructuralist challenges brought by Derridean deconstruction and/or by Foucaultian genealogy with the postmodernisms of Lyotard and Baudrillard, he understands the "crisis of representation" (2000:1050) in sociology's "sixth and seventh moments" as merely transitional problems perpetrated by a temporary inability to hear and know "the other" ("Who is the Other?"). Denzin believes that the cacophony of voices and ceaseless images assaulting us in the era of postmodern hyperreality have destroyed authenticity. The truly "social" interactions that could once be found in local settings filled with real, coherent selves has been, as we heard Denzin say, "swallowed up" by the hyperreality of "the postmodern period."

I can illustrate this thinking with an example. My maternal grandmother was born on a homestead near the Klamath Reservation and my paternal family. Before leaving home for nearby Dorris, California, which in 1939 had no more than five hundred residents, my grandmother saw the same fifty or sixty people exclusively and repeatedly. Because there were no televisions, no Internet, and no instant satellite connections to distant and different worlds, her experiences (Denzin would claim) were "real." They were *her* experiences, the experiences of a genuine, authentic self. My grandmother *did not,* could not, filter these authentic experiences through the glitzy *images* and mere *simulations* of the real, now provided by the mass media. The genuinely social, then, was what went on between my grandmother and those she interacted with in local settings around her Poe Valley homestead.

As Denzin describes this predicament, "Subjects are narrative constructions. These constructions may draw upon their media and popular cultural representations and may or may not reflect their actual experiences. *When this occurs, the gap between the real and its representations becomes existentially problematic. In such moments ideology repressively intrudes into the worlds of lived experience*" (1990:12, emphases in original). Denzin proposes to remedy the incursion of unwanted "ideology" into "the real" using what he calls "minimalist" sociology that will capture the experiences "of those who are on the underside of the dominant power relationships in postmodern society." This sociology comes closer to the authentic "experiences of such persons and cultural groupings" because it proceeds "without complex sociological jargon or sociological theory" (1990:15). The answer to "the postmodern," then, is a return to more pure, local, uncontaminated, interactive spaces— spaces where real selves not yet "repressed" by "media and popular culture representations" can still be found.

There is no acknowledged comprehension of the poststructrualist attack on essentialist, individualist, humanist agency in this formulation. There is not any inkling of a suggestion that centered structure might be an illusion, a cultural folklore. What we see, instead, is an attempt to preserve an assumed realness from the contamination of a postmodern "moment."

The tumultuous result of Denzin's faith-based pursuit of the objectively real pours forth from many tortured passages in his extensive writings. Although he

openly acknowledges that his quest for an "elusive center" is "contradictory" and "tension-riddled," he will not give up insisting that it is "emerging." In the end he must retreat, like Jonathan H. Turner and Peter Berger, into theological imagery. "Of course there are no real biographical subjects independent of the stories told about them . . . we can never get back, to raw biographical experience. The closest we can ever get is when a subject, in epiphanic moments, moves from one social world to another. In these instances the subject is in between interpretive frameworks. When this happens experience is described in words that have yet to be contaminated by the cultural understandings of a new group" (1990:12–13). "Epiphanic moments"? Pure interpretation ("raw biographical experience") is still being fantasized as the optimum foundation of Denzin's sociology, even as he must admit that "no real biographical subjects independent of the stories told about them" will ever be found. Recall that Lemert also writes of his respect for "epiphanies" of "feminist, queer, race-based, ethnic" others. As I understand the word, an epiphany is a divine instance of pure perception. It is often described as a moment of theological inspiration brought by a deity who appears for one's personal edification.

Denzin wants an authentic self that *has* experiences. He wants to know about experience that has "yet to be contaminated by . . . cultural understandings." But this belief in pure experience ("epiphanic") has only always been theology. As such, it *is* a cultural understanding. It is the same pious pilgrimage (albeit now dressed up for Denzin's "seventh moment") that motivated the ancient Greeks and Christians that came later.

Despite Denzin's faith, the self is never *not* under construction. It is never *not* cultural. The self *has* experiences only because it understands (feels, interprets, and *experiences*) through language that is always *acquired culturally*. The act of describing an experience simultaneously (re-)creates that experience and does so using shared (cultural) language. Once one has language, s/he is never again "between interpretive frameworks." And there are no signs that say, "now leaving your old interpretive framework: forget all that you used to know"—a predicament that we "institutionalized cultural others" are all too aware of. Agency is an effect, a consequence of the culturally authorized language that makes every social setting possible. And this *does not mean* that selves do not have agency. I can make decisions about what I am because of language. I have agency, but it is an agency that is dependent upon the rich discursive, textual, economies of language that I use to think about and describe all that I know.

Denzin's attempt to institute a "minimalist sociology," then, is a misguided attempt at salvaging a metaphysical center that never really existed. He is homesick. If grand, overarching, sociological narratives of the past were mere stories that kept us from really knowing the authentically social experiences of the other, then it is to the purity of those experiences, Denzin says, that sociology must go. The authentic working people, the ethnic,

the racialized, the common people that Mills claimed to be interested in, have been drowned out by the mass medias and left without voices by sociologists intent on speaking their own professional discourses. "But underneath these . . . exists the ever elusive subject. The man, woman, and child who cries out and sometimes goes to others for help. This subject . . . has an occasional grasp on who she is and where she is going. . . . We risk losing sight of her, and she of herself" (1990:12).

This is anthropological romance. It is precisely the "nativism" that we heard Trinh warn against. This desire for authenticity, for purity, is why too many Marxian intellectuals remain disconnected from the working people they long to speak for. It is why so many American Indians can still scarcely tolerate anthropologists. And, it is not how sociologists should respond to the failures of structuralist epistemology.

Quoting and rephrasing the words of another "minimalist," Denzin continues, "These are the people who don't pontificate a great deal . . . they are cagey and quiet, they keep things to themselves, they pick their spots. They are modest. Under the surface of their lives lies a level of existentially problematic experience that cries out to be heard. It is this experience that the theoretically minimalist text attempts to capture" (1990:6).

Having backed himself into this nostalgic, romantically nativist, metaphysical corner, Denzin's argument rapidly deteriorates. Faced now with the logical next step, the need for pure reporting of pure experiences, he offers the following: "The text tells itself, makes sense of itself, and stands alone as a textual representation of a significant moment of experience. The world captured interprets itself. . . ." (1990:5).

I doubt that Denzin will agree with my reading of his texts. I doubt that we could agree on the finer points of any difficult text. No text, regardless of how simple or difficult, speaks for itself. No text has ever spoken for itself. The most basic, foundational texts are perhaps subject to the most widely disparate and wildly controversial readings. Just ask the major players of any religion what their sacred texts mean. Or get ten of the most esteemed legal scholars in a room and ask them what the U.S. Constitution means. If texts were self-evident ("the text tells itself"), church officials and judiciary officers would be superfluous.

Certainly, ethnic and racialized minorities have long since learned that we can never count on the integrity of any text. (Can anyone look an Indian in the eye and say: "treaty"?) For centuries now, brown and black people have understood that we cannot count on those with power to validate, or even recognize, our experiences. All texts have to be read and made sense of. Virtually all ethnographers make editing decisions about what to leave in or take out. And the words of "the other" that Denzin reports upon in his own texts are always arranged to suit his arguments. There is no pure subjectivity, and there is no pure way to report on fantasized, pure experiences.

Denzin's promises for a future society validated by these pure, authentic, "epiphanies," should scare marginalized populations everywhere. He writes of

a "sacred ethnography" that "celebrates the small performance rituals that bring us together in the natural world" (2000:1055). Whose rituals? Which natural world? As interpreted by whom? Who is "us" and how is "us" defined? But Denizin seems to think that because it is "sacred," it is somehow so obviously foundational as to be easily recognized and understood by everyone everywhere. As he describes, "a sacred, existential epistemology places us in a noncompetitive, nonhierarchical relationship to the earth, to nature, and to the larger world" (1052) and "it seeks to . . . illuminate the unity of the self in its relationship to the reconstructed, moral, and sacred natural world" (1052).

This is hauntingly religious language. It homogenizes human differences. It reinvigorates and celebrates deeply oppressive, universalizing moral systems. It is quite probably a prescription for a replaying of the horrors visited upon humanity by centuries of Platonists and Christian Aristotelians (albeit here called by other names). The constant and continuing danger is that Denzin still seeks to remove politics from the relationship between professional sociologists and those we write about. Despite his claim that his epistemological desires are "postructural to the core" (1997:26), his writings are, on the contrary, a desperate attempt to re-center sociology.[15]

Clough: The Ethnographic Search for Self-Validation

Clough (1992; 1992b), with Siedman, is one of the few American sociologists to understand the productive potential of poststructuralist philosophy for sociology. She rereads the empiricist quest for objectivity through a feminist, psychoanalytic lens. Explicitly concerned with ethnography, as a tradition where researchers imagine themselves in a heroic struggle to lay bare culturally alien worlds, Clough recasts these narratives as Oedipal struggles for the recovery of a lost maternal security.

As this Freudian story unfolds, the male separation from his mother, a separation insisted upon by his father, produces a pre-conscious longing and emotional lacking in men. Thus the ethnographer, like all adult men, is engaged in an unconscious quest for security and self-reconciliation. Never quite able to recover what we have lost, we compensate for our insecurity through defensive attempts at mastery of the many threatening differences we inevitably encounter.

In other words, if as poststructuralists claim, the self is always already decentered and never fully present to itself, then Clough would have us see this situation as a kind of unconscious, festering, psycho-emotional wound. The metaphysical dream of self-presence is here figured as a painfully deep (ultimately sexualized) need for restful security—for a promised foundation in epistemological certainty. Previous generations' longing for the warm unity of the one God, for a primal return to the Garden of Eden, is now a desperate scientific attempt at (masculine) mastery of an unruly and unpredictable (feminine) existence.[16] Structuralist sociology, so very male in its origins and

desires, amounts to a forever-frustrated attempt to restore boys to the safety of our lost, maternal embrace.

But, as the Freudian tradition teaches, it is no simple matter to control what is emotionally lost to us—that which is placed off-limits even as we desire it. And, because this drama usually plays out below the level of conscious awareness, most often we seek to control these painful longings by denying the existence of that same desire. We lie to ourselves. We repress our own conscious stake in what can only always be an unsuccessful outcome. We can never again have the safety and certainty of the infant feeding at the breast, so we belittle and invalidate that security. We are tough, alone, and stoic. As men, we purport to be above the warmth and security of the feminine.

But this repression has consequences. The desire is never really left behind; and it resurfaces again and again in unrecognized (unconscious) fantasies of control and mastery. Structural sociologists, then, must hide and minimize their own needs from themselves. The ethnographer, in particular, controls by denying the power of his own desires. He narrates and denies that he narrates. He controls by reducing the social world to that which he claims simply "is," hiding his own actively desirous role in its depiction. The "empirical world" of the structuralist sociologist can function as a fantasized center of certainty only because he denies that it is fashioned out of his desires. That is, it provides the hope of security and safety only so long as it is fantasized to exist before and in excess of his own narratives. As Clough (1992a: 24) says, "factuality is always composed as a narrative defense against narrativity."

Ultimately, though, his scientific control over others and their foreign domains is secured only as long as his perpetuation of this epistemological ruse can be repressed. "Thus the masculine subject has appropriated power by dissociating himself from the spectacularized others of vision and not by simply denying their presence or their visions but by making their points of view public only through and as his vision" (Clough 1992a:40). Security requires mastery and mastery requires predictability. Predictability means simplification. It means patterns, cycles, centers, and teleology. It means structure. It means fantasizing that there is structure in what must otherwise remain foreign and other, unpredictable, and therefore threatening. This requires the protection of empiricist orthodoxy; it requires an ever vigilant and disciplined defense of the colonial prerogative to speak as the uniquely entitled authority, as a "man of science." ". . . empirical science is not easily distinguished from the process of empire, a construction of raced and sexed identities. Indeed, it is these functions of empirical science, its disavowed strategies for textualizing local settings, that make it epistemologically comforting. As it seemingly distinguishes fact and fiction, the image and the real, the observer and the observed, empiricism (con)serves the dominance of white masculinity" (Clough 1992a:58).

Again, this quest for dominance is the outcome of repressed fear and longing that ultimately becomes the colonial and masculine loathing of the feminine and non-European. But the desire of the man of science for unity lost, for the complete and centered subjectivity that was provided and guaranteed in the maternal embrace of infancy, is always already displaced into uncontainable différance, into a centerless text that haunts him as the only possibility of his insecure existence.

The structuralist, in his metaphysical desire for his own complete self-presence, must reduce the subjectivities of the colonized to manageable simplifications. And these simplifications, after all, are the textual referents that allow him his own imagined, self-congratulatory, superiority. He is what the other is not. Consequently, structuralist sociology must always traffic in "crude . . . opposition[s]" (Clough 1992a:104): masculine/feminine, white/ethnic, straight/gay, rational/irrational, truth/narrative, civilized/primitive, and modern/postmodern. For Clough (107), these reductions, these simplistic binaries, are the projected possibility of an "Oedipal logic of realist narrativity."

These fantasized essences are always informed by the primacy of Oedipal gender roles. The preferred halves of these binaries are projected and coveted from within the masculine hope for security and control—from within an unconscious desire for reunification with the feminine. But because the self is decentered and constituted from within ceaseless and insecure amalgamations of textual traces, no such selfsame presence has ever been possible. Subjectivity is not something that, as Foucault (1977:170) maintains, anyone "can glory in . . . since it always occurs in the interstice."[17] The self is an effect without inherent structure, and, for Clough, this always unfinished quest for closure is productively understood as frustrated, masculine desire.

The goal, Clough says, should be to "redirect sociology toward constructing itself as social criticism rather than as empirical science" (1992a:134). Where I have written of civic duty for sociologists that is no longer haunted and shackled by the theological phantasm of Christian responsibility to God, she finds structuralist sociology to be encumbered by an unconscious, masculine ache for the security of a lost, centering, and finally despised femininity. Where I call for understanding the textual complexes that animate the politics or social problems that we are set to intervene in, she envisions "a poststructural cultural criticism . . . to make visible the itineraries of desire in diagrams of power/knowledge" (1992b:550).

Both imaginaries are politically and intellectually useful. Both are in the spirit of Derrida's invocation of the Levi-Straussian notion of "bricolage." Both are consistent with Nietzsche's observation that knowledge production is always a "Will to Power." We both understand scholarship as political action designed to confront power. As Clough (1992a: 137) describes her vision of poststructuralist sociology: "It is to urge a social criticism that gives up on data collection and instead offers rereadings of representations in every form of information processing, empirical science, literature, film, television, and computer simulation."

Like my use of "text," "discourse," and "genealogy," Clough's wielding of psychoanalytic tools leads directly to sociologists taking political responsibility for our analyses. Important civic work, and not dedication to some "elusive center," is our intellectual priority. She ascribes no ontological, metaphysical qualities to the concepts she deploys. She feels no responsibility to unobtainable ideals. Although I hesitate to put words in her mouth, I can find nothing in Clough's writings to indicate that she would disagree with Derrida's description of his own analytic devices. Writing of "text," Derrida has said, its "efficacy . . . may very well, indeed must, one day be superseded . . . enmeshing itself in a chain that in truth it never will have governed. . . . [I]t is not theological" (1982:7).

Clough's work does not try to define a pure human agency. It promises no teleological closure in any overarching, grand narrative. The feminine is never finally defined nor held up as a newer and better epistemological foundation ("standpoint"). On the contrary, she provides a set of tools for interrogating the Will to Power in any and all intellectual and political narratives.

Ultimately, Clough posits, as her title makes explicit, *The End(s) of Ethnography*. If ethnography was a method whereby sociologists imagined they could know and therefore contain the other, Clough's work announces the end of that particular daydream. She does so by noting the "ends" that these ethnographers have always unconsciously sought. The power to define and control the unmanageable messiness of the others was always, she teaches, rooted in the ethnographers' own longing for centered security. The self-validation of these sociologists depended upon their ability to document, label, appraise, and pronounce upon the other.

Summary

The appeal of poststructuralist writings for many of us from many backgrounds—nonacademic, ethnically diverse, working class, feminine, immigrant, queer, and racialized—lies in their *uncontainable* attacks on epistemological centers and ontological foundations. These writings are potent intellectual weapons that we can put to use in our own political defense. A poststructuralist sociology will be inclusive of difference because it will not be consumed by the need to protect any epistemological center. These difference-embracing sociologists will not insist on an extra-cultural, extra-political, pure origin as the foundation of their academic appraisals. Responsibility, here, is no longer theological.

In summarizing chapter 3, I suggested that Mills's essay, "The Promise," provides an apt way to conceptualize the reflexive work that structuralist sociologists can do to rethink their angst and anger over poststructuralist criticisms. I suggested that sociological investigations into the cultural history of scientific assumptions could teach sociologists to be less intransigent in their defense of

what I claim are metaphysical superstitions. I also want to point out the limits of that prescription.

A poststructuralist sociology of sociology must ultimately come up against its own possibility. It must undo itself, and, in a less fearful academic climate, this is quite okay. Mills's analysis, centered as it is on "biography" and "history" (on structure) cannot pass beyond its founding assumptions. De-centering the self and attacking grand, overarching narratives undercuts the twin pillars of Mills's thought. This recognition does not make his analytic devices useless. Refusing to award these concepts metaphysical status is not the same as saying they are without utility. Derrida, citing the ancient Greeks, uses the word "aporia" to describe these productive, self-reflexive moments when critical thinking comes up against its own limits. The "post" of poststructuralist sociology, if it is to signal an "empirically scrupulous" embrace of the other in a pursuit of "ethics and justice," cannot tolerate definitions that move to reassert centers.

5

WHO'S UNDERSTANDING WHOSE PAST?

"Telling the Truth" about Native Dead

A clear and accurate understanding of the ancient past is something
that the American public has a right to know about.
—Doug Owsley, Curator of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution

I wish every scientist across this nation would say there is no scientific reason
to hold these remains. This ought to be a standard.
—Lawrence Hart, Traditional Spiritual Leader of the
Cheyenne Nation and NAGPRA Review Committee Member

We don't police NAGPRA. We work with materials sent to us.
—John Robbins, Designated Federal Official,
U.S. Department of the Interior

While his intent is clear, Mr. Hart might more accurately have declared that there are *"only* scientific reasons" to hold the remains of deceased Native Americans in museums' closets and university laboratories. Native Americans' struggles with members of the scientific community for control of our dead ancestors continue with great ferocity into the new century.[1] Many anthropologists, archaeologists, and osteologists remain outraged by what they see as an irreplaceable loss of scientific data to apparently backward tribal peoples who display little or no appreciation for the importance that this scientific research is said to hold for humanity as a whole. The overwhelming majority of American Indians see things quite differently. For Native peoples, the struggle to return dead family to the earth of their

homelands is just another sordid chapter in a five-hundred-year-old struggle against colonialism.

My argument in this chapter is explicitly political. My intent is that of an activist. My responsibility is for aiding in the struggle to see all deceased Native peoples returned to the care of their closest living descendants.

The chapter recovers important and often systematically ignored genealogy of contemporary scientific claims to Indian dead. The scholarly goal of this recovery is to expose these scientific claims as wholly political pronouncements. The "truth" narrated in the accounts of scientists actively resisting the repatriation of our ancestors to our communities are recollected as "a thing of this world." My aim is to demolish these scientists' ability to insist on their own metaphysical agenda—an agenda they insist on even as Native Americans actively resist capture in their anthropological tales. The political history of contemporary scientific claims is recovered so that their power to subjugate both living and dead Indians with pretensions to extra-political truth can be affectively arrested.

Some Conditions of Possibility: Noble Indians and Politics

It is important to note that this debate, despite Indian outrage remaining constant since our dead first began to be "collected" by European Americans, could not have taken place as recently as the mid-twentieth century. Tremendous changes in public understandings of American history, most notably the civil rights movement, are the conditions of possibility of Indian requests for the return of our dead being taken seriously.

Although Indians, like most peoples, have never shied away from a fight to have our dead left alone, the rehabilitation of Indian people in the minds of the American public over the past thirty years has facilitated our measured political successes in the last decades. Through the 1950s, Indians remained in the public imaginary unsophisticated descendants of savages or remnant populations of a subjugated wilderness. The racializations still relied upon by sports mascots were then the dominant image of Indian people held by most Americans. Although almost as patronizing as the old constructs were insulting, the romantic "at one with nature" discourses of the 1960s and 1970s made savagery noble. Hordes of activists seeking to "get back to nature" and "defend the earth" as a new national ecological awareness took root, suddenly loved and admired Indians.

I can vividly remember my own grandmother rolling her eyes and putting off these awestruck advances by declaring herself "a sidewalk Indian." Grandma wore dresses exclusively and was never without diamond jewelry. When she took me fishing, she stayed in the car or sat in a chair by the road. She had no romance with "nature." Nevertheless, this remaking of Indian people in the public consciousness, imagery that Indians still get called to

respond to, is a condition of possibility of the modest political gains that we have begun to make.

For a poststructuralist, the debate over our ancestors' remains is an interesting dynamic because it represents a point of vulnerability for the dominant scientific ethos. The status and power of anthropological discourse can be publicly challenged because its pronouncements come into direct political conflict with more recent constructions of American Indian identity. An opportunity—a textual opening—exists. Because, at least for the moment, the majority of the American public thinks highly (romantically) of Indian people, they will listen as the cultural and political (non-"objective") qualities of anthropological stories are forced to the center of the debate over Native dead. Cultural conditions are such that Owsley's claim to speak for some fictitiously unified and singular "American public" can be strategically interrupted.

Powerful Scientists

What political privilege, we can ask, is concealed in Owsley's invocation and declaration of his power, in his claim to speak truthfully about the status of these remains? Where did he get this power? How was it awarded to him? How, exactly, did his scientific narration come to have more power than competing narrations made, for centuries now, by Indian people?

In chapter 3, I wrote of "restoring the political scars" that those who claim to speak on behalf of truth must forget or erase when they invoke their powers. These political struggles (the contested history of his truth claims) must be strategically erased if Owsley is to speak with authority ("has a right to know") on behalf of all of us ("the American public"). He must insist that there is only one correct way to remember. Thus he writes with no visible self-interrogation of a singularly retrievable past ("A clear and accurate understanding"). There is only one past and Owsley claims the authority to articulate "*the* ancient past." He and his colleagues must insist on what Judith Butler (1993:8), although in the context of a rather different discussion, calls a "violent foreclosure." The scientists must place their status beyond political contest, and this is a violent act achievable only through raw power.

The anger and pain contained in the pleadings of Indian people testifying at the June 2001 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee Meeting reveals the violent quality of scientists' attempts to close off Indian sense makings from the debate, to foreclose on any contests to scientific legitimacy that we might muster.

One Pomo leader spoke of the curator at California State University as being "like Hitler's great-grandson." Declaring that the university official keeps his relatives "locked up like they were his own private property," the former tribal chair went on to sarcastically lament, "the great thing about white people is that when they steal they make a record of it." A Hopi official of the

Cultural Preservation Office called his people's fight for reburial "a moral duty." Another native woman asserted, "the dead are crying."

As Butler describes this violence that I am here locating in scientists' claims to speak as a singular voice of legitimacy for all of us: "This delimitation, which often is enacted as an untheorized presupposition in any act of description, marks a boundary that includes and excludes, that decides, as it were, what will and will not be the stuff of the object to which we then refer. This marking off will have some normative force and, indeed, some violence, for it can construct only through erasing . . ." (1993:110). The attempt to refer uncritically (as if everyone agreed with this description) to Indian remains as scientific data, as the stuff of "a clear and accurate understanding," is an attempt to place one's own understanding into the realm of the extra-political.

Owsley either believes or is pretending he believes that he is not acting politically. He is simply describing what the remains *are* and thus what they mean. He refuses to acknowledge the constitutive qualities of his description, thus removing them from the debate. He would have "the American public" believe that his description is only as Butler says, "the stuff of the object to which we refer" and not a violent political pronouncement designed to close debate about what the ancestors may be for others.

You will notice that by referring to "ancestors," and not to scientific "objects," I insist on keeping the debate open. Very different, and strategically vital, textual relationships of différance inhabit these descriptors. I insist that these are people and family and not objects because, as Butler indicates, description has "normative force" and is therefore never simply description. For centuries scientists have attempted to close off these politics by "erasing" competing Indian claims. In the mouths of the scientists, our dead family members have routinely become "specimens," "artifacts," "collections," the "archaeological record," and other humiliating euphemisms.

The goal in this chapter, then, is to forcefully return the scientific community to the ugly politics that continue to "construct only through erasing." We will revisit (as Michel Foucault instructed in chapter 3) "the profusion of lost events" that are the very conditions of possibility of Owsley's power. We shall see that, like Indians, Owsley is a mere mortal. He possesses no universally valid ability or qualifications that make him an authority (for all people) about the status of *our* dead, of what are after all *Indian* dead. He enjoys the power to narrate as successfully as he does only because his own ancestors came in overwhelming numbers and carried guns.

We can assess and challenge this political power by interrogating the weave-like text of différance that Jacques Derrida, in chapter 3, taught us can never be closed off or arrested. Tracing the textual history (the genealogy) of scientific claims will not only undo the scientists' ability to speak for a truth that they would have us award the status of a metaphysical presence; more importantly, this genealogy will empower us to force the textual politics of this

debate to, as Derrida says, "go off again in different directions." Our normative goal is a redirection of how scientific claims on Native dead are heard by those who have not yet made up their minds about these issues, particularly those with the power to affect policy. I want to recover and reiterate the political conditions of possibility of the scientists' power and to actively tie their current claims to a resurrected and reinvigorated colonialist past that they conveniently suppress or forget.

NAGPRA and Implementation: Where Things Stand Now

In 1990 Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. This law was preceded by the 1989 National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAIA), which was aimed specifically at the Smithsonian Institution's Museums. These laws were passed with the intention of forcing federally funded museums and universities to return human remains, funerary objects (items placed into graves with the dead), sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (objects having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance) to the tribes and to Native Hawaiians.

No one knows for certain how many Native dead were taken to the country's museums and universities by generations of "collectors," but the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) estimate of 600,000 bodies is a frequently cited figure (Preston 1989:67; Thornton 1998:387). However, in testimony before the United States Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs leading up to the passage of NAGPRA, the NARF indicated that as many as "two million Native people have been dug up from their graves in the United States and are now held in the nation's universities, museums, state and federal agencies, and tourist attractions" (Echo-Hawk 1990:185). In addition, thousands of individuals were taken by the agents of European museums or sold by American anthropologists to the large museums of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany (Cole 1985; Nihipali 1993:176–81). The Organization of American Indians Against Desecration estimates that European institutions continue to hold 500,000 dead Indian people (Hubert 1988:3). When the NMAIA became law in 1989, the largest American holder, the Smithsonian held (by its own estimates), the bodies of roughly 14,500 dead Indians. In addition, the museum was the curator of 4,000 severed Indian heads.

NAGPRA directs institutions receiving federal funds to complete "inventories" of dead Indians and of the objects found in their graves and to report their holdings to the tribes within five years. Sacred objects, objects of cultural patrimony, and grave contents that could not be identified as belonging to a specific deceased individual were to be inventoried within three years. All of these museums and universities were then to return the ancestors and the contents of their graves to the tribes "expeditiously." Furthermore, these inventories were to be "completed in consultation with tribal government and Native

Hawaiian organization officials and traditional religious leaders." In those cases when records do not clearly indicate the origins of remains or objects, or when ownership is in dispute, these institutions were directed to follow the "preponderance . . . of evidence."

Because of tireless Indian lobbying, the law states explicitly that "this Act shall not be construed to be an authorization for the initiation of new scientific studies of such remains and associated funerary objects or other means of acquiring or preserving additional scientific information from such remains and objects." Indeed, tribes were specifically guaranteed that they could show "a preponderance of the evidence" in many forms, including Native ways. "Native American human remains and funerary objects shall be expeditiously returned where the requesting Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization can show cultural affiliation by a preponderance of the evidence based upon geographical, kinship, biological, archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, folkloric, oral traditional, historical, or other relevant information or expert opinion" (25 USC 3005, Sec. 7[a]4).

By the time the three-year deadline for reporting objects and grave contents that could not be linked to specific ancestors came and went in 1993, the tribes had heard from only four institutions. In the cases of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, the Heard Museum, and the Field Museum of Natural History, these "inventories" listed a grand total of one item each (National NAGPRA Online Databases: 2001). Although, as I have already said, no accurate numbers exist for cataloging the extent of the plunder of Indian country that has been stored up over the centuries in the nation's museums and universities, tens of millions of pieces is a conservative estimate.

Notices of inventory completion of human remains have also been slow to meet the legislated deadline. Fifty-eight institutions failed to meet the 1995 deadline and were granted extensions by the secretary of interior. By 1998, when these extensions were due, six institutions holding large numbers of remains still were in noncompliance and requesting further extensions. These extensions were denied and the institutions were given the status of "forbearance" that meant that civil penalties were to begin accruing. These six institutions are the American Museum of Natural History, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, the Ohio Historical Society, the New York State Museum, the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory, and Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.

In May of 1999, the assistant secretary of the interior informed these museums and laboratories that they could avoid civil penalties by meeting their legal responsibilities by dates assigned in individual letters. Five of the six did so. The last of the six, Harvard's Peabody Museum, submitted its inventory to the NAGPRA Review Committee on June 2, 2001, almost eleven years after the passage of the law. These last six institutions to come into compliance estimated that they possessed 34,764 individuals (U.S. Department of Interior: 6/2/2001). In addition, a Peabody representative testifying

before the committee said that her institution had "lost through reassociations," an additional 411 people.

As of July 2007, approximately 3,927 of these almost 35,000 ancestors have been repatriated or made available for repatriation (National NAGPRA Online Databases 7/27/2007). The specific data for specific institutions are as follows: Peabody Museum: 11,587 people held and 2,416 returned or made ready for return; Phoebe A. Hearst Museum: 4,200 people taken and 360 returned or made ready for return; American Museum of Natural History: 4,200 people held and 513 returned or made ready for return; New York State Museum: 874 people taken and 129 returned or made ready for return; Ohio Historical Society: 6,722 people held and 6 set to be repatriated; and Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory: 2,144 people held and 333 returned or made ready for return.

Trying to estimate the overall extent of repatriations or notices of intent to repatriate that have been published thus far, we can identify by December 31, 1998, 13,481 sets of remains that had been listed in the *Federal Register* as available for repatriation. Between this date and April 15, 2002, approximately 10,979 additional bodies were announced in the *Federal Register*. This total of 24,460 individuals grew to 27,863 by March 31, 2004, and by September of 2005, 31,571 people had been identified and made ready for return to their families. The 2006 midyear report of the National NAGPRA Committee notes 32,052 ancestors repatriated or ready for repatriation by March 31, 2006. As of July 2007, the number has reached approximately 33,927. If we add these numbers to the 5,435 individuals repatriated by the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History through April 2007 (NMNH Repatriation Office), this means that the best we can say with any confidence is that, of the estimated 600,000 bodies held by American institutions, about 39,362 have returned or been made available for return to their people and homelands.[2]

It is interesting to note that the ancestors put under the control of the NMAI, an institution controlled and led by American Indians, have almost all gone home. Less than 300 remain, and those who do are mostly from South America. Taking a pro-active position that goes far beyond legal requirements, the NMAI does not wait for claims to be submitted. The museum's "highest priority . . . is the expeditious return of all human remains and associated funerary objects . . . to lineal descendants, regardless of geography and sociopolitical borders."[3] This effort stands in stark contrast to America's other federally funded institutions that have collectively returned or made ready to return barely one-third the number of our ancestors that they now claim are "culturally unidentifiable."

Given the picture told by these numbers, it seems likely that Indian people will be fighting to get our dead and their grave contents returned for a long time to come. As the following examples illustrate, tribes need to mount a major counter-offensive against anthropologists who are dedicated to eviscerating NAGPRA.

Many in the scientific community continue to react with anger, disgust, and threats as reburials reach serious numbers. Those who are most openly contemptuous depict Indians as incapable or unwilling to understand that humanity can benefit from the scientific "stewardship" of Indian dead. In this discourse, Indians are portrayed as obstinate reactionaries who, like religious and political zealots of other times and places, are holding up the advancement of knowledge with our backward superstitions. These academics see genuine appreciation of cultural others as merely an unfortunate political fashion that must be held at bay until the danger to science (as the only source of real progress) passes. Like modern day Galileos, they believe that they will emerge as true champions of human advancement and be celebrated for their perseverance by generations of scholars to come.

Among the most outspoken is Clement W. Meighan who, until his recent death, was Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at UCLA. Referring to Indians as "an allegedly oppressed minority" whose perspectives are "hostile to Western science itself" (1993:13), he suggests that anthropologists who do not actively contest reburials "have abandoned scholarly ethics in favor of being 'respectful and sensitive' to non-scholars and anti-intellectuals. When the current round of controversy is over, this loss of scientific integrity will be heavily condemned" (1992:706). As Meighan understands the conflict with Indians, he and his colleagues are the singularly legitimate authorities who alone are capable of correctly interpreting the history of the Americas. He thus moves quickly and decisively to erase his competition. "The real issue is who disowns the real past so they can sell you their mythology or other 'received wisdom' which cannot be challenged by evidence" (1996:3). As heir to a great scientific tradition, it makes perfect sense to Meighan that dead Indians are "data" left in the trust of current generations of anthropologists and that reburial amounts to a complete betrayal of professional responsibility. "Since we commonly proclaim that archaeological collections are unique and irreplaceable, how can we ever justify the conscious and acquiescent destruction of our data?" (1992:705).

Professor Meighan's contempt for repatriation is far from unique. Granly (1996), who is the former curator at the Buffalo Museum of Science, angrily denounces "this whole idea, interjecting these unimportant considerations into science." Kennedy (1996) proclaims that "myth might give you some clues as to ancestry, but in nine times out of ten, mythology is not supported by scientific endeavors." Beth Walton (1999:5) demands that: "[l]ocal political considerations must be balanced with maintaining a wider view of prehistory" and asserts that "[i]t is the obligation of federal archaeologists to protect this archaeological material and related data." Archaeologists' duty to science must be forcefully stated, Walton maintains, because "[w]ith the increasing demand for the return of remains to tribal representatives (frequently without

appropriate scientific study), they are often responding arbitrarily to emotional appeals, rather than with reason based on the law. . . ." As one might anticipate given the desperately emotional tone of this attack on Indians' request for the return of our ancestors' bodies, Walton's reference to "the law" has proven foreboding.

Cleone Hawkinson (2001), who is president of the "Friends of America's Past" (which she describes as "a non-profit organization that promotes the rights of scientists and the public to learn about America's pre-history"), warned the NAGPRA Review Committee at their June 1, 2001 meeting that it was time for them to "be prepared to respond in a legally defensible way." In a tone that was purposefully condescending, the anthropologist instructed the members that they "may not accept evidence that links religious stories with historical events to show that those religious beliefs point to a pre-history that is true." Admonishing the committee, Hawkinson lectured: "keep in mind that you are a secular advisory committee" and "the constitution requires this committee . . . to find a way to distinguish religious beliefs and to keep them separate from public policy." Finally, as if to underscore that her authority and power were not to be taken lightly, she concluded: "In plain English, if you use religious beliefs to make secular recommendations, the decisions resulting from your recommendations are vulnerable to challenge for violating the first amendment. . . . It is time for the committee to bridge the growing chasm between tribal views and the scientific and public interest in the past. We must uphold the constitution, create meaningful standards, and apply them fairly using common sense."

These ominous promises of legal challenges to NAGPRA are part of a much larger strategy, carried out with increasing rapidity and effectiveness and designed to sway the larger public to the scientists' cause using the mass media. Disappointingly, major newspapers and broadcast media have been only too happy to facilitate the assault.

On October 22, 1996, the front page of the *New York Times* screamed: "Indian Tribes Creationists Thwart Archaeologists." Citing a host of archaeologists, the author proclaimed: "adhering to their own creation accounts as adamantly as biblical creationists adhere to the book of Genesis, Indian tribes have stopped important archaeological research on hundreds of pre-historic remains" (Johnson 1996: A1).

Similarly, in October of 1998 the popular news program *60 Minutes* broadcast a one-sided attack on the Umatilla Tribe's attempt to rebury the 8,400-year-old remains of an individual who their leaders call "the Ancient One." Although the program relied on the increasingly familiar strategy of attempting to label Indian beliefs "religion" that can then be pitted against an overcoming and enlightened science, the producers also chose to exploit the growing backlash among non-Natives to the economic gains that some tribes are realizing through casinos. As narrated by the reporter Leslie Stahl, one of the anthropologists (Jim Chatters) committed to stopping the reburial "suspects

that the tribes' fight against further testing . . . is based on fear, fear that if someone else was here before they were, their status as sovereign nations, and all that comes with it—treaty rights and lucrative casinos like this one on the Umatilla reservation [camera shows a blackjack game with 100 dollar bills fanned widely across a blackjack table]—could be at risk."

The questions put to the scientists and to Armand Minthorn (who is a Umatilla spiritual leader and, at the time, was chair of the NAGPRA Review Committee) are purportedly those of an "objective journalist" trying to get at the "objective truth" about the scientists' attempts to pursue the "objective past." Yet the structure of the questions and the editing of the program were clearly designed to glorify anthropology and to disparage Indian cultures.

Adopting a tone of voice used by adults when they explain what they believe to be difficult concepts to young children, Stahl leans forward in her chair, opens her eyes a little wider, and speaks ever so slowly to Chair Minthorn. "Do you see why the scientists, do you understand why they want to know more about it, that they want to know everything there is to know about someone who lived 9,000 years ago, that bones can tell?"

Conversely, Stahl's questions to the anthropologists are designed to fashion answers that frame the story in sensational and thus politically effective terms. Professors Owsley and Chatters quickly recognize the platform. At one point the reporter asks Chatters, "do you think this is an attempt on the Indians' part to control history?" Jumping on the opportunity, the anthropologist responds: "Yes, in a word I do. They've got a history now, the way it's laid out, that fits their present-day political needs quite effectively. If that history changes, it may not fit so well."

The questions she asked of Owsley are equally uncritical and generous. Not once does she ask about the importance of respecting the worldviews of other cultures or seriously questioning whether science is itself a set of beliefs with a cultural history. On the contrary, she guides the anthropologist with all of the skill of the great public relations artist that she is. She unfolds pro-anthropology narrations of the conflict and asks for validation, which the scientists eagerly provide. For example: "did you not think 'wow this could be a significant major find in my field?'" And, "we are talking about *our* history?" And, "if it's a religion [Indian views] it's faith?"

In 2000, the Public Broadcasting Service series, *NOVA,* aired an equally one-sided program. The title, *The Mystery of the First Americans,* was indicative of the program's agenda, which was to provide a forum for scientists to attack Indian claims that our ancestors inhabited the Americas before Europeans. Of the 53 minutes of footage contained in the program, Indians got approximately 40 seconds of airtime.

The program takes the form of an apologetic explanation for what is now, all too conveniently, deemed errant anthropology carried out over the last several decades (what one anthropologist interviewed refers to as "our gospel"). The problem for these scientists is that thousands of pages of anthropological

scholarship documenting that Indians were the earliest inhabitants of the Americas proves to be politically problematic in their struggle to claim the Umatillas' ancient ancestor. If scientists are to keep possession of the Umatilla Ancient One, they must move to debunk mountains of their own writings.

Thus the program introduces "new theories" about how old remains are probably really as much European as Indian. If the first inhabitants didn't really come across a land bridge (an anthropological story of migration that many Indians despise and dispute) to get to the Americas, then we must be partially descended from whites who lived here before Indians' treks from Asia, across the Bering Strait, took place. Or maybe, the program suggests, the "Caucasoid-looking" people, who were here before Indians' ancestors arrived, died out or were killed off before or after "Mongoloid-looking" people (which is their name for Indian ancestors) arrived. Whichever "mystery" the viewer chooses to embrace, the intent of the program is clear. Native claims to being the first Americans are under full attack by scientists' intent on employing the complete political weight of their academic credentials to discredit Indian claims to old remains. The Ancient One was really white, one "new theory" proceeds. (Indeed, one of the anthropologists who sued to stop reburial insists that the Ancient One looked like the actor Patrick Stewart, who is better known as TV's Capt. Jean-Luc Picard.) Therefore, Indians have no basis under NAGPRA to return him to his grave.[4]

Displaying their formidable capacity to make plausible this suggestion that even a few years ago would have been laughable, the *Nova* show concludes with background music designed to trigger feelings of awe and wonder as a somber male voice intones: "If we look back far enough in time, all people are members of a single family. How we came to exist everywhere on earth and in such variety is our collective story [long pause for effect], and one we are just beginning to understand."

Indian people have our hands full if we are to effectively combat the power and status that pours forth from scientists' political narrations. The NAGPRA legislation may have been a great Indian victory, but the humane treatment of our ancestors' remains, particularly the oldest of our relatives, is still far from secure.

Friendly Anthropologists

Particularly insidious are those scientists who portray themselves as friends of Indians, and therefore as less acrimonious than the openly hostile individuals just cited, while they fight Indian wishes. For example, Thomas W. Killion and Tamara L. Bray (1994:4) claim, "since the conscious shedding of the colonial mantle, anthropologists have frequently assumed the role of advocate for the disenfranchised with whom they traditionally work." These archaeologists tend to see themselves as misunderstood victims. They are really the political and intellectual champions of Indians, they argue, but Indians and those influenced

by the public comments of Indians tend not to appreciate their goodwill. Thus, these Indian-loving scientists say that the need for stepped up public relations campaigns is more urgent than ever before.

Asserting, "Perhaps the single greatest challenge facing archaeological preservationists is the need to become involved with primetime, as well as educational, television," Robert Mallouf (1996:206–7) implores:

> Do they honestly believe that scientific findings, which have proven so important in dispelling the prejudiced European concepts of the "barbarous savage" are somehow deleterious to their well-being? . . . The ancient cultures that are brought back to life by archaeologists through studies of their carefully excavated artifacts provide critical linkages for Native Americans to their past. Through the act of reburial, our only hard evidence of the existence of some ancient cultures will be permanently expunged from the archaeological record. Are proponents of repatriation really correct in assuming that future generations of Native Americans will approve of what is transpiring today? Again, these are important questions that are best considered outside the sphere of emotional debate, and without pressing external influences.

Referring to dead Indians as "hard evidence" that can teach live Indians about Indian history is common sentiment among this group of self-proclaimed, friendly archaeologists and physical anthropologists. Although they regularly suggest that "no simple statement can explain all the reasons" why they require "long-term study" of Native dead that they insist on calling "direct tangible evidence of our [their] history" (Landau and Steele 1996:209–10), they have offered limited lists of those reasons they consider most important.

Maintaining that "an innate need to know is universally characteristic of all humans," that "physical anthropologists are willing to comply with NAGPRA's terms, but the need remains for long-term study of some skeletal collections before repatriation," and that "physical anthropologists have an interest in learning just who humans are," Patricia Landau and D. Gentry Steele (1996:209) offer one such list of reasons.

It is critically important, these scholars suggest, to know if Europeans brought venereal diseases to the Americas or whether they already existed among Native Americans before Europeans arrived. Although not able to solve their puzzle, they note, "Syphilis spread rapidly and tragically among Native American populations as they came into contact with Europeans." Native remains, they argue, "provide humankind with one of the best documented records of complex origin, spread, and reinfestation" of venereal syphilis (Landau and Steele 1996:211–12). Next, Landau and Steele inform us that some Mississippi Valley Indians intentionally altered the cranial development of their young by tying bands or flat surfaces to the heads of growing children. Without the study of living Indians' dead ancestors, they worry,

"the widespread nature of this practice . . . would not be known" (212). They then explain that the 486 men, women, and children removed from their graves in Crow Creek Village provide solid proof that the Plains tribes sometimes fought violently among themselves. Suggesting that many of these "aspects of prehistoric life would be unknown without the analysis of human remains," they also reveal that "analysis of skeletal material from the King site, a Georgia site occupied between AD 1535–1570 may support accounts of atrocities perpetrated by the Spanish during the early years after European contact" (212–13). We also learn that Native women sometimes softened animal skins with their teeth, that Native men got sore elbows from throwing spears, and that those regularly carrying heavy loads had sore backs (215). Finally, and perhaps sensing the lack of drama contained in these revelations, Landau and Steele assert, "the study of human remains clearly indicates that cannibalism, a practice recorded in many parts of the world, occurred under rare circumstances in the American Southwest as well" (213).

Given their dedication to teaching living Indians about what they insist on calling our "prehistory," two colleagues of Landau and Steele go so far as to suggest that "it would be racist not to have large collections of aboriginal New World remains in New World museums since that would imply lack of interest in the history of those people" (Ubelaker and Grant 1989:249). Referring to their work as the "exploration of the proud heritage of a proud people," these anthropologists from the National Museum of Natural History refer to "large collections of human remains" as having been "assembled by early workers such as Samuel Morton and Ales Hrdlicka" (249). Paying tribute to "such pioneers as Paul Broca" whose publications, they claim, "illustrate how the study of human remains can generate information that both dispels erroneous theories and builds scientific basis for our understanding of the biology of past populations," they conclude that "without access to Indian human remains, one can only assume that the next generation of American Indians and the generations thereafter will encounter huge gaps in their knowledge and understanding of the history of their people." Without the "collections . . . assembled" by these "pioneers," Ubelaker and Grant warn, "anthropologists and others who have devoted their careers to the study of American Indians" cannot "ensure that this history is not lost" (250).

In these claims to speak as the solely legitimate narrators of Indians' histories, histories whose oral telling endured among the tribes for thousands of years before the anthropologists' ancestors got off the boats, we find a full-blown anthropological attack on NAGPRA taking shape.

Anthropologists Take Their Friends to Court

Two of these anthropologists, Steele and Owsley, have joined six of their colleagues in filing a lawsuit against the federal government and five Indian nations

that is designed to render major provisions of NAGPRA effectively useless to Native people. If allowed to stand, the February 4, 2004 decision (*Bonnichsen, Robson v. United States of America*) issued by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, provides ample opportunity for anthropologists to halt the return of hundreds of thousands of our ancestors.

Perhaps most frustrating about this challenge is that it was fully anticipated by the Native activists who fought to get NAGPRA passed in the first place. Recall that the law specifically states that "cultural affiliation" between tribes and our dead can be demonstrated by a "preponderance of evidence" and that this evidence absolutely includes "folkloric," and "oral traditional" knowledge. Clearly, the intention of lawmakers was to validate Native ways of knowing and, at the behest of the bill's Indian proponents, to guard against any future attack on oral cultures. Although I cited this language, it is worth reiterating here.

To be certain their intentions were clear, and that scientists could not use Indian requests for "documentation" of museum and laboratory holdings as an excuse to further denigrate dead ancestors, the law includes the following language. "Such term [*documentation*] does not mean, and this Act shall not be construed to be an authorization for, the initiation of new scientific studies of such remains and associated funerary objects or other means of acquiring or preserving additional scientific information from such remains and objects" (25 USC 3003, 2a).

Nevertheless, in ruling that the Ancient One must be handed over to the anthropologists, Judge Ronald M. Gould devalues and ignores the Native oral histories brought before his court. He values and legitimates only the European American anthropologists' ways of knowing and explicitly dismisses those parts of the law designed to protect Indians from scientists. Indians, then, are put in the dubious position of needing scientists and science to prove that our dead are worthy of being protected from science and scientists.

> . . . we conclude that these accounts are just not specific enough or reliable enough or relevant enough to show a significant relationship of the Tribal Claimants with Kennewick Man. Because oral accounts have been inevitably changed in context of transmission, because the traditions include myths that cannot be considered as factual histories, because the value of such accounts is limited by concerns of authenticity, reliability, and accuracy, and because the record as a whole does not show where historical fact ends and mythic tale begins, we do not think that the oral traditions of interest . . . were adequate to show the required significant relationship of Kennewick Man's remains to the Tribal Claimants (*Bonnichsen, Robson v. United States of America* 14:1607).

One of the archaeological organizations repeatedly declaring its friendship with Indians is the Society for American Archaeology (SAA). This group has sixty-six hundred members and is the largest organization of professional archaeologists in North America. In a 1995 publication, *Ethics in American*

Archaeology, these scientists proclaim: "Ultimately, the relationships we forge must be beneficial to all parties involved . . . If we listen to the concerns of the people we study and tell them ours, perhaps we can develop an affiliation that will work" (Watkins et al. 1995:34).

But, only a short eight years later, we find this same organization of professional archaeologists filing an *amicus curiae* brief used by Judge Gould to justify his attack on NAGPRA's oral history clause.

Despite their promise to "listen to the concerns of the people [they] study," the SAA declares oral history "insufficient to establish a relationship of shared group identity" (SAA 2003:16). Only scientists, the court and the SAA maintain, are capable of knowing extended tribal histories. Scientists and their ways, not Indians and our own histories (oral histories), can legitimately say to whom we are related. In the SAA's world, Indians can prove that we are related to our own ancestors only by assuming anthropological voices and by projecting anthropological imperatives thousands of years into our pasts.

> NAGPRA's stipulation that the group identity must be "shared" implies that Congress intended the relationship between the two groups to be a strong one, i.e., that the two groups must have the same identity. While some cultural change over time is, of course, inevitable, a "shared" identity must in some sense be an identity that has been carried on over time. . . . [G]eographical continuity is not alone a proper criterion. . . . Thus, even if it could be shown that contemporary Native American residents of an area were descended from earlier residents . . . that in itself would not be sufficient to show shared group identity between modern tribes and ancient remains or objects. (SAA 2003:10–11)

If our friends and advocates in the anthropological community succeed in helping federal judges hold that only anthropology is qualified to determine which of our ancestors living Indians are related to, then NAGPRA—for the hundreds of thousands of our dead and over a million funerary objects that have yet to be returned—may be worth little more than the paper it is written on.

The *Bonnichsen, Robson v. United States of America* ruling and the supporting anthropological briefs are particularly galling given that the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) developed to enforce NAGPRA were designed specifically to safeguard against Congress' concern for exactly this scientific attack on Native cultures. The regulations clearly state: "the connection between the claimant and the material being claimed . . . should not be precluded solely because of some gaps in the record"; and that "geographical, kinship . . . linguistic, folklore, oral tradition" all constitute "evidence" of cultural affiliation; and finally "claimants do not have to establish cultural affiliation with scientific certainty" (Dept. of the Interior, CFR 10.14 [d], [e], [f]).

Despite the law and these regulations, Indians are made to endure Judge Gould's (2003:14,1607 fn. 23) explicit thanks for the authority of anthropologists who brazenly insist that their scientific certainty is only and exactly what

is required: "we find of considerable help the explanations of the uses and limits on oral narratives as explained and documented with scholarly authority." And, these anthropologists are quite forthright about their low opinion of Native ways. Nor do they mince words about the rightful place of anthropology as the ultimate arbiter of any disputes between competing cultural traditions. Asserting that these evaluations must "be as objective as possible," Andrei Simic and Harry G. Custred Jr. (2003:8,11) claim: "Scholars have learned that the authenticity, reliability and accuracy of any oral tradition must be determined through appropriate analysis and evaluation. In the absence of careful study, oral traditions cannot be accepted as reliable evidence of past events. . . . The tribes made no attempt to test their oral tradition evidence to determine whether it is authentic, credible and accurate. Because of that failure the evidence and any conclusions based on it should have been rejected."

In an epigraph to this chapter, we heard a Department of Interior official warn, "We don't police NAGPRA. We work with materials sent to us." Clearly, if these anthropologists have their way, and only time will tell whether the courts will continue to reinforce their colonialist power, they alone will "police NAGPRA."[5]

Forever "Culturally Unidentifiable"?

Over 600 of the nation's museums and universities have declared 118,400 Native dead and 852,641 items taken from their graves as "culturally unidentifiable." This means roughly three times the number of Indians who have been returned to their communities by all federally funded institutions except the NMAI remain stranded, away from their graves and families (National NAGPRA Online Databases 2007).

Speaking before the September 2004 NAGPRA Review Committee, Suzan Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee) worried about the consequences of federal regulations being developed to govern so many ancestors. She noted that the draft regulations "characterize human beings as the property of the repositories that hold them." She went on to call for greater consultation with the tribes, pointing out that these relatives are "unidentified" and not "unidentifiable."

Considered together, scientific attacks on the oral history clause of NAGPRA and the placement of the vast majority of our dead into an "unidentifiable" status begin to look like a strategy. Should anthropologists succeed in forcing through a judicial reading of NAGPRA that validates only scientific ways of knowing, we will not see these ancestors returned anytime soon. The stakes for insisting on the thoroughly cultural and political qualities of science and scientists could not be much higher.

The language and numbers cited thus far provide us with a clear sample of objections to repatriation that scientists continue to raise in their writings,

their public pronouncements in the mass media, and in the lawsuits they file. These expressions of scientific discourse serve as our data for the poststructuralist and genealogical analysis that follows. To reiterate, our strategy is to force these claims back into the domain of politics. The goal is not to insist that Indian ways are more truthful, as scored on some grand scale of so-called objectivity, but rather to destroy archaeologists' ability to make such claims.

Victims' Re-collections: How Indians Became "the Archaeological Record"

No one can seriously suggest that had Indians won the nineteenth century wars with Europeans we would now be fighting to have the remains of our dead returned to us. Only with military victories came the power to narrate the history of the continent and the reality of its first inhabitants. Even the name "Indian" is of course the result of Christopher Columbus's misreading his location by about half the span of the globe. Europeans brought their ways of knowing and their understandings of their history with them, and they have almost always used these cultural phenomena as if they were somehow obviously and naturally, indeed universally, applicable. In short, to this day most archaeologists fail to see their own culture as culture, preferring to elevate their own understandings to the status of the real and to demote all others to "mythology," "superstition," and "religion."

"An innate need to know," Landau and Steele tell us, "is universally characteristic of all humans." How are we to read the discrepancy between this assertion of a comprehensive "need" and hundreds of years of Indian statements of exactly the opposite sentiment? When Landau and Steele testify that "physical anthropologists have an interest in knowing just who humans are," are they not putting us on notice that "knowing" is only their domain? There is really no conceivable way that these scientists could not have heard the repeated and angry rebuttals of Native peoples from the Atlantic Coast to the Hawaiian Islands. As Bronco Lebeau (1996), who is repatriation officer for the Lakota, characterizes this attitude, "I want to tell you something sir. My ancestors are not a book. When I die and am placed in the ground I don't want to be dug up and thought of as a book (according to you guys' traditions). We think it is very arrogant or ignorant (could be a combination of both). Where do you guys get off saying you know who we are? We know who we are. We know where we came from."

This need to know is "universally human" but Indians (who these Indian-adoring scientists certainly count as human and cannot avoid hearing from) don't possess this "need" to dig up our dead.

As Lebeau and countless other Indians over the centuries have repeated, "we know who we are" and "we know where we came from." Thus the only credible reading of these scientists' words is that they do not recognize Indians' accounts as worthy of serious consideration. Like Stahl in the 60

Minutes program just discussed, and like generations of benevolent white politicians, Landau and Steele are asserting that apparently unsophisticated Indians do not understand what is good for us. Because we are, like stubborn children, incapable of understanding what we really want, they must force us to accept what they (our parent-like superiors) know is good for us. Since this "need to know" is a "universal human characteristic," it follows that only *uncivilized* or *unenlightened* or *primitive* (and the reader can here choose to insert any of the old colonialist labels) peoples do not recognize the obviously legitimate beseeching of anthropologists who, in the self-aggrandizing ethnocentrism of their colonialist logic, are the only ones capable of "understanding just who humans are." Again, it seems that there is no other way to read these remarks. Either Indians *are* child-like inferiors of anthropologists or the scientists *are* ethnocentric colonialists.

The attack on Indian graves that continues in the pronouncements of Landau and Steele (a colonial attack that Lebeau, in quite un-child-like fashion, clearly recognizes as patronizing) began almost immediately after Europeans set foot in the Americas. We know from their own diaries that in 1620 Pilgrims looted the grave of an Indian child, making off with "sundry of the prettiest things" (Thornton 1998:387). We also know that President Thomas Jefferson opened thousands of Indian graves, "collecting" their contents as "data" for use in his anthropological debates with French intellectuals over the evolutionary potential of the New World environment (Beider 1990:1;1996:168; D. H. Thomas 2000:30–35). Anthropology in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the work of unabashed racists who never tired of pointing out the scholarly qualities of their studies. Like the other flora and fauna of the New World, these thinkers surmised, Indians had to be placed within an Aristotelian and Christian taxonomy of natural history.

Predictably, Indians and the other dark-skinned peoples of the planet fell somewhere below white Europeans in the logic of the Christian Creation. Europeans were thought to most closely resemble the first human beings. That is, they were closest to the perfection of God's Creation. Often this argument was based on "evidence" as suspect as the presumed landing of Noah's Ark. Given that this point was said to be in the Caucasus Mountains of Europe, Caucasians (having been least impacted by distant environments) were assumed to be the most immediate to God's archetype (D. H. Thomas 2000:37). On the other hand, the theory put forth by Dr. Samuel Morton (one of the "early workers" and "pioneers" praised by Ubelaker and Grant) proposed that there were really multiple gene pools derived of multiple creations. This argument avoided the messy business of documenting exactly how the non-white races had deteriorated since the time of the Creation or since their ancestors wandered away from Noah's beached Ark. Morton surmised that the deficiencies of dark-skinned peoples were original, and he made it his business to scientifically document the differences between the races, particularly those relating to intelligence and temperament.

A wealthy Philadelphia physician, Morton could afford to pay for his "evidence." He hired government agents charged with overseeing Indian affairs, army physicians, and willing civilians to steal dead Indians, particularly their heads, from their graves and ship them east to his "cranial library." As Robert Bieder (1996:170) describes this looting, "Grave robbing kept many people busy on the frontier supplying Morton. . . . Angry and horrified Indians tried to prevent the desecration of their graves but such activity often was carried out by military personnel against defeated tribal groups. Epidemics that periodically swept through Indian communities often made the collecting of crania an easy task. Still other crania were unearthed from grave sites long abandoned because of tribal removal and were sent to Morton."

Ultimately, Morton determined that Indians would necessarily die out because we lacked the cranial capacity (which he measured by filling looted skulls with mustard seeds) to survive in a civilized culture. Speaking to the Boston Society of Natural History in 1842, he observed that Indians' "minds seize with avidity on simple truths, while they reject whatever requires investigation or analysis," finally concluding that "he who has seen one tribe of Indians has seen it all" (quoted in D. H. Thomas 2000:41–42).

Although I certainly do not mean to suggest that Landau, Steele, Douglas H. Ubelaker, Lauryn G. Grant, and Stahl share any of Morton's racist delusions, it has to be said that Morton's frequent characterizations of Indians as "simple" and their own patronizing disparagement of Indian ways of understanding are disturbingly similar and complimentary. Recall that Ubelaker and Grant praise Morton as "an early worker" who "assembled large collections." They then go on to argue that the study of our looted dead "can generate information that both dispels erroneous theories and builds a scientific basis for understanding." And there is no question about who these scientists believe to be propagating these "erroneous theories." Ubelaker and Grant remind us, "one can only assume that the next generation of American Indians and the generations thereafter will encounter huge gaps in their knowledge and understanding of the history of their people." Since they know that Indians want to rebury our dead (the subtitle of their article is "Preservation or Reburial?"), and that we have strong oral histories passed from generation to generation, they can only be suggesting, like Morton, that we are too simple to understand the value of their apparently complex scientific work. "They reject whatever requires investigation or analysis," Morton said of his small-brained Indians. Indians, of course, are baffled by the suggestion that we need archaeologists to tell us that the Plains peoples fought among themselves, that the Spanish were cruel colonialists, or that contact with Europeans caused outbreaks of sexually transmitted disease.

With the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, natural history debates moved steadily toward the view that "the races" were arranged according to different levels of progress on an evolutionary scale. In the constant competition for dominance that was thought to characterize all life on the

planet, "natural selection" ensured that the strongest and thus most advanced survived while weaker genetic strains died out. This was to become the logic of "Manifest Destiny," justifying the usurping of the Americas as the inherent destiny of a more advanced European civilization.

Anthropologists of the last half of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries were sure that Indians would soon be extinct and that little could be done to arrest the laws of evolution. Although perhaps sad, it became their academic duty to record these doomed lifestyles and to preserve evidence of the physiological deficiencies leading to Indians' demise for future generations to ogle and ponder.

Given this growing anthropological responsibility, in 1868 the surgeon general of the United States issued an order to troops in the field informing them that

> a craniological collection was commenced last year at the Army Medical Museum and it already includes 143 specimens of skulls. The chief purpose . . . in forming this collection is to aid in the progress of anthropological science by obtaining measurements of a large number of skulls of aboriginal races of North America. Medical officers stationed in Indian country or in the vicinity of ancient mounds or cemeteries . . . have peculiar facilities for promoting this undertaking. They have already enriched the Mortonian and other magnificent craniological cabinets by their contributions and it is hoped that they will evince even greater zeal in collecting for their own museum. (cited in Bieder 1990:319)

Retrieving this federal order, we can see that Indian communities are justifiably outraged when anthropologists and archaeologists refer to our war dead as "our [their] collections." Thousands of bodies and severed heads were removed from battlefields and tribal cemeteries as a direct result of this federal policy during years of armed conflict. Personnel aboard naval vessels patrolling the West Coast also took the opportunity to empty graves when they could be found and shipped the contents eastward. Surely, contemporary members of the scientific community do not expect that Indians will accept that these dead warriors and their families, which amount to morbid spoils of war, are "collections assembled by early workers." As Russell Thornton (1998:394) has argued, "what would be the reaction if the Republic of Vietnam refused to return the remains of American service men and women killed there? What if they said: we want to keep them and study them. They have much scientific value?"

The systematic desecration of Indian graves by generations of anthropologists and their hired help was thought to be nothing less than a calling, and this attitude continued well into the twentieth century. Museums and their wealthy contributors spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for "collection expeditions" into Indian country. These men knew that Indians did not want their dead taken from the ground. They acknowledged this openly in their

"field notes," but they nonetheless bragged unabashedly that theirs was a much higher mission than could be understood by Indians who would have few descendents to complain anyway.

In his 1895 Presidential Address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (titled "The Aims of Anthropology"), Professor Daniel Brinton (1895:244) warned his colleagues that "the time is short and opportunity fleeting." Exhorting the conference to action, he declared that if sufficiently diligent in their labors, anthropologists "will be able at last to offer a conclusion and exhaustive connotation of what man is" (245). Emphasizing the "importance of a prolonged and profound investigation of the few savage tribes who still exist," because "although not as rude and brutish as primitive man they stand nearest to his condition," Brinton (243) left little doubt about what he expected from these men of science. "The generations of the past escape . . . personal investigation, but not our pursuit. We rifle their graves, measure their skulls, and analyze their bones; we carry to our museums the utensils and weapons, the gods and jewels, which sad and loving hands laid beside them; we dig up the foundations of their houses and cart off the monuments which their proud kings set up. Nothing is sacred to us" (1895:244).

Despite ugly disparagement meted out by anthropologists, Indian oral traditions (reduced by scientists to "mythology," "superstition," and "religion") have spawned strong collective memories. Indians know quite well that archaeologists have been claiming that they will soon tell us "just who humans are" (Landau and Steele in 1996) or that they will produce a "conclusion and exhaustive connotation of what man is" (Brinton in 1895) since almost the time that they first began digging up and stealing our dead ancestors. We are quite capable of recalling and noting the unseemly similarities between Brinton's call for "prolonged and profound investigation" and Landau and Steele's assertion that "the need remains for long-term study" of Indian dead. No one should find us at fault if we deduce, after a very long one hundred years have passed, that "long-term" must mean forever. If it did not, scientists (like Walton, who was just cited) wouldn't still be referring to our dead family as their "archaeological material and related data." Indeed, not only are our dead their property, but within the twisted logic of Walton's short memory, "archaeologists [still] have a duty to science to protect" the desecrated bodies that her anthropological predecessors stole from Indian cemeteries and battlefields.

Surely Walton, once asked to remember exactly how preceding generations of scientists acquired what she claims as her "archaeological material and related data," will reconsider her position. After all, if my great-great-grandfather had dug up her great-great-grandfather, and I refused to return him to her, choosing instead to accuse the committee charged with overseeing our dispute of "responding arbitrarily to emotional appeals, rather than with reason," she would be rightly outraged. If I then furthered this arrogance by labeling her wishes for her dead grandfather "politics" while claiming that I

spoke as a nonpolitical proponent of truth, she would not know whether to laugh, cry, or scream. Yet, this is the preposterous position she is advancing.

Walton writes, "Local political considerations must be balanced with maintaining a wider view of prehistory." Indians who want our desecrated, looted ancestors back, and tribes that want to see our war heroes returned to our homelands, are "local political considerations." Walton, on the other hand, is capable of "maintaining" (even in the face of overly emotional Indians pining away for our dead) a less narrow, "wider view." By my (admittedly emotional reading), it does not seem unfair to suggest that Lebeau's rather astonished analysis is an astute one: "Arrogance or ignorance"? "Could be a combination of both."

Given what appears the obvious superiority of the Indian faculty of memory, at least relative to that of these scientists, Professor Mallouf (also cited above) ought to understand our hesitation when he suggests, "through the act of reburial our only hard evidence . . . will be permanently expunged from the archaeological record." To expunge, of course, means to erase or blot out something that has a prior presence. To suggest that reburial will "permanently expunge from the archaeological record" is to give this anthropological invention (the contested history of which we are now tracing) a preexisting and nonpolitical reality.

The archaeological record exists, Mallouf is saying, and Indians are trying to erase it. Mallouf must forget or ignore that what he wants to call an "archaeological record" is a highly contested narration and one that is born in the racist projects of his scientific predecessors. He must forget that this racist science is exactly the same racism that resulted in the widespread anthropological grave-robbing that brought him his "hard evidence" in the first place. Once again Indians have to ask, who is "expunging" what here?

Recall that Mallouf asks, "do they honestly believe that scientific findings, which have proven so important in dispelling the prejudiced European concepts of the 'barbarous savage' are somehow deleterious to their well-being?" Yet barely a hundred years prior, we heard the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science clamor for "the profound and prolonged investigation of savage tribes." Relying on Indian memories (which current generations of anthropologists need not do since their predecessors kept records of their own "barbarous savagery" and stored it in libraries and museums all over the country), it seems obvious that science has, on the contrary, *produced* and not dispelled "prejudiced European concepts." Surely, then, it is compounded foolishness to suggest that dead Indians, removed from their graves in an attempt to prove "prejudiced European concepts," should now be kept from the tribes because they have saved us from these same "prejudiced European concepts"?

Indians, then have a right to inquire, does Mallouf "honestly believe" that his claim that "ancient cultures are brought back to life by archaeologists through studies of their carefully excavated artifacts" does not bear a striking

resemblance to Brinton's proud and racist declaration that he and his colleagues would "cart off" to their museums everything they could get their hands on?

Still more galling, Mallouf, like Walton, has the audacity to suggest that these "questions are best considered outside the sphere of emotional debate." Can he really be proposing that the systematic decapitation of dead warriors and their families by those who took Indian homelands by force, which was then followed by the racist ("scientific") justification of a hundred thirty years of federally sanctioned grave-robbing, with these horrors finally culminating in his own struggle to stop the return of these same violated dead, should for Indian people somehow not be "emotional"? Sadly, it seems these long years of horror, endured and remembered by multiple generations of Indians are the "pressing external influences" that Malouf brushes aside as he urges, "important questions" about repatriation "are best considered outside the sphere of emotional debate."

Malouf's and Walton's attempts to claim an emotionless, moral high ground are uncritical invocations of very old European quests for enlightenment and self-overcoming through ascetic and pious self-discipline. They are also a thinly veiled strategy for erasing the continuing suffering and anger of those Mallouf claims to help. As such, they are the expression of an ongoing colonial attitude that remains unable to instigate a critical self-appraisal. This same emotionless discipline led some of this country's most influential anthropologists to be among the most ghoulish and sneaky of cemetery thieves. For many Indian people, one of the most infamous was Dr. Franz Boas, whose students by the mid-1920s headed every academic anthropology department in the United States (Krupat 1992:66).

Booty from Boas's "collection expeditions" ended up in some of the largest museums in the world, including the Berlin Museum, the Field Museum of Chicago, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and the National Museum of Health and Medicine (formerly the Army Medical Museum) in Washington, D.C. Boas went to great lengths to flatter and ingratiate himself to the tribes of the northwest coast, only to steal their dead or hire his agents to do so. In 1888 while on one of his collection binges in British Columbia, he lamented that "It is most unpleasant work to steal bones from a grave, but what is the use, someone has to do it. I have carefully locked the skeleton into my trunk until I can pack it away. I hope to get a great deal of anthropological material here. Yesterday I wrote the Museum in Washington asking whether they would consider buying skulls this winter for $600; if they will, I shall collect assiduously." (quoted in Riding In 1992:92)

Not long afterward, Boas and his hired hands were nearly cornered. As one of his employees wrote, "some half-breeds at Fort Rupert started quite a disturbance" and, the thief warned, "tried to incite the Indians to shoot me" (Cole 1985:120). During the same "collection" trip, the Cowichan Tribe discovered that their loved ones' graves had been opened and, rather than pulling their

guns, hired a lawyer to press their grievance. Predictably Boas and his helpers escaped any legal sanctions; they also managed to purloin the remains out of British Columbia by falsifying shipping invoices.

In 1899, Boas wrote to Chief Hamasaka insisting that "the Kwakiutl have no better friend than I." Yet by early 1901 he was scolding his agent in the field for not doing his "level best to send to the Museum material enough to justify our continued expenses" (quoted in Cole 1985:159). The Indians were not stupid and before long Boas's agent, by then a known body stealer, was forbidden entry to tribal lands. Nonetheless, and as always owing to Boas's bribes and upbraidings, the contents of a large Indian mausoleum were "collected" in 1904. Boas's agent was able to buy off two of the locals, but, as part of the deal, he agreed to be seen pretending to leave town so as to reduce the vigilance of suspicious tribal members. To seal the backroom agreement, Boas and his agent agreed to wait until most of the tribe had left for seasonal work at the canneries when the theft could be more easily accomplished (158–62).

Even worse than Boas, and among Indian people perhaps the most notorious cemetery thief of all, was Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, still referred to by some tribal elders as "Old Hard Liquor." Despite his infamy in Indian country, Hrdlicka was showered with the praise of his anthropological colleagues both during his lifetime and posthumously. Another of Ubelaker and Grant's "early workers and pioneers," his list of honors and accomplishments includes being elected the first president of the American Association of Physical Anthropology and being appointed chair and curator of the Anthropology Department at the Smithsonian Institution. He was elected president of the Washington Academy of Sciences, was awarded the Huxley Memorial Medal of the Royal Institute of Anthropology of Great Britain and Ireland, and even had one of the U.S. liberty ships built during World War II commissioned in his name. In 1969 his countrymen at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences dedicated their entire Annual Anthropological Congress to his memory on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth. The same year, the United States National Museum opened its new Anthropological Exhibit Hall complete with a celebratory bust of Hrdlicka looking down upon the dedication.

In 1904, Professor Hrdlicka published his *Directions for Collecting Information and Specimens for Physical Anthropology.* Perhaps recognizing that his "instructions for travelers" might prove to be too gruesome for the less than anthropologically inclined to carry out, Hrdlicka sought to steel them with praise for the coming atrocities.

> [T]here are . . . men to whom science has often been indebted, whose good will, when opportunities arise, might result in much benefit to physical anthropology. Among these are foreign missionaries and teachers, particularly among other peoples than the whites; explorers, primarily interested in other sciences; miners, prospectors, and surveyors and engineers of railroads; men engaged in trades

that take them into virgin regions; and travelers of means and leisure. But it lies in the power of every intelligent person to call attention to the discovery of an ancient burial place or cemetery, or to prevent destruction of specimens and direct them to where they can be made useful. . . . The National Museum is always ready to respond to telegraphic or other requests for vessels or preservatives. (1904:23)

Although he refers to "ancient burial place[s]," Hrdlicka makes it clear that the newly deceased are not only valued by his institution but even preferred. He urges, "[t]he fresher the product the better; but even if decomposition is advancing the body is still of undiminished value" (1904:17). He provides instructions for combating the smell and emphasizes that he is "absolutely wanting in such parts of the body as the brain, or other soft organs and in racial fetal material" (6–7). Dead children and babies, or as Hrdlicka prefers to say, "embryological and infant material," are especially prized. This is because "[i]t is this material alone from which may be learned racial differences or similarities in the early phases of development, and it is this material alone which can give instructive developmental series of brains, bones of the skull and skeleton, teeth, etc., for Museum exhibits" (17).

Admitting that robbing Indian graves, including those of children and babies is certain to produce outrage (labeling his defilement "delicate and difficult"), he nonetheless went on to provide precise and macabre instructions for extracting Indian brains.

In taking out the brain, make a scalp cut from ear to ear over the top of the head and push and dissect the skin backward and forward until most of the skull-cap is exposed. Mark your proposed cut with a knife. Cut the bone right above the supraorbital ridges and low along the sides, finishing below the occipital protuberance. Use all care not to injure the brain (it will be of value, however, even if slightly injured). To avoid cuts of the brain substance do not saw the bone wholly through, but help to detach the cap with hammer and chisel. . . . When the skull cap is lifted, cover the sharp edges of the back part of the skull with cotton or cloth. . . . Begin to remove the brain from the front. Cut nerves and, finally, the spinal cord . . . and helping with one hand from within, receive the brain into the palm of the other hand.

If there is any possibility of doing so, weigh the brain immediately after extraction. (1904:16, emphasis in original)

This revered man of anthropology concludes his instructions by coaching his ghouls to hide their work by wiring the skull back together and by "combing the hair over all." Finally, he attaches a copy of the "color standards" published by Pierre-Paul Broca (yet another of Ubelaker and Grant's "pioneers"). It is important, Hrdlicka explains, for the brain to be labeled with the exact skin color of the corpse.

Hrdlicka was certainly not above carrying out his own thefts. In 1929 he wrote in his "field notes" of an irate widow "who appeared to be provoked" as he made off with her husband's body. He also recorded that he opened graves where "the remains are too fresh yet," and of packing bones in "a new heavy pail thrown out probably on the occasion of the last funeral" (quoted in Pullar 1994:21–22). In another self-recorded atrocity, Hrdlicka went so far as to help stage a fake burial for a deceased Greenlander (whose son was fully taken in by the sham) only to later boil the flesh from the bones that he then studied and displayed. The duped son learned of the real fate of his father only after he came across his skeleton years later in a museum display case (Preston 1989:71). But Hrdlicka's most well-known transgressions took place between 1931 and 1936 on Kodiak Island in Alaska. The reason for this notoriety, however, has little to do with the extent or specific character of the plunder that took place there. Rather, the struggle for the dead of Larsen Bay, Alaska is infamous because it involved the Smithsonian and because the institution's Anthropology Department struggled mightily to avoid returning what two of their members noted amounted to "nearly 5 percent of the Smithsonian's skeletal collection from North America" and thus threatened the "loss of an important biological collection" (Bray and Killion 1994:5).

In the fall of 1987, the chair of the department responded to tribal elders' request for the return of the relatives that Hrdlicka had removed from their graves sixty years prior. The patronizing tone and claims to power contained in Dr. Kaeppler's letter are by now familiar. "As you are no doubt aware, the issue of deaccession is a complex one, which the Smithsonian must consider in light of the Institution's responsibility to hold its collections in trust for the benefit of all people, not just discrete interest groups. Before we can seriously consider such a request, we must be presented with compelling legal reasons justifying the transfer of remains from our collections" (quoted in Bray and Killion 1994:188).

Kaeppler labels the Indians' request an "issue of deaccession." Taken literally, what this narration says is that Indian dead have always been "accessible" to her and to her colleagues, and the people of Larsen Bay want to terminate her "access." By this logic the whole of existence, as long as it can be said to have scientific value, could be claimed for anthropological "access." *Access,* as Kaeppler uses the term, is not something violently assumed by those with the power to insist upon it. Yet, and this is also now all too familiar, Kaeppler puts us on notice that those of us who disagree with her right to "access" had better be ready with "compelling legal reasons." By claiming to be the champion "of all people," Kaeppler is of course claiming that her motives are not political maneuverings; but if her actions were not political ones (if she really spoke for some selfsame category, "all people"), would she really need the weight of politically legislated laws ("compelling legal reasons") to protect what she must secretly believe to be *her* people's possessions from other (Indian) people?

Once again, we see an anthropologist move to assume the dominant and defining voice and to violently erase pleas born of other understandings. Larsen Bay concerns for dead Larsen Bay family members are inscribed as merely those of "a discreet interest group." Anyone who watches the news or reads a newspaper knows that "interest groups" are made of unscrupulous characters lurking in the halls of government trying to influence legislation by writing checks on bloated corporate bank accounts. Kaeppler's political strategy is clear. She must reduce the Indians to one of many "discreet interests groups" who have, because of political self-interest, challenged the nobility of her "Institution's responsibility to hold its collections in trust for the benefit of all people."

Think about this. There is no doubt that Kaepler's predecessor ransacked the Larsen Bay burial grounds. This is not in dispute. Hrdlicka diligently recorded his pillaging. Nonetheless, as is common to the political power of these scientists who claim to speak on behalf of truth, Kaeppler guards her own by insisting that anthropological concerns are politically disinterested and objective ones. She has to insist that her political positions are not political at all, that they are simply and obviously common sense, and she is more than willing to patronize the elders who dare to get in the way of her claims to represent objective reality.

Notice the introductory clauses that open the paragraph: "As you are no doubt aware, the issue of deaccession is a complex one. . . ." To point out that the tribe "is no doubt aware," is to forcefully call their attention to something that should have been obvious and that they therefore could only foolishly have missed. One only calls attention to the obvious if one believes that her partners in the conversation are not up to seeing it for themselves. This is why Kaeppler points out to the apparently unsophisticated Indians that "the issue . . . is a complex one."

On the other hand, perhaps Kaeppler's parent-like chiding of the Larsen Bay elders is simply designed to deceive by insisting that what is not really obvious is obvious. In other words, she knows very well that her scientific claims are political claims, but she has sought to initiate a bullying rhetoric of persuasion by talking down to the tribal council. After all, if things were as obvious as she claims she would not have to speak only one sentence later of those "compelling legal reasons."

The same patronization is apparent in another choice of words: "Before we can seriously consider such a request. . . ." Why is the Tribal Council not to be taken seriously? How can we read this qualifying phrase as other than an assertion that Larsen Bay leaders do not even understand what is necessary to "be taken seriously." Why would Kaepller need to point out how one goes about being taken seriously to anyone who she perceived to be her equal? And why label the Indian request: "*such* a request"? Why not just "your request" or "the tribe's request"? To say "*such* a request" is to insist that it is not among normal requests (those that *are* to "be taken seriously"). It is also a maneuver that forces

these Indian requests to stand out from all other requests. The Larsen Bay request is special in Kaeppler's eyes and not because she has any basis for claiming that these bodies came from other than a Larsen Bay tribal burial ground. Without saying so explicitly, she has claimed as her own prerogative, the right to narrate what is commonplace and obvious and what is extraordinary.

The tribe's request, then, is "such a request" precisely because in the world Kaeppler inherited (where she and her anthropologist colleagues have always enjoyed the power to narrate truth), her status (she who speaks for "the benefit of all people") is so obvious as to apparently not even require explanation. After all, is it not *only* a power so taken-for-granted as to not require *any* explicit justification that could allow Kaeppler to not appear ridiculous to herself when she moves to label the families of Hrdlicka's victims "a discreet interest group"?

The crux of the problem, then, is that these naive Natives have the audacity not to recognize the assumed obviousness of Kaeppler's status. This indiscretion (forcing her to make her power explicit) is what makes the Indian request special, as in "*such* a request." In placing the Indians' failure to pay homage to her power beyond the realm of what is normal, she insists upon normalizing her anthropological discourse and cultural setting as the legitimate forum where requests must be made (or at least those that are "to be taken seriously"). Native families finally reburied approximately a thousand of Hrdlicka's victims in October of 1991, four years after the tribe's request and two years after the NMAI act finally provided Kaeppler with her "compelling legal reasons."

Yet another of the nation's most famous anthropologists, and one who is also infamous among many Indians, was Dr. George Dorsey. Dorsey was awarded Harvard's first Ph.D. in anthropology and went on to become the curator of the Chicago Field Museum. In part, Dorsey's infamy stems from his penchant for seeking out and robbing the graves of Indian spiritual leaders. One of these violations took place in 1897 in Tlingit country.

> At ten o'clock we started toward the east again. We . . . [were] disappointed in not finding the grave of a Shaman or medicine man. . . . We had been slowly working away at the oars, for the wind had completely died away, and were rounding a point on Duke Island, when we espied one of these little houses perched far up on a rocky point which was piled high with innumerable drift. We were soon ashore . . . and found ourselves well repaid for our pains. The house was about thirty years old, and its roof was covered with a thick growth of moss. . . . Removing a portion of the one of the walls, we could see the body, which had been carefully tied into a neat bundle with stout cedar-bark rope. . . . Removing the wrapping still further, we disclosed the desiccated body of a woman doctor. In one hand she clasped a long knife, its steel blade entirely wasted away, leaving only the handle. In the other hand was a beautifully carved wooden pipe inlaid with finely polished abalone shells. (Dorsey 1898:172–73)

The corpse was photographed and the gruesome picture has been widely circulated ever since. She and the contents of her grave were labeled "Field Museum accession 592." Later in the same trip, Dorsey was arrested along the Oregon shore of the Columbia River for desecrating Indian graves. Although he promised to make restitution, he was later criticized in a British Columbia newspaper after local Indians "found almost every grave in the neighborhood of Virago Sound and North Island rifled and the coffin boxes strewn about" (Cole 1985:175). A published letter from a local minister reported that "[i]n one case some hair, recognized as having belonged to an Indian doctor, and a box which had contained a body, were found floating in the sea" (175). Dorsey and Boas were rivals, and Boas felt that Dorsey often intruded into "his territory." Thus he delighted in his competitor's difficulties, bragging that he had robbed hundreds of graves but had never caused the sort of problems that the more reckless Dorsey had stirred up.

"Storing and Protecting Data"

Indians have great difficulty reconciling the kind of steal, hide, and run operations carried out by Boas, Hrdlicka, and Dorsey with the claims to careful storage and cataloging made by modern archaeologists. Recall that Mallouf refers to our ancestors as "carefully excavated artifacts," and Landau and Steele characterize these dead as having been "*assembled* by early workers" like Hrdlicka and Morton. Similarly, Amy Danise (2000), an anthropologist from the Nevada State Museum (NSM), reacts with indignation to suggestions that scientists are not good stewards, claiming the NSM's bodies are always "carefully stored."

Scientists opposing reburial rarely miss an opportunity to congratulate themselves on the detailed and immaculate ends to which they go to document and care for Indian remains, even referring to this effort, as does Dr. Walton, as her "obligation to protect . . . archaeological material and related data." For many Native people, these claims are both bothersome and amusing. First of all, they assume that the scientists' concern for "careful storage" makes the desecration of our dead less revolting. But the claims themselves are also difficult to believe. If the most famous of anthropologists had to evade and deceive as they went about their "collecting," why should we assume that innumerable and less famous body snatchers were any less harried and any more careful in their "field work"?

How can these dead Natives be both "carefully excavated and assembled" and "culturally unidentifiable"? And if after all these years Indians are now being told that these museums and laboratories have little or no clues as to the identities or origins of nearly 120,000 bodies, on what basis are we to believe that they have been fawned over by generations of caring anthropological hands?

Douglas Preston (1989), who was former manager of the Department of Publications at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, has written of opening the door to his office and being "nearly knocked down by the smell of mothballs." Investigating further, he soon learned that he shared an adjoining wall with the Anthropology Department and that the "cheap plasterboard" was no match for the overwhelming odor of "paradichlorobenzene crystals" that were used to keep the bodies "free of insects." To his further dismay, Preston (66,71) soon learned that there were "stacks of human bones and mummified body parts" that "languished unstudied, for the most part, in museum drawers."

Don't anthropologists need to know whom they have and where they came from, if our dead are to be of some use to them? Otherwise, won't any old body do? They need dead Indians, they claim, but then they tell us that they do not know which Indians they have, where they came from, or when their graves were disturbed. How is this "careful study"?

Consider the following example of scientific rigor as revealed in a NAGPRA Notice of Inventory Completion published by the University of Nebraska. The university admits to holding at least 313 individuals and knows all of the following about them, "At an unknown date, human remains . . . were recovered from an unknown location by person(s) unknown under unknown circumstances. They were acquired by the University of Nebraska State Museum at an unknown date under unknown circumstances. No known individual was identified. . . . The assigned number 68/1929 has no known documentation" (*Federal Register* 2000, 65:191:58805)

Why should anthropologists be allowed to have it both ways? Are Native dead "hard evidence," "carefully excavated artifacts," and an "archaeological record," that can be "brought back to life," or are they "culturally unidentifiable"? If the anthropologists don't know what cultures these dead are derived from, how can they simultaneously claim that continuing to hold them will "ensure that this history is not lost"?

If scientists really want to be friends with Indians, they ought to simply admit to the shameful quality of much of what they now wish to call "careful storage." More importantly, they should not use the shabby record keeping of their predecessors as a tool to stall the return of our dead. They should help Indians get into their institutions. They should listen to what our elders have to say about whatever records do exist. And they should not dismiss our oral recollections as "myths," or as not "factual." They should never use their own uncertainty as a strategy for holding onto our stolen ancestors. Indians should decide where Indian dead belong.

An additional impediment to repatriation is that NAGPRA does not legally force anthropologists and museums to return the ancestors of those tribes that were never federally recognized or that have had their recognition terminated. This is a much larger problem in some states—for example, California and Ohio—than it is in others. In central California, the ferocity of

the genocide campaigns carried out by European Americans in search of gold and land left small numbers of survivors who now lack the necessary federal recognition to recover the victims. Needless to say, relying on the extent of the genocide carried out by their ancestors as a tool to avoid returning the bodies of those who were wiped out to their closest living descendants is not a strategy that will ingratiate anthropologists to Native people.

In addition, legally mandated consultations must be genuine and carried out with due diligence. I was personally shocked to read that the National Museum of Health and Medicine of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology had a Modoc man identified as the "brother of Sconchin" and that the museum claimed "consultation with the Klamath Indian Tribe of Oregon . . . has not identified a lineal descendent" (*Federal Register* 2000 65 [251]:83082). The Modoc and Klamath peoples have been intermarrying for well over 100 years (since we were forced onto the same reservation in the 1860s), and many descendents of Sconchin live on our reservation.

Still more troubling, the *Federal Register* notice indicated that the remains were "collected from an unknown area in Oregon or California referred as 'the lava beds.'" The lava beds are of course a national monument and the site where Captain Jack, about 50 warriors, and many more women and children made their heroic stand against the United States military in the 1872–73 war. Fortunately our tribal NAGPRA officer does her job well, and she was very aware of the museum's claim. However, the point remains that Indians have little basis for believing that the museums and universities have the will or capacity to tell us in earnest whose relatives they have locked up.

Once again, the words of the Department of Interior official that are an epigraph for this chapter bear repeating: "We don't police NAGPRA. We work with materials sent to us." Although we now have federal law on our side, Indians are still very much at the mercy of museums, universities, and courts.

One common response to the embarrassing history I have presented thus far, particularly coming from anthropologists who claim to be advocates for Indians, is that they are unfairly smeared by the mistakes of their racist predecessors. Recall, for example, Killion and Bray's claim that "since the conscious shedding of the colonial mantle anthropologists have frequently assumed the role of advocate for the disenfranchised with whom they traditionally work." Yet the reality is that this "advocacy" did not stop archaeologists and physical anthropologists from continuing to dig up Indians until the threat of legal sanctions contained in NAGPRA forced them to reevaluate their actions.

Sometimes, in the days before NAGPRA, Indians were moved to take things into their own hands. For example, Vine Deloria (1972/1994:13–14) has written of an occasion in 1971 when members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) confronted archaeologists in an Indian burial ground who were instructing members of a Minneapolis area "Talented Youth" group about how to rob graves. Arriving on the scene after five weeks of digging had

already occurred, the AIM members physically removed shovels from the groups' hands, filled in graves, and burned archaeologists' notes. In other instances, lands long inhabited by the tribes (and therefore full of old villages and burials) were made into national parks, thus guaranteeing federal protection of grave desecrations by university and museum personnel.

One particularly outrageous example occurred in Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado where NAGPRA will soon force the repatriation to the southwestern tribes of more than 1,500 dead Natives and more than 4,800 items taken from their graves. The *Federal Register* Report required by NAGPRA (1999 64 [166]:46936–949) is a full 28 pages long and details "excavations" lasting from 1909 to 1990. With the blessing of the National Park Service, the interred remains of an entire civilization was (as we heard Brinton promise that it would be) dug up and "carted off" to southwestern museums and universities.

It is also untrue that modern anthropologists have only been interested in digging up ancient burials. The Wisconsin Archaeological Society has opened graves of the Menominee that contained such "ancient artifacts" as combs, earrings, and brooches. In 1972, The State Museum of Pennsylvania violated the final resting places of 86 Native people, removing snuffboxes, mouth harps, perfume bottles, cuff links, spectacles, coins, mirrors, thimbles, pieces of shoes, a vanity box, and even a crucifix from the graves. In 2001, NAGPRA forced the Nevada State Museum to admit that it held the bones of a very unancient Native person as well as the shoes, clothing ("four different fabric types"), and ring she wore to her funeral. The NSM scientists even took the kitchen knife that she was buried with (*Federal Register* 2000 65, 207:63886–87; 2001 66,58:16490–92; 2001 66,18:7398).

New burials were not placed off-limits to archaeologists until the passage of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979. Nevertheless, as the name of the act suggests, the law was difficult for Indian people to celebrate. Although it stated that "no item shall be treated as an archaeological resource . . . unless such item is at least 100 years of age" (16 U.S.C. 470aa-470mm. Public Law 96–95:10/31/1979), it also gave unprecedented legal codification to scientific narrations of Natives' graves. "The term 'archaeological resource' means any material remains of past human life or activities which are of archaeological interest . . . such determination shall include, not be limited to: pottery, basketry, bottles, weapons, projectiles, tools, structures, or portions of structures, pit houses, rock paintings, rock carvings, intaglios, graves, human skeletal materials, or any portion of the forgoing items" (16 US.C. 470aa-470mm. Public Law 96–95:10/31/79). Indeed the law is best read as a political maneuver designed to combat growing Indian organization against grave robbing, in part by attempting to distance archaeology from its long history of politically damaging, Frankenstein-like habits.

If the phrase "any material remains . . . which are of archaeological interest" is not sufficient indication of the real purpose of the act, other passages

dispel any potential confusion about the motives of the archaeological community. No one should be deluded into thinking that the statute was born of a moral awakening. On the contrary, the tactic was to legally institutionalize scientific discourse and to reinforce the power of the scientific community to define its ways and its desires as *universally* human ways. "Any person may apply to the Federal land manager for a permit to excavate or remove any archaeological resources . . . and to carry out activities associated with such excavation and removal. . . . The activity is undertaken for the purpose of furthering archaeological knowledge in the public interest" (16 U.S.C. bb). Like "Old Hard Liquor" had done seventy years earlier, in his *Directions for Collecting Information and Specimens for Physical Anthropology,* his descendants were still calling for "any person" to "remove any archaeological resources." As late as 1979 (long after the racists that they resent being connected to were dead), archaeologists succeeded in legally institutionalizing their still prevalent habit of looting Indian graves ("furthering archaeological knowledge"), labeling our ancestors "archaeological resources," and insisting that this outlandish behavior was done for the benefit of everyone everywhere ("in the public interest"). From an Indian perspective, then, there is no good reason to accept that the desires of modern archaeologists are qualitatively different from those of earlier generations of scientists. We understand very well that only NAGPRA forced the cessation of scientific violations of Indian graves.

Given this despicable history, a history which, as these examples illustrate, extends almost until the moment when NAGPRA became federal law, one might be tempted to believe that moral people will get in line to help Indians recover our dead. But as I have argued throughout this book, our dead are not "objective" "essences" that any right-minded person can see. And our antagonists are everyday spinning and emphasizing their own stories, stories designed to maintain their power and safeguard their centuries old assault on Indian people and our ways. This struggle is discursive warfare, and no pursuit of objective reality will save us from these scientists.

In the opening pages of this chapter, we heard an outspoken UCLA anthropologist refer to Indians as "an allegedly oppressed minority." He went on to chastise his contemporaries who have had second thoughts about the role they have played in these colonialist politics for "abandoning scholarly ethics in favor of being 'respectful and sensitive' to non-scholars and anti-intellectuals." Like many of the fifteen hundred members of The American Committee for the Preservation of Archaeological Collections, which he founded, Meighan's political strategy is to make scholarly ethics into a noble struggle against the unenlightened peoples of the planet.

In the contexts created through this discourse, science is held up as the single best way to understand existence, and all other forms of understanding are relegated to the realm of myth, superstition, and religious backwardness. As Meighan said, "the real issue is who disowns the real past so they can sell you their mythology or other 'received wisdom' that cannot be challenged by evidence."

We know from chapters 2 and 3 that the nineteenth-century claim to have severed knowledge from religious faith fails to adequately interrogate the metaphysical desires that seventeenth-century progenitors of science imported from theology and Greek philosophy. But the problem here is greater than simply not recognizing the conditions of possibility of one's own sense-makings. The much larger intellectual shell-game contained in attempts to roll back Indian claims to Indian dead by branding our outrage "religious" is that those wielding these attacks do not recognize that they are smearing us with the blood of political slogans fashioned during the European Enlightenment—a massive and foreign sociopolitical reorganization that Indians had absolutely nothing to do with. We can make this point by recalling two previously cited assaults on the ostensibly religious qualities of Indian beliefs.

Quoting a host of archaeologists, the October 22, 1996 front page of the *New York Times* announced: "Indian Tribes Creationists Thwart Archaeologists." The article went on to insist that "adhering to their own creationist accounts as adamantly as biblical creationists adhere to the book of Genesis, Indian tribes have stopped important archaeological research on hundreds of prehistoric remains." We also heard the president of the Friends of America's Past organization threaten the NAGPRA committee with lawsuits for "violating the first amendment" should they "use religious beliefs to make secular decisions." Referring to a "growing chasm between tribal views and the scientific and public interest in the past," President Hawkinson went on to equate her organization's call for "meaningful standards" with "common sense."

The power of these arguments to move public opinion stems from their artful enlisting of victorious political rhetoric taken over from much older European political struggles, struggles subsequently institutionalized into the founding documents of the American Republic. Virtually every American has been taught something of the cultural clashes contained in the overcoming of the European Dark Ages by the European Enlightenment. From the earliest days of our formal education, Americans are taught to admire the wisdom of those who constitutionally separated church and state. Nearly every American child also knows of the religious fanatics who settled the east coast of North America and burned innocents at the stake. Indeed the logic of this lunacy is so well-known that we now refer to any unjust inquiry as "a witch-hunt." This popular culture is reinforced by less well-known but still substantial understandings of the horrors perpetrated under the theological authority of the European Inquisition. Most Americans know, for example, that church leaders persecuted Galileo for suggesting that the earth revolves around the sun.

If this history is insufficient to remind us of how far we have progressed, there is never any shortage of religious zealots about who delight in shouting offensive buffoonery. (Recall, for example, the Reverends Fallwell and Robertson who asserted in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World

Trade Center and the Pentagon that God was angry with Americans for allowing abortion, pornography, feminism, the American Civil Liberties Union, and a host of other evils.)

A potent political strategy of archaeologists, then, is to make Indian accounts "religious" and to make all religion into the "religion" that reasonable people will be happy to be rescued from by science. This European history, complete with villains and heroes, is the textual condition of possibility of the power of the accusation: "Creationist!" Indeed the outrage contained in the article makes sense to the readers of the *New York Times* precisely because they understand these other stories, logics, and fears. This history, with all of its pageantry, amounts to a cultural lore that doubles as interpretive context. The term *Creationist!* has significance because it contains—what Jacques Derrida taught us in chapter 3 to call "traces"—of these other popularly understood cultural scenes and logics.

But, if Indians had their own ways and their own understandings of our dead for centuries before they ever came to know Europeans and their notions of "religious" and "secular," then these anthropologists' political maneuvers are not intellectually rigorous. Why should Indian understandings that predate the arrival of Europeans by thousands of years be awarded significance only on the basis of European history? Can we really assume that pre-contact Natives' understandings of their dead were identified as being *religious* in the post-contact sense of that term? Or is it not considerably more plausible that a variety of Indian peoples lived their lives by doing what they thought best without labeling some behaviors "religious" and other behaviors "secular"? Does it not make much more sense to assume that labeling very un-European, Indian ways of knowing as "creationist" and "religious" has given these old ways a modern-day flavor that tribes who did not yet know any Christians would not have recognized?

Read literally, the *New York Times* piece asserts that the many different tribes were all busy preparing (as part of a universal seven-day week) for the particularly religious day when a single pan-Indian deity rested after creating everything for everyone during the prior six, not-so-religious days ("as biblical creationists adhere to the book of Genesis"). I cannot expect the *New York Times* to literally mean what they write. But I am upset that this prestigious publication has intervened to further the political agenda of scientists whose scholarship is so poor as to lack the capacity to see *the founding political history* of their own people as the very possibility of their current claims to be nonpolitical.

Why should European blood spilled in European battles for European causes (struggles over their "religion") be uncritically allowed to politically encircle much older Native stories, stories told by generations of pre-contact tellers who never learned to fear the Grand Inquisitor or felt compelled to take a stand on Darwinian theory? Indian understandings were not first forged in the history of Europe, and Indian understandings of our dead must not be neatly subsumed and therefore dismissed by what generations of

Americans have quite appropriately learned to oppose as "religious." Indian understandings may be many things, but they are not reducible to the ongoing folly of Christendom. They *are not* the European "religion" overcome by European "Enlightenment."

This unwillingness or inability to intellectually interrogate the colonialist imposition found in the conflation of European political history and pre-contact Native understandings is signaled by the ease with which, in an earlier passage, we heard Hawkinson reduce the maneuver to one of "common sense." "In plain English, if you use religious beliefs to make secular recommendations, the decisions resulting from your recommendations are vulnerable to challenge for violating the first amendment. . . . It is time for the committee to bridge the growing chasm between tribal views and the scientific and public interest in the past. We must uphold the constitution, create meaningful standards, and apply them fairly using common sense" (2001).

Hawkinson is asserting her power in no uncertain terms. She is warning the committee, lecturing them, threatening, and insulting this distinguished group that includes venerated Native elders and spiritual leaders. Her narration and her history, she insists, are the only possible "common" ground ("the scientific and public interest in the past"), and the indignity she feels from the challenge ("a growing chasm") to her power is detectable in her tone ("In plain English. . . .").

The irony of claiming European political history as her basis for not acting politically, of being "scientific," borders on the absurd when Hawkinson insists that the founding political document of the American republic should be obviously and easily recognized as "common" ground. How can someone whose profession is to study cultures fail so very miserably in her analysis of what is firstly and fundamentally a struggle between competing cultures? Why is the Constitution "common" when not only different cultures but *different nations* are at the table?

The arrogance and ignorance found in these archaeological attacks on Indian ways is not always a matter of conflating European history with all peoples' histories. Often scientists simply move to, as we heard Butler warn in the early pages of this chapter, "erase" the perspectives of cultural others. Recall that Hawkinson instructed the NAGPRA committee members that they "may not accept evidence that links religious stories with historical events to show that those religious beliefs point to a pre-history that is true." If "history" is true then "pre-history," by definition, is what exists before the real authorities arrive. Archaeological writings are replete with this insult.

These scientists do not say "Native understandings" or "Indian history." On the contrary, Indian understandings of the centuries that passed before the rather recently ashore anthropologists got off of the boat, are deemed "pre-history." To say that those times are "pre-history" is literally to say that there were no Europeans around to correctly record them. ("The real issue is who disowns the real past," Meighan asserts.) If the only stories that count as "true"

stories are the stories that make sense to the descendents of the European conquerors, then surely no one should suggest with a straight face that this fight has ever been about anything but naked power. What other plausible explanation is there for Hawkinson's organization naming themselves "Friends of America's Past"? If this struggle were not simply about protecting their own power, would these anthropologists be both "friends of America's past" and hell-bent on erasing the Native cultures that are that same past?

Genealogy as Political Work

Social scientists, politicians, policy writers, and anyone interested in NAGPRA have a difficult but clear-cut choice to make. Because Native people are forcefully insisting on reclaiming Native dead, and because these relatives were taken from their graves against the wishes of multiple generations of Native people, there really is no middle ground to be had. Either archaeology came with the colonizers and has its metaphysical imperatives rooted in their history, or it is a universally superior form of assessing the true significance of dead Indians and should be forced on unwilling and still unsophisticated, living Indians.

On the other hand, to stand with the tribes in this struggle is to acknowledge the cultural, historical, and political qualities of scientific desires. Science, here, cannot be the basis for politics. Science *is politics*. Indeed it is precisely the failure to critically interrogate the history of inherited metaphysical desires—like those we heard structuralist sociologists defend in each of the previous chapters—that has caused this long, ugly, cultural clash.

One wonders how Patricia Hill-Collins (1997:3–6) might have us understand the fight over NAGPRA, even as she blames racism on "faculty members whose objectivity failed." Objectivity? Native peoples' struggles with anthropologists point unequivocally to the danger of continued faith in this cultural fantasy. Her calls for renewing and strengthening this faith are exactly the opposite of what might finally solve this intercultural debacle.

Jonathan H. Turner's (1998a:256) urging to "push ideology to the background" is equally useless. Whose ideology? Not only do many Native people see science as ideology, we tend to see it as imposed ideology. It is an ideology of self-loathing discipline in the pursuit of "no ideology," which, as I have repeatedly said, is a self-contradicting dream sustainable only through theology-like faith.

Similarly, Peter Berger's (1963/2005:3–4) boast that "the sociologist tries to see what is there" despite "hopes or fears concerning what he may find" has no meaningful application to this political debate. Sociology is a powerful way of knowing, but it is a child of the European Enlightenment and it comes with deeply ingrained European assumptions about humans and existence. To speak in this intercultural context of overcoming hopes and fears in pursuit of

"what is [really] there" makes no more sense than calling for guidance from Olympic Gods or praying to Christ on his cross.

Foucault (1971/1977:148) warned, "the metaphysician" will try to place his or her own "present needs at the origin," seeking to "convince us of an obscure purpose that seeks its realization at the moment it arises." NAGPRA-opposing anthropologists do exactly this. These scientists want us to believe that their own metaphysical desires gather their urgency from needs that have always been present for everyone everywhere. "An innate need to know is universally characteristic of all humans," we heard Landau and Steele implore.

Genealogy, Friedrich Nietzsche and Foucault teach, differs from traditional history in that it does not see a theme or spirit in the passing of time. There is no truth, no "obscure purpose," no "what is there, despite hopes and fears," being slowly uncovered through scientific discipline and responsibility to any imagined intellectual finality. Genealogists (and poststructuralist sociology) can confront and embrace this complexity. Genealogy can help us understand this complexity because it "seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection . . . the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault 1971/1977:148).

I have waited until now to report recorded sentiments of fellow Klamath tribal members (who graciously agreed to submit to my questions and to the tape recorder) because I wanted first to resurrect and interrogate genealogy that is erased in an interpretive context that is too often simply assumed when non-Natives pass judgment on Native arguments. With this genealogy, I seek to transform this debate from one imagined to be "on behalf of truth," into one about the "political role it plays" (Foucault 1977:133).

Klamath Narrations

The Klamath tribes have had, and continue to have, our share of outrageous interactions with scientists, scientific institutions, and relic hunters. In the early 1980s, one of our tribal cemeteries was looted.[6] My great-grandparents, great-uncles, and many other relatives are buried there. Not long afterward, someone was foolish and bold enough to approach my uncle and offer to sell him "an Indian skull." Not very many years after that, the Smithsonian finally repatriated the severed heads of our executed war leaders. The University of California at Davis still refuses to return one of our dead to the tribes, claiming that our culture and heritage officers are not competent to determine the cultural affiliation of a burial that the university's scientists raided in the 1970s.

In the course of a March 2002 interview, the former head of our Culture and Heritage Department asks incredulously of the anthropologist leading the resistance to the return of our ancestor, "this guy is telling us what kind of burials our people did?" The current director adds, "I call it grave robbing;

they call it archaeology." And our tribal NAGPRA officer concurs, "they take them away from us but it is our responsibility to prove that they were stolen." Summing up what he takes to be a long and egregious history of disrespect for Klamath understandings of Klamath history, the longtime director of the department, who was by now angry, concludes: "It'd be like me going to Ireland and telling them St. Patrick's Day is full of shit. I don't have the gall to do that. I'm not going to go into somebody's home and say what you know is bull."

The anthropological behaviors and attitudes contained in these and in other related incidents are the extended context for the following comments from five additional tribal members recorded in a separate interview.[7] The first passage is from a female elder who a moment later was in tears.

> It's arrogance, very arrogant! Who are they (!)? Why do they measure thereself with the creator (!)? And they know there's something bigger than them. Everybody (pause), anybody with an ounce of common sense has to know there is something big that keeps things going . . . I think the arrogance comes out of fear.

From a 35-year-old male:

> I think they're barbarians (pause), the scientists. They're absolutely out of their place digging people up. . . . They got no place doing what they are doing now; they can't just go around digging up old graves and taking the remains and putting them in museums where they don't belong, because they don't belong there. That wasn't their home; that wasn't their purpose. . . . It doesn't make any difference what somebody did [thousands of] years ago. Know why? Because they don't know what they're doing today. Why would it make any bit of difference what somebody did [thousands of] years ago, if they [scientists] can't see what they're doing now? They got no grasp of what they are doing right now. They mean nothing.

From a 40-year-old female:

> It's totally disrespect. It's like they're superior beings, like they're right and they know this and they know that. Well they don't know. . . . I just consider the source that it's coming from. The European society think that they are superior over all. They believe that their way is the only way in everything: in death, living, civilization, religion, the whole works. And they think that everyone should believe that way, and if they don't, then it's all myth and superstition.

From a 42-year-old female:

> Mom and I were talking, and I said you know if you find a grave and it's from 1800's, boy dig it up and you've got a find. . . . But what would happen to me or

you if we went over Jacksonville? Hey they got 1800's graves in there. They do. . . . Dig 'em up all in the name of science. Couldn't we (pause), long as they're Induns though. . . . They don't see it because they're not spiritual. They don't have the spiritualness that we have within us; they don't. . . . That's why it hurts us and makes us angry, 'cause we understand. . . . We see what they're doing. . . .

And from a 35-year-old male:

I don't like anthropologists very much. They're studying minorities, and the government is paying them a lot of money to do that, I believe. Now, the government ratified just about every treaty and every treaty that any president ever signed and in just about all of those treaties they promised to invest in our future as a people so that we would not face the genocide that they were openly practicing on us at the time, and before that, and in many ways still are. If they had taken any of what they had sworn to invest in our future and done that with it, they wouldn't have to pay all this money to anthropologists to come and study us to tell us that we have the highest infant mortality rate in the Western Hemisphere, the highest alcoholism rate and suicide rate, and on down the line. All these things that we didn't even have words for in our own language. We didn't have a word for "rehabilitation." You don't see the have nots out studying the haves, saying "wow, check them rich guys out man. Why do you think they do that?" If I was to go down to the graveyard . . . and start digging people up, and then say well we're going to unlock your mysteries for you by digging up your ancestors here, and then I'm gonna build a museum and I'm gonna take all their artifacts and put them in a museum and charge you to see this stuff so that I can protect your heritage for you and preserve it for you, they'd put me in jail. . . . (pause: hurt/disgusted). This is just the same racist crap that this government's been doing right from the get. They've never considered us equals.

Beyond any doubt, these Klamath recognize scientific narrations of Indian dead to be political phenomena. They quite readily associate contemporary archaeological desire with a long history of colonial arrogance. ("They've never considered us equals.") They also see quite clearly that the debate is between cultures ("They don't see it because they're not spiritual") and that double standards have always been employed ("Dig 'em all up in the name of science . . . long as they're Induns though"). They are equally unequivocal in their assessment that the struggle is, and has always been, about power ("they'd put me in jail"; "the European society think that they are superior in everything"). Indeed, as if to highlight the role of power, they show that they are quite capable of erasing the significance of scientific claims ("they don't know what they're doing. . . . They mean nothing").

Summary

In earlier chapters, I argued that responsibility for the lived consequences of our academic analyses is a far greater burden than responsibility to metaphysical phantasms. This chapter bears out my claim. The Indians whose words you have just finished reading are actual people fighting specific struggles. "Objectivity," in this context, is an intellectual and political burden.

I also claimed that embracing cultural others means abandoning the self-absorbed claim that scientific ways are extra-cultural and extra-political. Clearly, in any discussion of NAGPRA, those scientists who insist on the absolute value of their ways will not be able to count the vast majority of American Indians among their supporters. Should they continue to attack our struggles for our dead in the courts, they should not be insulted when Indians pronounce them only the most recent installments of colonial arrogance.

A structuralist sociologist who looks for centered truth in the struggle over NAGPRA will never be an effective political player in this debate. There is no nonpolitical space (a center) from where disciplined sociologists might assess falsity and veracity. The pursuit of the fantasy can only consume time and effort better spent in conscious pursuit of political advantage. Abandoning these metaphysical aspirations proves to be a political and intellectual advantage—exactly the opposite of the gloomy predictions of critics reported in each of the previous chapters.

In political spaces where one's political opponents claim authority through appeals to objectivity and truth, genealogy is a powerful weapon. If all truth is politics and politics are always about power, genealogists can recover these connections ("the hazardous play of dominations") and deploy them in politically expedient ways (force them to "go off again in different directions").

6

TAKING CHARGE OF THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION DEBATE

Social Science and Racial Justice

The preference lobby constantly talks about "victims." But they are nameless
and faceless and don't exist except as theoretical speculations.
—Ward Connerly (2000:225)

There were few cries of "we are all individuals" from the 99 percent white
worksite of the 1950s.
—Troy Duster (1998:120)

Issues of race and ethnicity were easily the single biggest source of social and political unrest in the United States in the twentieth century.[1] At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are far better off as a nation with regard to issues of color and ethnic diversity than we were as the nineteenth century closed. Gigantic and progressive strides have been made. To state only the most obvious, legally mandated segregation of public facilities and institutions in the South is now a thing of our older generations' memories. Many children all across the country are taught everyday to be proud of their ethnic heritages and to respect and admire those of their neighbors. University campuses, Parent Teacher Association meetings, and after work social gatherings are in ever more locations quite comfortably integrated. It is increasingly normal (particularly among the young) for friendships and romantic relationships to not only cross racial and ethnic boundaries but to do so without those involved seeing this as a significant "issue." Perhaps most

impressive of all, racism is no longer a publicly acceptable set of attitudes or behaviors. Bigots now must talk frankly only among themselves or find ways to express their prejudices euphemistically and in closeted tones.

Americans should be proud of these changes. Human beings are not machines whose direction can be altered with the quick interjection of new software, and we rarely change long-standing, institutionalized attitudes so quickly. Belief systems and methods of self-assessment are intergenerational phenomena handed down, cyclically, in interpersonal moments and in unconsciously displayed behaviors from authority figures to children. Given that large complexes of racist logic dominated European and European American imaginaries for centuries, the fact that this thinking has been forced into an apologetic retreat, and that the most dramatic transformations have occurred in only the last forty years, is something of a sociological miracle.

Nonetheless, there is still much to be done. The problem at the beginning of our new century is that there is little agreement about how progress made can best be continued. Indeed, with perhaps the exception of the broad assessments just made, there is almost no detailed agreement about what the state of racial and ethnic relations in the United States currently is. This is both sociologically frustrating and politically ominous.

The many pronounced and heated disagreements about race are ominous inasmuch as the stakes for our society remain extremely high. As virtually every American old enough to pay attention recognizes, racial discord is far from over in this country. Americans of differing ethnicities continue to express alarming levels of disagreement about the importance of race in everyday life. A great deal of research exists documenting these competing perceptions.

For example, James Kluegel (1990:512) finds that "a substantial majority [of European Americans polled between 1977 and 1989] believed that blacks' lower socioeconomic status was due all or in part to a lack of will or effort to achieve." A 1990 nationwide survey confirmed these attitudes, reporting that 50 percent of white Americans viewed blacks as innately lazy and less intelligent than whites (Lipsitz 1998:19). Despite these sentiments, the National Research Council was already reporting in the late 1970s that large numbers of whites believed that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had completely eliminated racial discrimination (Feagin and Sikes 1994:75). And, this attitude has not subsided. Carol Swain, Kyra Green, and Christine Min Wotipka (2001:229) found that white Americans routinely assume that racial discrimination is "largely a thing of the past." Yet, these same European Americans also claimed to be "victims of reverse discrimination."

Conversely, in 1989 a nationwide *Washington Post/ABC News* poll found that 26 percent of African Americans believed that more than half of all white Americans "personally share the attitudes of groups like the Ku Klux Klan" (Eisaguirre 1999:125). Similarly, a nationwide National Urban League (2001) survey finds that 43 percent of African Americans polled believe they have "been stopped by police because of their race." Seventy-four percent

agree with the statement that "the criminal justice system is biased against them." Meanwhile a 1999 *Seattle Times* poll found that 75 percent of white Americans agree with the statement: "Unqualified minorities get hired over qualified whites" (Pincus 2001/2:33). Finally, surveying students at a large, private, urban university, Kimberly Arriola and Elizabeth R. Cole (2001: 2475) observe that even among European Americans describing themselves as politically "moderate or liberal," 60 percent of respondents advocate the complete abolition of affirmative action programs.[2]

To initiate our discussion of these immense disparities, I ask students to reflect on their perceptions of race and racial politics. How prevalent is racism today? Is racial equality a reality? Is affirmative action still necessary? What exactly is affirmative action and what is it not? Are some African Americans' speech patterns seen as a sign of ignorance? If yes, is this fair? Is immigration a problem or an asset for the United States? Should immigrants proudly hold onto the language and customs of their former nations, or should they strive to leave these ways behind in pursuit of "being American"? Why are black and brown men locked up in numbers far exceeding their proportions of the overall population? (African Americans are about 12 percent of the population and nearly 50 percent of the incarcerated population, in California about one of every three African American men in their 20's is behind bars, and American Indians are less than 1 percent of the population but about 6 percent of the jailed population.) And finally, how difficult is it to honestly discuss these issues in ethnically mixed groups?

Given that Americans feel so strongly about racial issues, the potential for civility to vanish and for violence to replace discussion in this country remains very real. Racial injustice clearly perceived and deeply felt by millions of citizens is dangerous for our society. When added to the millions more who believe that race is no longer a significant problem, the combination becomes potentially explosive.

On the one hand, that skin pigmentation and other physiological aspects of our appearances—what Paul Gilroy (2000), among others, calls "racialization"[3]—is significant to the daily experiences of so many, testifies to the currency and urgency of complex and seemingly intractable sociological problems. On the other hand, this chronic crisis begs the frustrating question: how could the single largest social problem of the last century remain so poorly understood? How is it that sociologists have not yet laid bare the underlying structure of these dangerous difficulties?

Where are the scientific conclusions about this "empirical reality" that should by now have been generated by the legions of the most disciplined of social scientists, scientists whose work on race and ethnicity can be found in virtually endless stacks of studies that cover acres of library shelves? Why have the promises of civic responsibility made by structuralist sociologists not yet been fulfilled? (Recall that Jonathan H. Turner wrote of sociologists' "obligation to acquire a standard body of knowledge, to learn the general theoretical

principles explaining the operation of society," arguing that this knowledge corresponds to "the extent that sociologists still want to build a better world.") Although Turner blames the longstanding inability to produce such coherent principles on a lack of sufficiently disciplined scientists, the sheer volume of work conducted in pursuit of this metaphysical goal makes this explanation difficult to defend.

In this chapter, I extend previous assertions. Remember that we are concerned with sociologists' ability to make civic responsibility our primary responsibility. As in chapter 5, I argue here that metaphysical aspirations are an impediment to sociologists as they try to increase our political relevance. Structuralist dreams will do little to ease racial discord in the Untied States.

I use the ongoing and contentious debate over affirmative action programs to illustrate why structuralist desires for coherence and scientific validity must remain forever frustrated. The instability of the very terms of the debate is emphasized. There can be no sustained, far-ranging, and impartial agreement about the merits of affirmative action or about how well it does or does not work, I argue, because neither these programs nor the key terms and logics used to promote or condemn them are Platonic essences. Neither the policies nor the major features of debates over them are objective entities in an objective reality that disciplined social scientists might progressively understand and explicate for a lay public, or for those with the power to legislate or adjudicate. Indeed, it is far more politically efficacious for sociologists to understand the politics of affirmative action as *irreducibly* social. Talking and writing about affirmative action is cultural, historical, and textual, and these discussions *always* bring complex genealogy to the table. Discursive genealogies (genealogies of functioning discourses about affirmative action) and contemporary textual politics are the literal capacity that enables anyone (including sociologists) to speak authoritatively about affirmative action.

Once again, I write as an advocate. Affirmative action policies need to be defended. However, sociologists aspiring to protect affirmative action using extra-political facts culled and marshaled to defeat objectively wrong opponents are misguided. They are also dangerously close to complete political defeat.

I want to be clear from the outset that I am *not* suggesting that the pain and suffering wrought by racism are anything but abhorrent and tragic. I am, however, going to argue that there is nothing inherent about these experiences that make them objectively the same for all who consider them. Our opponents in the struggle for racial justice do not see what we see. And we on the political left should not imagine that we will defeat them by insisting on the extra-political status of "the truth." New tactics are needed.

I begin by exploring the changing historical and political contexts that have acted as the basis for understanding the "reality" of these programs. The struggle to narrate the meaning of affirmative action is tracked through the executive orders and Supreme Court cases where its key language has its origins. Central components of the debate are then deconstructed. The art of

political contest over these key terms, I argue, is what progressive sociologists should focus on. How do we decide who is or is not part of a *race*? What does it mean to be an *individual* who therefore can be judged on the basis of *merit*? How does anyone know when *discrimination* has occurred? Powerful political strategies now laying claim to these terms, strategies employed by both proponents and opponents of affirmative action, are analyzed as textual phenomena. Finally, poststructuralist tactics designed to secure a future for affirmative action are suggested.

Early Political Contexts and Key Language

President John F. Kennedy is most often credited with first using the term *affirmative action*. In the years following the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, which overturned the so-called separate but equal doctrine that sustained legal, forced segregation in public education and in other government administered facilities, it became all too apparent to proponents of racial justice that court decisions alone would not end discrimination in public institutions. Indeed, a full ten years after this landmark decision, 98 percent of Southern blacks remained in forcibly segregated schools (Dye and Zeigler 1978:344). Reacting to this intransigence, on March 6, 1961 Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925. In its introductory paragraphs, the president cites frustration with the lack of progress as the basis for his directive to end discrimination in federal contracting. "A review of existing . . . compliance with existing non-discrimination contract provisions reveals an urgent need for expansion and strengthening of efforts to promote full equality of employment opportunity."

With the same order, Kennedy created the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, which subsequently became the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and gave the new agency the power to force all entities contracting with the federal government to "Take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin" (Part III:1).

It is important to remember that the racism that this order was attempting to arrest was deeply ingrained in the fabric of social life, particularly in the South. This was the era that would soon be recorded in black-and-white film footage of civil rights activists being beaten by white police officers. African Americans attempting to use "whites only" rest rooms and drinking fountains in government buildings, attempting to swim in public pools or at public beaches, sitting in front seats on public buses, and showing up to enroll in public universities (all of this desegregation having been ordered by the Supreme Court) were attacked by water canons, police dogs, electric cattle prods, and violent mobs of white segregationists. This was also the era when governor

(and soon to be presidential candidate) George Wallace of Alabama proclaimed in an infamous speech to a cheering crowd, "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever." Only with the protection of federal troops sent by Kennedy did it become possible for African Americans to register at the Universities of Alabama and Mississippi in 1963.

The strident racism of the period also meant that people of color were routinely denied equal access to opportunities for wealth and vocational advancement. For example, in 1963 the median income of black families was only 53 percent of the median income of white families and blacks' unemployment was 114 percent higher than whites.' Similarly, in 1962 the infant mortality rate of brown and black Americans was 90 percent higher than it was for white Americans (Eisaguirre 1999:87; Ryan 1981:150).[4] African Americans were also routinely prohibited from voting in the elections of the deep South. Thus with the federal monitoring of voter registration, the number of African Americans registered to vote increased by 40 percent in only five months in 35 counties (Burner, Genovese, and McDonald 1980: 658).

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act extending legal prohibition of "discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin" into the private sector. In 1965, he issued his own Executive Order 11246 reiterating Kennedy's earlier directive but strengthening it with the following requirements for all contractors doing business with the federal government: "Each contractor . . . shall file, and shall cause each of his subcontractors to file, Compliance Reports with the contacting agency or the Secretary of Labor. . . . Compliance Reports shall be filed within such times and shall contain such information as to the practices, policies, programs, and employment policies, programs, and employment statistics of the contractor and each subcontractor, and shall be in such form, as the Secretary of Labor may prescribe (Section 203 [a])."

That same year, Johnson delivered the commencement address at Howard University. His words extended the analysis and logic contained in the earlier executive orders to "take affirmative action" to overcome discrimination. In this speech, Johnson explicitly articulates his understanding that even if a cessation of discrimination could be quickly and miraculously provided, the stark reality of deep sociological problems would remain. "Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries. You do not take a man who for years has been hobbled by chains, liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race saying, 'you are free to compete with all the others' and still justly believe you have been completely fair" (as quoted in Eisaguirre 1999). Johnson had come to understand what sociologists have learned to call "institutionalized racism." This problem was and is one of being trapped in impoverished institutions and settings and, thereby, being cheated out of equal opportunities.

In addition to the inequities of inferior schools, crime-ridden communities, and overt racism, people of color have had to struggle against what Supreme

Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg (2000:2) has called "trade union nepotism." Large federal contracts (high-wage work being paid for by taxpayers, including ethnic minorities) have over the years been routinely monopolized by white business owners who were awarded contracts from federal agencies run by white men who then proceeded to hire other white men for the best-paying positions. Being locked out of union pay scales meant that people of color were also locked out of the many privileges of middle-class status. Again, these include good schools, crime-free neighborhoods, environmentally un-contaminated communities, healthy lifestyles born of adequate educations, and social networks made up of the wealthy and powerful.

By 1969, President Richard Nixon had put in place his "Philadelphia Plan" that aimed to desegregate the Philadelphia construction industry. For the first time, the nepotism problem was to be addressed through "goals and time-tables" established by industry officials themselves but under the watchful scrutiny of the Department of Labor. As the president explained: "The civil rights policy to which this administration is committed is one of demonstrable deeds—focused where they count. One of the things that counts most is earning power. Nothing is more unfair than that the same Americans who pay taxes should by any pattern of discriminatory practices be deprived of an equal opportunity to work on Federal construction projects" (Presidential Papers: 494: 12/19/69).

The call for goals and timetables contained in the Philadelphia Plan immediately brought the now familiar charge that the program was really about "hiring quotas" that were sure to result in contracts being awarded to "unqualified minorities." Those wanting to maintain the segregated status quo argued that because the plan considered race, it violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Although this Philadelphia affirmative action was attacked in both Houses of Congress and challenged in the courts, Nixon held firm.[5] "The Philadelphia Plan *does not* set quotas; it points to goals. It does not presume automatic violation of law if the goals are not met; *it does* require affirmative action if a review of the totality of a contractor's employment practices shows that he is not affording equal employment opportunity" (Presidential Papers 494:12/19/69, my emphases).

The 1970s were a time of expanding programs, increasing opportunities for racialized minorities. A series of Supreme Court rulings recognized the importance of what came to be called "disparity studies." These analyses of hiring practices looked for a "disparate impact" on minority populations. In other words, the Court asked whether the hiring methods of companies negatively impacted minorities and women at a higher rate than white males. The logic of disparate impact assumed that qualified minorities and women should advance through hiring processes at the same rate as qualified white men.

Thus qualified females and minorities should advance at a rate of no less than 80 percent of the rate of advancement of qualified white males. For example, if a hiring committee was presented with a pool of 50 qualified women and 100 qualified white men, in the absence of discrimination (conscious or

unconscious) one could reasonably expect that the women hired or advanced to the next round would be equal to no less than 80 percent of whatever proportion of the 100 qualified men were advanced. If 20 of the men were hired or advanced, this would mean that 20 percent of the qualified pool had been successful. Twenty percent of the women's pool would equal 10 applicants. Of this 20 percent of qualified females (10), at least 80 percent (again, in the absence of discrimination) should be expected to also advance. Thus if 8 did make the cut then the hiring procedures would meet the test for not causing a "disparate impact." Again, these guidelines, following the original intent of Nixon's Philadelphia Plan, were designed to ensure equal opportunity for all qualified applicants as promised by the 1964 Civil Rights Act. They were directed at blatant and discriminatory nepotism in both the public and private sectors of the economy.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) governing affirmative action plans also instituted what were called "underutilization" studies. Underutilization was defined as "having fewer minorities or women in a particular job group than would reasonably be expected by their availability" (41 CFR 60–2.11b). Not only were companies being instructed to make sure that women and minorities made it through the hiring process without being discriminated against, but they were also being asked to compare the "availability" of qualified minorities and women "in the immediate labor area" and in the "area in which the contractor can reasonably recruit" (41 CFR 60–2.11b[vi-v]). The emphasis was on action that brought affirmative results, or as Nixon had promised, on "demonstrable deeds." Nonetheless, the CFR was careful and explicit in its instruction as to the illegality of hiring quotas. "Goals may not be rigid and inflexible quotas which must be met, but must be targets reasonably attainable by means of applying every good faith effort to make all aspects of the entire affirmative action program work" (41 CFR 602.12[e]).

The Supreme Court affirmed that such statistical probes could be used to identify employers who were not complying with federal anti-discrimination regulations. These Court decisions (e.g., *Griggs v. Duke Power Company* of 1971) added legal teeth to affirmative action efforts and finally began accomplishing what executive orders and the Civil Rights Act did not. Fearing their own liability for failing to provide women and minorities with equal opportunities, employers took careful notice.

By the 1970s, affirmative action was being enforced by a growing government bureaucracy. The institutionalization of affirmative action meant that a large and ideologically committed government workforce was being paid to enforce anti-discrimination laws which, until the era of "goals" and "timetables," had been largely ignored.[6] At the beginning of the decade, in 1970, only 4 percent of employers had Affirmative Action offices and less than 20 percent had any affirmative action policies at all. By 1980, both numbers had more than doubled (Kelly and Dobbin 2001:91–92).

Although, to the best of my knowledge, there have never been any federal affirmative action policies governing admission to educational institutions, by the 1970s universities and colleges were increasingly concerned with enlarging the enrollments of underrepresented, ethnic minorities and women.[7] In 1974, the California State Legislature passed a statute declaring, "the undergraduate student body at the University of California should reflect the general ethnic, gender, and economic composition of the state's high school graduates" (Douglass 2001:126). No doubt the (too often forced) diversification of university faculty contributed to the subsequently growing diversity among undergraduates at the nation's colleges and universities. For example, from 1970 to 1980 the country's population of African American undergraduates grew by 14 percent and by 1990 had increased by 30 percent (Eisaguirre 1999:13).

By 1980, the political climate of the country had changed dramatically. Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign marks the beginning of an era of successful attacks on affirmative action. Despite the clearly cut language of the CFR, Reagan repeatedly branded these anti-discrimination laws as "bureaucratic regulations which rely on quotas, ratios, and numerical requirements" (quoted in Kelly and Dobbin 2001:95). Once elected, the new president truncated enforcement of EEOC guidelines, even appointing the ultra-conservative and affirmative-action-despising Clarence Thomas as chair of the commission. Judge Thomas quickly and quietly instructed his charges not to approve programs containing goals and timetables (Kelly and Dobbin 2001:95–96). Under his leadership, the time it took to process discrimination claims went from five months to nine months, and the backlog of uninvestigated cases doubled (Lipsitz 1998:148).

Throughout his tenure as president, Reagan appointed judges to the federal bench who opposed affirmative action, and his administration went to court on the opposite side of policies staked out and defended by previous presidents. Reagan's appointments to the Supreme Court also extended a string of conservative nods that had begun in 1970 and would extend to 1991. As Paul Ong (1999:14) points out, this pattern would eventually mean that "Republican Presidents appointed all nine additions to the Supreme Court from 1970 to 1991." As early as 1978, the impact of these right-wing appointments was becoming apparent as the Court's rulings began to pare back affirmative action programs.

Supreme Court Cases

In the *University of California v. Bakke* case of 1978, the Court ruled that the university's Davis Medical School allowed their outreach programs to go too far. While expressly allowing for race and ethnicity to be considered as a "plus factor" in admissions decisions, the majority found that the school's policy that 16 percent of new students be ethnic minorities, violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution.[8]

In 1989, in *City of Richmond v. Cronson*, the Court took issue with Richmond, Virginia's attempt to remedy what its administrators believed was discriminatory practice in the awarding of the city's construction contracts. Noting that ethnic minorities constituted a majority of Richmond's population, and that a full 50 percent of the city was African American while less than 1 percent of city contracts were awarded to minorities, the city ordered that 30 percent of these contracts should go to minority-owned businesses. They also allowed for a waiving of the requirement if no Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) were available or qualified to fulfill the contract work. Together with the *Bakke* case, this decision represents the onset of a so-called narrowly tailored requirement for affirmative action programs.[9] The Court voted 5 to 4 that Richmond's policy was unconstitutional. Writing for the majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor argued:

> There is *absolutely no evidence* of past discrimination against Spanish-speaking, Oriental Indian, Eskimos, or Aleut persons in any aspect of the Richmond construction industry. . . . It may well be that the city of Richmond has never had an Aleut or Eskimo citizen. The random inclusion of racial groups that, as a practical matter, may never have suffered from discrimination in the construction industry in Richmond suggests that perhaps the city's purpose was not in fact to remedy past discrimination (quoted in La Noue and Sullivan 2001:75, emphases in original).

This logic signals a retreat from the attack on institutionalized racism that we heard Presidents Johnson and Nixon articulate. O'Connor is ordering that specific evidence of specific and past instances of discrimination against specific ethnic groups in a specific industry has become the threshold for justifying the taking of affirmative action to remedy *ongoing* inequality of opportunity.

Continuing and institutionalized inequities in access to satisfactory education; to competent health care providers and adequately funded health care facilities; to affordable, quality legal representation; to decent housing; to the networks of businesspeople where deals are made; and to the dignity that comes with all of this access is, from the standpoint of this Court decision, insufficient proof of discrimination. This gross inequality of opportunity for (as Nixon labeled it) "earning power" no longer indicates the presence of discrimination. In *Richmond v. Cronson*, the conservative majority pushes through definitions of discrimination so narrow as to make the logic of "taking affirmative action" constitutionally indefensible. "Narrowly tailored" affirmative action is, by definition, forbidden from attacking institutionalized and current inequality of opportunity, as it exists on a broad array of social and political fronts—unless it can be strictly located in a long list of specific historical events narrowly defined.

Six years later, in *Adarand Constructors v. Secretary of Transportation Pena* (1995), the majority (again, 5 to 4) made its lack of appreciation for the relevance of institutionalized discrimination against racially categorized groups

explicit. Writing for the majority and citing Justice Powell, O'Connor explained. "If it is the individual who is entitled to judicial protection against classifications based upon his racial or ethnic background because such distinctions impinge upon personal rights, rather than the individual only because of his membership in a particular group, then the constitutional standards may be applied consistently" (515 U.S. 200: 93–1841). O'Connor and Powell are seeking to protect what they call "the individual" against the discriminatory capacity of racial labeling. They argue that the right to "due process" contained in the Fifth Amendment (which states that "*no person* shall be deprived of. . . .") is a right guaranteed only to individuals and that considerations of race (as an aggregation) therefore violate this right guaranteed only to individuals and not to groups. To award significance to group identities is to do harm to individual identities, which are, after all, the only identities protected by the Fifth Amendment.

This is an intriguing turn of logic. The majority ruling is that the Fourteenth Amendment, again a primary purpose of which was to prevent racial discrimination against former slaves, is enforceable only by protecting the always already racialized from race. Protection against racial discrimination, this line of reasoning maintains, requires that racial identity and individual identity be understood as structurally distinct.

As O'Connor continues:

> The basic principle [is] that the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution protect *persons,* not *groups*. It follows from that principle that all government action based on race—a *group* classification long recognized as "in most circumstances irrelevant and therefore prohibited"—should be subjected to detailed judiciary inquiry to ensure that the *personal* right to equal protection of the laws has not been infringed. . . . We hold today that all racial classifications, imposed by whatever federal, state, or local government actor, must be analyzed by a reviewing court under strict scrutiny (515 U.S. 200:93–1841, emphases in original)

Race-less Discrimination

The majority's words mark a site of crisis for structuralists' defense of affirmative action. The Court's attempt to tease out racialized "individuals," as distinct from their demographic categories, signals the instability of what many on the left assume are empirically verifiable structures of racial inequality. With this discursive turn, the Court moved to fundamentally alter the meaning of racialized subjectivities. This logic, this legal narrative attempts to restructure the meaning of race in American society.

As a poststructuralist, my analytic strategy is not to simply reemphasize and insist upon the group-based inequalities that I find morally compelling. I will

not merely contend that my centering of group inequalities is superior to the Court's centering of "the individual." (Although, as I make clear in the next section, I am happy to use analyses of group-based racial inequality as part of my own political narratives.)

My strategy is to point to the impossibility of policing the structural borders that the Court is moving to institutionalize. Is the Court-ordered separation between "individual rights" and the sufferings of "racial groups" sustainable? Can this structuralist delineation really be defended, or is it a metaphysical dream?

Millions of Americans (as racialized groups) in the course of their everyday lives continue to experience race as a centrally organizing feature of reality. What, then, are the social and political consequences of the Supreme Court's increasing reluctance to pay attention to the reality of these perceptions? Is the importance of "race" lessened, *for all of us*, because the Court has moved to marginalize its importance?

How, for example, might brown and black Americans differ from white Americans in their reactions to the view that Judge Antonin G. Scalia champions in his concurring opinion? "In the eyes of government, we are just one race here. It is American" (515 U.S. 200:93–1841). Scalia's words appear to go beyond and extend the logic of O'Connor's. While she seems to at least recognize that "racial groups" still have a social reality and to believe that individuals might still need protection from oppression based on this reality, he appears to propose that race is irrelevant.

What does it mean to tell those whose identities are inseparable from functioning social constructions of race and ethnicity that we are firstly and foremostly (race-less) "individuals" or "Americans"? Taken to its logical end, the order that affirmative action programs must be "narrowly tailored" to protect "individuals" from discrimination, which can therefore only be validated by reference to specific and individual instances of discrimination ("strict scrutiny"), is to deny the group-based racializations that make those individual experiences understandable as acts of racial discrimination.

If "race" refers to groups of people who have a long and ongoing (institutionalized) set of experiences (experiences that result directly from the perception that they constitute a "race"), then to deny the group-held quality of those experiences is to deny the literal meaning of racial prejudice. To have prejudice, after all, is to pre-judge. It is to judge someone before one knows her. But how does one pre-judge an individual without referencing assumptions about groups, without assigning them to a group: "they," "them," and "those"? That is, how can one discriminate against *an individual* without that discrimination being discrimination based on assumptions about that individual's *group* identity? And, how can racial prejudice about that individual not reference a sense of my own "individual" identity that is also inextricably tied to my sense of my own group, "my race"?

Thus to rule that specific instances of discrimination can and must be separated from the extended social history of racialization (contexts that are the

very possibility of discrimination being interpretable as "racial discrimination") is not well thought out. One wonders how long it will it be before an enterprising attorney insists on the complete irrelevance of the large and voluminous history of racial discrimination to an individual instance of discrimination at an individual workplace. At what point would the court majority have us draw the line between an individual's experience and the long history of group experience that make "racial discrimination" recognizable in the first place? Said another way, if discrimination only happens to "individuals" ("It is the individual who is entitled to judicial protection. . . ."), what exactly is the individual to be protected from? Racism, after all, is not something that originates in the psyche of an individual discriminator or that is uniquely comprehendible (as "racial discrimination") by individual victims. Racism cannot be contained or defined from within any isolated, singular set of circumstances.

There can be no "personal right to equal protection of the laws" that is not always already a protection based on one's membership in a group. Indeed, if this sociological problem was or had ever been about "individuals" needing protection, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution would have been unnecessary and the Civil Rights Act would be completely nonsensical. Despite what O'Connor may desire, racialized individuals do not have a reality without the groups that constitute and maintain their societal significance and self-perceptions. This is very old sociological insight. As George Mead (1934/1961:740) observed seventy years ago: "the individual is what he is, as a conscious and individual personality, just in as far as he is a member of society, involved in the social process of experience and activity, and thereby socially controlled in his conduct."

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Ginsburg fears for progress made against the ongoing consequences of group-based racism. "The lead opinion uses one term 'strict scrutiny' to describe the standard of judicial review for all governmental classifications by race. But that opinion's elaboration strongly suggests that the strict standard announced is indeed 'fatal' for classifications burdening groups that have suffered discrimination in our society" (515 U.S. 200:93–1841).

Either identities, including those believed to exist outside and in excess of groups, are shared group phenomena ("classifications burdening groups") or they are somehow truly personal. I am claiming that there is no empirically verifiable, structurally identifiable point where O'Connor can separate individual experiences from group experiences. Considered carefully, legal interpretation and enforcement of this separation is at least impractical. At worst, it is, as Justice Ginsburg suggests, "fatal" to affirmative action taken in defense of equality of opportunity.

Where can "strictly scrutinized" remedies be intellectually severed from the group-based possibility of these supposedly, individualized racial experiences? Every individual's perception of "race" is only socially possible. As I instruct my students, relying on (the again rather old) sociological insights of in this

case Charles Cooley (1902/1961), the self is always a "looking-glass self." Racial identity can only make sense because those around us reflect its importance back to us (as a mirror or "looking-glass"). "As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it" (824).[10]

My experiences make sense precisely because they are not *only* my experiences. All personal experiences rely on a larger set of commonly understood, social experiences. Otherwise, the importance of "race" or the boast of "color blindness" could not be recognized, stressed, or even experienced by so-called individuals. As meanings they are literally "common sense."

In an earlier opinion, O'Connor seems at least to imply her awareness of the impossibility of enforcing a separation between the individual and her socially maintained significance. In *City of Richmond v. Cronson* (1989) she allowed that ". . . if the City could show that it had essentially become a 'passive participant' in a system of racial exclusion practiced by elements of the local construction industry, we think it clear that the city could take affirmative steps to dismantle such a system" (488 U.S. 469:87–998).

What exactly is a "passive participant," and does this phrase signal O'Connor's uncomfortable awareness of the intractably extended, group-experienced, and collectively recognized history of "race" that I have argued is the possibility of the racialized individual having a "personal" racial experience?

At first reading the phrase appears oxymoronic. To be passive is to be the opposite of a participant, and to participate is to not be passive. Since O'Connor of course recognizes this basic problem of definition, she can only mean that racialization of individuals happens beyond the specific instances of racial discrimination that (only six years later she argues) must withstand "strict scrutiny." She must be acknowledging that local and immediate (strictly scrutinized) instances of discrimination have reality only because a much wider (albeit in her language "passive") group of participants is involved. But how extended is this group? What makes one a member and what excludes one from this larger participation that is so indirect as to be "passive"? Who is "the City"?

Assuming that the Court is referring to those who award contracts, is "participation" meant to refer to only those who sign key documents (hardly "passive" acts), or is it meant to include all those who "participate" in the city government meetings and after work, cocktail hour discussions where gross racial inequities in city business are explained away in apologetic logics of self-protection? Perhaps one can even be a participant when these disparities gain no overt expression? If in these meetings and social gatherings the fact that more than 50 percent of the population of Richmond are ethnic minorities while less than 1 percent of city contracts are awarded to minorities is resolutely ignored, is this "passivity" one of "participation"?

Could we also include larger circles of friends and acquaintances which, over the years, have participated in the maintenance of racialized identities among these "passive participants" whose influence continues to keep the Richmond construction industry segregated? If a respected family elder helps a city official see himself (acts as a "looking glass") as fair-minded and just, despite his dismal record on issues of racial equity, does this make the family member a "participant"? What if the official watches the evening news and hears a right-wing politician intone about the evils of "race-based quotas"? Should this only remotely available politician, or the news program, or the network that carried it, or even the European American voters to whom the politician is responding be considered "participants" in an extended and obviously complex text of racialization that is the very possibility of any "individual" minority contractor in Richmond, Virginia, having a racial experience?

At what point, exactly, does "passive participation" become not recognizing or caring that race is an issue? And, where is the empirical structure here?

In *Grutter v. Bollinger et al.* (2003), O'Connor's intellectually tenuous demarcation between individuals and groups remains a prominent part of the majority's appraisal. Eight years after her insistence on the primacy of "individual rights" in *Adarand v. Pena,* she is again struggling with the impossibility of this metaphysical separation. Arguing for the majority that had just upheld the constitutionality of the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action program, O'Connor writes: "Just as growing up in a particular region or having particular professional experiences is likely to affect an individual's views, so too is one's own, unique experience of being a racial minority in a society. . . ." (539 U.S.:21 2003).

These "experiences" are said to be "unique" and "particular," but they result from "being a racial minority in a society." So, where do these "individuals," these personhoods, these subjectivities that are only subsequently "affected" come from? What could O'Connor mean by "one's own unique experience of being a racial minority"? Being a racial minority means being a member of a group and having experiences that other members of that group share; otherwise, the "experience of being a racial minority" has no meaning. Thus the depiction: "one's own unique experience of being a racial minority," driven to its logical end, proves to be nonsensical.

However untenable, O'Connor's words at least allow us to fantasize a metaphysical space where racial identities could be both individual and group phenomena while also remaining neatly separable.[11] She has not closed the door completely on the sociological reality of race in the lives of everyday Americans. Nonetheless, at bottom her individualist argument owes its appeal to the same de-racialized phantasms inhabiting her colleague Justice Scalia's much more unsettling imaginary. Scalia, remember, maintained in an earlier dissenting opinion that "we are all just one race here." By claiming that this "one race" "is American" he is textually linking his view to the patriotic pageantry routinely heaped upon the republic's celebrated documents. He claims, "under

our Constitution" talk of race (of a "creditor or a debtor race") has no reality. Such talk is, he asserts, "alien to the Constitution's focus upon the individual." "To pursue the concept" is to "reinforce and preserve for future mischief the way of thinking that produced race slavery, race privilege and race hatred" (515 U.S. 200: 93–1841).

Scalia claims that the Constitution has an extra-social, time-defying reality that will not sanction talk of racial inequities. It has an essence and a structure.[12] Indeed, should the Court force the nation to acknowledge race, thereby disregarding the Constitution ("is alien to"), this document might lose its ability to protect us from "race privilege and race hatred."

Should racialized minorities who have suffered every level of racist indignity for hundreds of years accept that *the same piece of paper* that presided over those indignities will now protect us from them? The Constitution is surely a fine document in many regards, but Scalia should not expect racialized minorities to accept that his claims stem from something inherent in that old writing. We know who wrote that Constitution, and we know that it did not get in the way of slavery and/or genocide in which its authors often actively and sometimes only "passively participated." The Constitution is not a Platonic essence. It has no extra-social, metaphysical reality. It has to be read and argued over. So what of Scalia ignoring the fact that explicitly racialized horrors of American history were perpetrated by other men of high office *who also claimed the Constitution as an ally?* Is he being naive? Disingenuous? What are we to make of his assertion that the Constitution now prohibits remedying the racial inequalities that earlier generations of white Americans perpetrated while relying on the same document? Does he not see what we see?

The unemployment rate for African Americans remains more than double that of European Americans. Although 11 percent of white Americans quite tragically live below the federal poverty line, this number is 27 percent for black Americans, 27 percent for Latinos, and 29 percent for American Indians (U.S. Bureau of the Census: 1999; Henslin 2002:224). Ninety-seven percent of the senior managers in Fortune 1000 corporations are white. African American men with exactly the same degrees as their European American counterparts working in exactly the same job categories earn only 79 percent of the salaries of their white colleagues (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission 1995:iv). In 2002, the median weekly income for white men was $702. Black men made $523 per week. Black women earned $474 per week. Latin men made $449 each week and Latinas earned only $396 per week or about 56 percent of what white men earned in 2002 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2003, Table 37). A 1990 Federal Reserve Board study of 9,300 American financial institutions found that brown and black Americans were far more likely to be denied home mortgages than whites with the exact same financial profiles (Henslin 2002:213; P. Thomas 1991). In thousands of researched incidences throughout the 1980s and 1990s, employers revealed a preference for white applicants over equally qualified black and brown applicants. Time and again,

these "audit" studies (in, e.g., Denver, San Diego, Washington D.C., Newark, and Chicago) reveal that folks of different colors sent to test the responses of the same potential employers receive very different treatment (Cross et. al. 1990; Fix and Struyk 1993; Kenney and Wissoker 1994; Reskin 1998:27; Stephanopoulous and Edley 1995; Wellman 1997).

These disparities result in tragedy disproportionately visited upon minority populations. For example, black babies die at 250 percent the rate of white babies, and whites avoid and quit smoking in greater numbers due to better educations and greater access to health care (Meckler 2002; McKenna 2002). And, social problems born of racialized inequality breed racist perceptions among courts and police. For example, in August of 2002, the state of Delaware announced that its police force was creating a database of people they feel "are likely to break the law." Although the exact process for collecting the addresses and photographs remains sketchy, most of those listed are minorities from poor neighborhoods. Many have spotless police records, having been simply stopped for "loitering" and were photographed and released (*San Francisco Chronicle* 8/26/02:A7).

Defending affirmative action programs means facing the alarming and curious need to insist on the reality of racialized identities that Americans fail to acknowledge with consistency. How is it that judges and other intelligent citizens remain so divided in their appraisals of what I claimed was the single biggest source of political unrest of the last century?[13] If problems of race are so very important to so many people, why have their objective qualities not been long since uncovered and solved?

These competing realities make it abundantly clear that to speak and write of racial discrimination is to always already enter into irreducibly political and social (poststructural) contests. Appeals to empirically verifiable "truths" will not lead us out of this dangerous predicament.

Seeing and Not Seeing: The Elusiveness of "Discrimination" and "Merit"

In chapter 3, we heard Michel Foucault (1984/1997:125–26) characterize genealogical scholarship as "No longer . . . practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying." Americans "do" race and recognize race in a variety of ways. These ways of doing and reading race are what mark us, socially, as "racial groups." Social performances (where we act racially and react to the racial performances of others) maintain the significance and interpretability of our merely physical differences. In other words, the importance of differences in skin pigmentation is fundamentally tied to self-presentations that are only socially learned and always socially perpetuated. These racially marked practices, habits, and styles ("doing, thinking, saying")

become "caste systems" when they are born in inequality and allowed to perpetuate inequality.

Recall that I asked students to consider whether the English dialect spoken by many African Americans is seen as a sign of inferiority by vast numbers of white Americans. If you believe, as I do, that millions make exactly this assumption, then we might inquire into the origins and ongoing effects of this racialization. Is this linguistic racial marking rooted in socioeconomic inequality, and does it then work to perpetuate and extend that same inequality? In other words, do negative perceptions of black English constitute and continue institutionalized racism?

A student of mine once observed that the African American television personality Bryant Gumbel "acts white." When I pressed this young black man to explain why he thought this way, he pointed to Mr. Gumbel's distinct use of language. He proposed that if a viewer had never seen Gumbel, s/he would, based on what s/he heard, believe the announcer to be a white man.

Perhaps you have watched Oprah Winfrey switch quickly from her more "standard" (white-sounding?) speech patterns to those that are commonly understood to be African American? I once saw Winfrey demonstrably move her hands to her hips and shift her weight to one side as she congratulated and encouraged a young black woman in her audience. Lacking recognition of this performance as a racially marked event, I might have completely misunderstood the interaction. In tones that went low and then high and then low again and that sounded assertive (even commanding), Winfrey told the woman: "don't you go there with me now girl!" The talk show host was "doing black" for and with this woman. The woman recognized the racially marked quality of the interlocution and "did black" back. The audience, of all colors, roared their approval, apparently following perfectly the racialized codes in these speech patterns—patterns that made the words comprehendible as encouragement even as their literal meaning seemed to say something else.

If we can agree that millions of African Americans indeed have speech patterns that distinguish them from other Americans (who of course also have distinct styles of talk) then the next question has to be about how this style of talk is heard, in particular by many white Americans. Why, for instance, does Winfrey stay predominantly in the more "white-sounding" mode? Could the reason for both Mr. Gumbel's and Ms. Winfrey's interactive style have anything to do with negative perceptions of "black talk" held by the majority of the audience that each, over their long careers, has so successfully appealed to? Conversely, how likely is it that black men and women striving to have serious public careers (in domains where impressing white Americans is a key to success) can meet their goals without agreeing to speak in a fashion that is less clearly marked as African American? Is "sounding white" a requirement for obtaining the "earning power" that we heard President Nixon equate with basic civil rights? Could this be at least part of the reason behind so many

black teachers working so hard to "correct" the African American English spoken by their students?[14] I am suggesting that this designation of middle-class white English as "standard" American English should be understood as what Nixon called "a pattern of discriminatory practices." This is a group-based and group-enforced decision, and it routinely denies "equal opportunity" to African Americans.

Black English is not heard as legitimately professional language simply because those who have always been "professional," who set the standard for how to "do professional," and (most importantly) who maintain the boundaries of admission to becoming "professional" have nearly always been middle-class whites and/or elite whites. This "standard English" (which I too insist that my students learn and practice) is only "standard" because it has always been the vernacular of those communities enjoying economic dominance. Yet this disdain for black English and reverence for middle-class, white English is almost never understood as discrimination. Indeed, this group held belief (so rooted in the history of inequality between those who speak these racially marked dialects) all too easily becomes a sign of who is and who is not "qualified."

When job interviewers remark of a "standard English-" speaking black candidate that "s/he sounded so professional," we are witnessing one of Foucault's "events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves." The ability to inscribe such an event as being "about professional qualifications" is a direct result of social and economic power—the power to define who "we are" and who "they are." So, are such events racialized experiences, or are they explicitly and emphatically not about race? The answer will always depend upon whose group enjoys the power to narrate with legitimacy. Far from being a question of disciplined social scientists uncovering objective social structure, the key question is who wields the power to skillfully narrate the reality of key interactions and to have those depictions center the debate.

How might an African American who believed she had lost a contest over a coveted job because of her speech patterns go about proving that this was an example of racial discrimination that is prohibited by the Civil Rights Act and by the Constitution? Consider a situation where three "very professional" white men have interviewed an African American woman as part of her application for a highly sought after job. For the sake of argument, let us say that this woman sailed through the pre-interview parts of the application process. She also feels that the initial part of her meeting with these men went well, but noticed that one of them tightened his face on a few occasions when she pronounced certain words in ways that she later realized may have "sounded black."

Is there a non-group-based way to determine whether her forthcoming rejection is an act of discrimination? The men on this hiring committee may well argue that "polished speaking skills" are an important part of this high-profile, public position. No doubt, they believe they have made a decision based simply on "merit."

How could this woman make the case to Justice O'Connor that she is "an individual who is entitled to judicial protection" when only competing, group-maintained understandings of what constitutes "discrimination" or "merit" (and thus entitle one to "protection") exist? If discrimination and merit can only always be assessed by referencing group understandings, understandings that are always unstable and open to contest, then, again, we are left with the recognition that every analysis of the interaction is irreducibly social and political.

Meanwhile, an absence of objective structure makes this tragedy no less real and no less unjust. Having lost the "color-blind" competition between "individuals" for this job, this woman has also lost thousands of dollars in annual income. This income would have financed her move to a suburban neighborhood with elite schools where students and teachers speak "standard English"—schools largely financed by property taxes paid on expensive homes. Had black idioms not become momentarily visible in her interview, her children and probably her children's children would have benefited from this move. Worse yet, she has been robbed of the opportunity to be one of those doing the interviewing. With a seat at the table, the experiences of her group might have become relevant the next time a highly qualified minority candidate with slightly ethnic speech patterns appeared for an interview.

Again, this scenario is both an example of institutionalized discrimination and of why the notion of generic individuals experiencing individual racial prejudice is only a fantasy of those who, like Justice Scalia, proclaim "we are all one race" in "a color-blind society." The Court majority's "individuals" have experiences that are interpretable only because of membership within groups where agreements about race and discrimination and merit are maintained.

The Unreliability of "Experience"

We spent many pages in the first few chapters discussing why it is always too simple to comprehend subjectivity as something that *has* experiences. The self is a location that does not cease always being constituted. It is not structure but rather relies upon always underway, overlapping, and competing discourses for its always only apparent semblance. Discourses, those domains of language whose logics and meanings are linked textually, are the possibility of recognizing "experience." One does not describe experience without *constituting* that experience in the act of description. Once one has language, "experience" will remain rooted in it. Language organizes the world, including one's place in it, and discourses compete for our collective cognitive embrace.

Scalia and millions of Americans who do not see racialized inequality speak and think in discourses of individualism (replete with notions of merit) that justify and even eliminate the significance of gross inequality of opportunity.

And let us be perfectly aware of this. Despite our outrage, there is nothing inherent to this inequality that makes our focusing on it any less political than Scalia's claim to be color-blind.

As members of racialized groups, and as progressive sociologists, we speak and think with different conceptual apparatuses, different discourses that highlight and foreground different textual connections. We have different experiences. As Joan W. Scott (1992:34) describes this relationship between language and experience: "It is to refuse a separation between 'experience' and language and to instead insist on the productive quality of discourse. Subjects are constituted discursively but there are conflicts among discursive systems, contradictions within any of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy. And subjects have agency. They are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them." We have, then, not a fight over the empirical reality of affirmative action, not a struggle over some objective structures of people or policies or deployed concepts, but rather a contest over the language of affirmative action and over the productive, constituting qualities of that language. Affirmative action is what it becomes in arguments over its future, in forecasts that themselves depend upon strategic recollections. These arguments, these definitional contests, will initiate and give significance to whatever policies we can successfully defend.

When I describe or experience an event as an act of discrimination, I inscribe it with the structure of what I know to be "discrimination." This is not to say that the understanding of discrimination originated from within me (from the inner depths of a pre-social "I") or that the effects of racism are any less despicable because I participate in the maintenance of its recognized definitions. Understanding institutionalized discrimination as a discursively enacted and protracted phenomenon, and not as an assemblage of Platonic essences or objective facts that can be intellectually contained in a description of what one "individual" does to another, does not make it any less horrible. However, wielding a poststructuralist eye means recognizing that the significance of ongoing inequalities—as they are understood and experienced across color lines—will not be proven through appeals to self-representing truth or to the obviousness of the tragedy.

Scholarly debates over audit studies are one example of social scientists' inability to agree upon objective qualities of discrimination. These research projects send mixed teams of qualified minorities and whites to apply for job openings or to inquire about rental properties. George Galster (1990:172) compiled evidence from fifty such studies and concluded that "racial discrimination continues to be a dominant feature of metropolitan housing markets in the 1980's." John Yinger (1993,1995), working for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, found that housing was repeatedly made more available to whites and that whites were often offered more favorable

rental terms. And, in a study substantiating our hypothetical case of discrimination ensuing from black speech patterns, Douglas S. Massey and Garvey Lundy (2001) measured the impact of landlords using telephone answering machines as a screening device. "We found clear and often dramatic evidence of phone-based racial discrimination. Compared with whites, African Americans were less likely to get through and speak to a rental agent, less likely to be told of a unit's availability, more likely to pay application fees, and more likely to have credit worthiness mentioned as a potential problem in qualifying for a lease" (2001:466).

Despite the fact that these scholars refer to racial discrimination as "a dominant feature" proven by "clear and dramatic evidence," James J. Heckman (1998) finds that auditing studies are typically marred by a host of methodological and reasoning errors. Because individual audit studies can easily use at most hundreds of pairs, he maintains that this research is guilty of undersampling that probably overstates problems of discrimination. If these studies did not almost always employ college-age pairs responding exclusively to public advertisements, his reasoning goes, they could more accurately depict the experiences of a group whose "main avenues" to employment or housing tends to be "networks and friends." In addition, these impressionable young researchers too often know what they are looking for and expect to find it. "Auditors are sometimes instructed on the 'problem of discrimination in American society' prior to sampling firms, so they have been coached to find what the audit agencies wanted to find" (1998:104).

Heckman contends that the expectations of minorities themselves result in poorer performances when competing for jobs or academic placement. In the case of African Americans, he suggests that "poor performance in schools and low achievement test scores" are based on the expectation that discrimination is rampant. Thus doing well matters less to those who believe the competition is racially rigged from the outset. Lower test scores therefore become "a proxy for discrimination to be experienced in the future" (1998:107). Said in terms that clarify the meaning of the quotation marks placed around the words "problem of discrimination," Heckman asserts, "achievement scores may be lower than white scores not because of the inferior environments encountered by many poor blacks, but because of expectations of discrimination. . . ." (1998:107).

Heckman's more substantive claim, however, is that the methodology of audit studies cannot control for what he labels "unobserved characteristics for each race group" (1998:111). In other words, employers are aware of "relevant characteristics" that remain "unobservable to the audit study." Because researchers assign standardized qualifications to their auditing teams, they miss the fact that variables ("relevant characteristics"), beyond and in addition to race, are at work in the production of unequal treatment. In short, there are errors of validity afoot. The researchers are not measuring what they think they are measuring. But, these "unobservable characteristics" are "at least somewhat visible to the prospective employer and acted on in hiring decisions

or credit decisions" (109). Employers and landlords do prefer whites and minorities at different rates, but this pattern is only coincidental. These preferences correlate with nonracial and "somewhat visible" qualities that are the real (and presumably legitimate) bases for treating people unequally.

Even more troublesome, these unnamed qualifications that employers and landlords can see but which social scientists conducting auditing studies systematically miss may come with different levels of variance for different racial groups. Heckman makes this point with an analogy to a high-jumping contest:

> . . . think of pairing up black and white high jumpers to see if they can clear a bar set at a certain height. There is no discrimination, in the sense that they both use the same equipment and have the bar set at the same level. Suppose now that the chance of a jumper (of any race) clearing the bar depends on two additive factors: the person's height and their jumping technique. We can pair up black and white jumpers so that they have identical heights, but we can't directly observe their technique. Let us make the generous assumption, implicit in the entire audit literature, that the mean jumping technique is equal for the two groups. Then, if the variance of technique is also the same for white and black high-jumpers, we would find that the two racial groups are equally likely to clear the bar. On the other hand, if the variance differs, then whether the black or white pair is more likely to clear the bar will depend on how the bar is set relative to their common height, and which racial group has a higher variance in jumping technique. If the bar is set at a low level so that most people of the given height are likely to clear the bar, then the group with the lower variance will be more likely to clear the bar. If the bar is set at a very high level relative to the given height, then the group with a higher variance in jumping technique will be more likely to clear the bar. A limitation of the audit method is readily apparent from this analogy: there is no discrimination, yet the two groups have different probabilities of clearing the bar. (1998:110–11)

In Heckman's high-jumping analogy we see a not so subtle shift from an attack on what he deems to be poor research methodology to a suggestion of genuine differences between minority groups and white Americans. Although his discussion of "variance in jumping technique" is indirect, he is clearly suggesting that the ranges of qualifications within racial groups differ. It is this difference in the scope of qualifications ("higher variance" for whites), acting as spurious variables functioning below the radar of researchers that results in the unequal treatment that the social scientists wrongly confuse with racial discrimination.

Regardless of Heckman's capacity for obscuring his charges in sports analogies or statistical jargon, he is nonetheless positing real differences between racial groups. And, if these differences are to legitimate unequal treatment, we have a right to know exactly what they are and what their origin is. Heckman never supplies this information. He says only that "ability as it crystallizes at

an early age accounts for most of the measured gap in black and white labor market outcomes" and, in a footnote, that this inherent difference should not lead to abolishing what are now superfluous civil rights laws because this old legislation maintains "important symbolic value" (1998:107).

Race, in Heckman's world, means something very different than racial stratification statistics mean to me. Race is surrounded by very different textual relations of différance and organized according to a radically different discursive logic.

Other critics of affirmative action are far less circumspect in their assertion of real differences between racialized groups and whites in the United States, unabashedly asserting that gaps in wealth and achievement flow not from institutionalized discrimination but from specific and identifiable differences in capacity and merit.

Perhaps the most well-known scholarly critic of the claim that discrimination is an ongoing fact of life in the United States is Thomas Sowell. Regularly cited by right-wing judges, politicians, and journalists, Sowell (1994:114) asserts, "for the concept of racial discrimination to have either analytical or moral significance, it must be distinguished from the mere economic reflection of actual differences between groups." Sowell champions what sociologists have for decades now referred to as "the culture of poverty argument." From this perspective, minorities are disproportionately impoverished, incarcerated, and less educated than whites for good and defendable reasons.

People of color, by and large, *are* less qualified for high-status jobs, this thinking goes. We are less qualified because we do not study as much, do not try as hard, drink too much, use drugs, have babies outside of marriage, and lack a sufficient work ethic. "Differences in work-habits, savings propensities, organizational skills, personal hygiene, attitudes, and self-discipline all influence end results, both economic and social. Differences in all these respects influence economic and social outcomes among different groups. . . ." (Sowell 1994:9)

In short, Sowell asserts that racialized peoples have ourselves to blame for our plight. The horrendous state of ghettos, barrios, and Indian reservations are the result of internal cultural traits that perpetuate our own impoverishment. From this vantage, charges of institutionalized discrimination are simply excuses for a failure to compete in the greatest merit-based society the earth has ever known.

Similarly styled renderings of inequality data are espoused by one of Sowell's colleagues at Stanford University's Hoover Institute, Dinesh D'Souza. Tracing what he sees as a faulty assumption of equality-of-ability to a "doctrine of cultural relativism" championed by Franz Boas in the early decades of the last century, D'Souza (1995) concludes that discrimination may indeed produce inequality; but this prejudice is morally warranted.[15] It is what he terms "rational discrimination." In D'Souza's world, civil rights activists have become professional "race merchants" who are hell-bent on forcing an ideology of equality onto a world that is quite naturally marked by

inequality. "There is no organized political or intellectual lobby on behalf of incompetence. But many who are committed to a doctrine of the natural equality of groups find it incomprehensible that fair procedures would not produce what they view as the necessary outcome of proportional representation" (1995:296).

In tones that work to discursively recapture and rearticulate older justifications for racial inequality in language appealing to contemporary audiences, D'Souza redeploys nineteenth-century images of civilization and barbarity. The differences between "us" and "them" are real, and those not blinded by fashionable liberal prejudices see that they are real. Writing of the "Pathologies of Black Culture" (as one of his chapters is subtitled), D'Souza describes an objective reality ("a breakdown of civilization within the African American community") that ideology-blinded liberals refuse to talk honestly about. "This breakdown is characterized by extremely high rates of criminal activity, by the normalization of illegitimacy, by the predominance of single-parent families, by high levels of addiction to alcohol and drugs, by a parasitic reliance on government provision, by a hostility to academic achievement, and by a scarcity of independent enterprises" (1995:477).

What we find, here, is not a refusal to acknowledge inequality. Racial inequality is real enough for D'Souza, but these "facts" are not centrally important.[16] D'Souza's worldview is constructed and maintained by discourses of equal opportunity, merit-based advancement, and legally guaranteed assurances that racial discrimination will not be tolerated. He is *not* drawn to inequality-depicting statistics (as civil rights activists are) because they are not part of the discursive imaginary that animates his existence, that underwrites his significance to himself and to others whose opinions he values.

As the title of his book, *What's So Great about America* (2002), suggests, D'Souza's civic experiences are had in patriotic fervor that long since awarded the founding documents of the republic a sacred status. Agape with awe, the quite earth-bound details of their political production evade him. Institutionalized inequalities that do not reflect the sacred story are not visible through his discursive lenses. "In most countries in the world, your fate and your identity are handed to you; in America, you determine them for yourself. America is a country where you get to write the script of your own life. Your life is like a blank sheet of paper, and you are the artist. This notion of being the architect of your own destiny is the incredibly powerful idea that is behind the worldwide appeal of America" (2003: D6). Such American folklore enshrines the republic's founding in an idealism that acts as a potent genealogical force, a force strategically deployed by critics of affirmative action.

If equality of opportunity exists, if American society is true to the ideals D'Souza feels well up in his being when he stands for the national anthem, then racialized groups who claim otherwise are not victims but perpetrators of a giant institutionalized fraud.

> Claims of victimization are established by blaming societal racism for the prob-
> lems of blacks. Such blame serves two purposes: to rationalize the pathologies of
> the black underclass, and to legitimize racial preferences and set-asides for the
> black middle class. . . . If racism was not the primary obstacle currently facing
> blacks, many in the civil rights industry would have to find something else to
> do. . . . Yet if the problems endured by African Americans today are substantially
> the result of cultural pathologies on the part of blacks, these individuals would
> not be victims but perpetrators. (D'Souza 1995:481)

The discursive text organizing D'Souza's perceptions is not even shaken, as we
might reasonably expect, by the observations of people of color who by no
stretch of the imagination can be located within the "cultural pathologies" he
claims to describe.

Faced with first-person accounts of racialized experiences sustained by well-
educated, middle-class, professionals as chronicled by Joe Feagin and Melvin
Sikes (1994), D'Souza finds only evidence of individual psychological patholo-
gies to accompany his earlier discussion of cultural pathology. Far from being evi-
dence of ongoing, racially organized social interactions that systematically work
to disadvantage non-whites, D'Souza gains only "illuminating insight into some
blacks' questionable grip on reality" (1995:491). Characterizing these extensive
accounts as "cases of people who live in a world of make-believe," he thinks it ab-
solutely rational that whites would not want to work in too close proximity
(492). In D'Souza's reality, when discrimination happens, it is completely ra-
tional, and in settings where it would not be rational, it is "make-believe."

Other critics of affirmative action explain the concentration of minorities in
low-income and low-prestige occupations—as juxtaposed with the fact that 97
percent of the senior managers of Fortune 1000 industrial and Fortune 500
companies are white and 97 percent are male (Reich 1995:iii-iv)—as simply a
matter of free will. Careers are freely chosen. While these choices may reflect
cultural inclinations, occupational segregation has nothing to do with nepotism
or with a proclivity for hiring those who are most like oneself. As John Skrentny
(2001:10) describes this situation, "It seems clear that different minority groups
have different tendencies to go into business and that discrimination cannot be
the sole cause of the variation." Arch Puddington (1996:82) is more explicit.
"The problem is that those who advance this argument seem to assume that only
white males rely on personal relationships or kinship. Yet as we have learned
from the experience of immigrants throughout American history, every racial
and ethnic group values family and group ties. Korean-American shop owners
enlist their families, Haitian-American taxi fleets hire their friends."

Although Puddington writes here of Americans with different national an-
cestries, affirmative action programs are rarely so precise. Critics of affirmative
action have seized upon the ambiguities contained in racial classifications as a
basis for attacking progressive attempts to confront ongoing group inequal-
ities. Opponents of affirmative action not only deny the reality of racialized

experiences, they deny the sociological reality of the classification schemes that these experiences originate from.

Policing the Racial Borders

While many social scientists (Almaguer 1994; Davis 1991; Espiritu 1992) persuasively document the long history of imposed racial-classification schemes designed to maintain white privilege, opponents use this same lack of structure to attack affirmative action policies meant to remedy inequality perpetrated through these same constructs. In other words, race has always been a cultural and political construction. Locating differences in biology was a brutal strategy used for centuries to subjugate non-whites. Yet, modern recognition of the biological nullity of "race" is now used to discredit affirmative action programs that necessarily rely on those old classifications.

Sociologists of color cannot have it both ways. We cannot expect to argue that race is a social and political construct and believe that our opponents will not do the same. Destroying the stability of these categories means becoming intellectually comfortable and politically capable within a thoroughly post-structuralist confrontation.

Before taking up these politics in earnest, let me be more explicit about why "race" can never be simply a biological reality. At issue is the irreducibly social nature (and thus instability) of agreements that divide physiological differences into biological groupings. As Karen Rosenblum and Toni-Michelle Travis (2000:18) note, "biological variability exists but this variability does not conform to discrete packages labeled races." Ultimately the lines that one draws for inclusion or exclusion of discreet groups of peoples in any "race" is arbitrary in as much as another decision could have been rationally made. Sharon Begley (1995:67,68) further illustrates this lack of structure.

> If our eyes could perceive more than the superficial, we might find race in chromosome 11: there lies the gene for hemoglobin. If you divide humankind by which of the two forms of the gene each person has, then equatorial Africans, Italians, and Greeks fall into the "sickle-cell race"; Swedes and South Africa's Xhosas (Nelson Mandela's ethnic group) are in the healthy hemoglobin race. Or do you prefer to group people by whether they have epicanthic eye folds, which produce the "Asian " eye? Then the !Kung San (Bushmen) belong with the Japanese and Chinese. . . . [D]epending on which traits you pick, you can form very surprising races. Take the scooped-out shape of the back of the front teeth, a standard "Asian" trait. Native Americans and Swedes have these shovel-shaped incisors, too, and so would fall in the same race. Is biochemistry better? Norwegians, Arabians, north Indians, and the Fulani of northern Nigeria . . . fall into the "lactase race" (the lactase enzyme digests milk sugar). Everyone else—other Africans, Japanese, native Americans—form the "lactase-deprived race."

The evolution of demographic categories on the U.S. census form records this instability. In only twenty years (1970–90), the available choices for racial identification expanded from 4 to 16, and by 2000 respondents were allowed to check more than one box. The political struggle over a "mixed race" box continues. Proponents argue for the increased accuracy contained in this new category and for their right to be proud of being of mixed decent. Opponents point out that minority populations stand to lose a great deal of both economic and political power should federal counts of their numbers decrease significantly. These racial identities, at first glance so personal and self-proclaimed, are literally political and not biographical.

Radically different societal agreements continue to determine who is and who is not a member of particular groups. For example, American Indians are the only group in the United States who are required by law to maintain records of "blood quantum." (This label is a remnant of the old assumption that "race" was contained in blood.) Every American Indian in the country has a detailed account of his or her lineage archived at the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs. This is the case despite a lack of agreement between tribes about how much Indian "blood" makes one a tribal member. To complicate things still further, the federal government allows one to be enrolled in only one tribe. Thus, as far as the government is concerned, Indians from more than one tribe (and there are many of us) must choose which side of the family to be legally affiliated with. Worse still, many tribes are not federally recognized or have had their federal recognition terminated, which means that their members have no legal Indian identity.

African Americans have long since been segregated by what is commonly called "the one drop rule." Meaning, any amount of black ancestry has always been understood to make one "of the black race." Largely a function of the virulent racism that strove to guard against "race mixing," miscegenation laws in many states required that children born to parents with *any* black ancestors were legally black. James Davis (1991) has written of the absurdity of these old but still functioning laws, citing the case of Susie Phipps who to her complete surprise was denied a passport because she checked "white" on the application, while, as she was soon to learn, the state of Louisiana considered her "colored." Investigating, Phipps learned that her great-great-great-great grandmother was a slave. As Davis (1991:10) tells the story, she "always thought she was white, had lived as white, and had twice married as white." Others believe she looks white, and she has siblings who have blond hair and blue eyes. Nevertheless, Phipps lost her court case and, at least in Louisiana, she and her children remain legally black.

What makes one a member of "a race" also differs with geography. For example, African Americans who travel to Brazil sometimes find that once they step off of the plane (into a land where the one-drop rule is not at work) they are no longer considered black. Likewise, Brazilians who become Brazilian Americans may well learn that they are indeed black in the United

States but not in Brazil (Degler 1971). Similarly, the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* group people of very different ethnic backgrounds. Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and Peruvian Americans are lumped together into a single, overly homogeneous racial classification that hides tremendous differences in culture and economic power. And although Italian Americans are now commonly assumed to be white, this has not always been the case. Indeed, Texas Democrats once explicitly forbade Italian Americans from voting in their primaries on the grounds that they were not white (*New York Times* 4/12/04).

As I said, the contested status of these categories is not exclusively apparent to those who recognize them as tools of historical oppression. With academic skill and political acumen, opponents of affirmative action move to turn this lack of structure to their own ends. These critics point to the porousness of racial boundaries, to underinclusion and overinclusion in every attempt to draw racial demarcations. These political foes, including members of the state and federal judiciary, seize upon differences within, and similarities across, categories as a strategy designed to make the impossibility of objectivity in the administration of the policy fatal to the policy.

As a U.S. district court, having had *Adarand v. Pena* (515 U.S. 200) remanded to it by the U.S. Supreme Court, concluded: "[We] find it difficult to envisage a race based classification that is narrowly tailored. By its very nature, such a program is both underinclusive and overinclusive. This seemingly contradictory result suggests the criteria are lacking in substance as well as in reason" (quoted in La Noue and Sullivan 2001:85).

The opponents who cite this court opinion conclude that categories as they function in affirmative action policies are not closely tied ("narrowly tailored") to the discrimination that they are supposed to remedy. Lawmakers, they maintain, have never carefully considered the problem of defining who is, and who is not, included in definitions of protected groups. Rather, these choices have always been made for political expedience and away from public view. Furthermore, sustained by the momentum of a rapidly growing federal bureaucracy, "there was almost never any independent examination of whether the federally defined groups fit any theory of social justice or equity" (La Noue and Sullivan 2001:71).

George La Noue and John Sullivan have hit upon the insight that a lack of objective structure in racial-classification systems also indicates a lack of objective structure in racialized experiences. For the link between discrimination-caused social disadvantage and categories of protected peoples to be made, they claim, there must be a provable commonality of experiences that lead rationally to the formation of a demographic category as a protected category. And they find no such proof. "What if some Hispanic and some Asian American groups are above and some are below the mean? What if some white groups are below some Hispanic or some Asian groups? Both possibilities would suggest that there was no commonality of experiences of

the affirmative action categories and that racial discrimination was not the most probable cause of the differences that exist. It would further suggest that the affirmative action categories are themselves overinclusive and therefore constitutionally suspect" (2001:80).

Affirmative action will be successfully attacked if its defenders, foolishly, rush to defend terrain where the empirical status of "race" is at issue. Like "individuals" and "discrimination" and "merit" and "experience," race has no inherent structure. Insisting on objectively present racial groupings that have objectively present experiences will only hasten our political defeat. Our opponents can point quite correctly to the indefensibility of what can only always be constructed and contestable boundaries.

Pursuing precisely this strategy, one of these scholars (Sullivan) has already participated in fifteen separate legal challenges to affirmative action policies. Mapping the technique for like-minded allies, La Noue and Sullivan (2001:77) cite the following language from an Ohio State Court decision. Here we find an example of the underinclusive quality of racial categories. This court has taken issue with Ohio's decision to not include Lebanese Americans in the protected group, "Orientals."

> Working our way north and west from India we first come to Pakistan, then Iran, then Iraq, then Syria, and finally Lebanon. If Asian Indians are "Oriental," shall we exclude Pakistanis separated from India only by the Great Indian Desert? And if Pakistanis are "Oriental," shall we exclude Iranians who share a common border with Pakistan? And if Iran is "Oriental," shall we exclude Iraq, separated from Iran only by the Zagros Mountains? And if Iraq is "Oriental," shall we exclude Syria, for the Euphrates River flows through both countries? And finally if Syria is "Oriental," how can its contiguous neighbor Lebanon be anything but "Oriental"?

La Noue and Sullivan (2001:85) conclude, "if the courts are going to reexamine the composition of the affirmative action categories, it will be important for social scientists to produce better data than currently exist." The epistemological faith of these political opponents has not yet waned. As we shall see, we can use this shortcoming to our advantage.

To summarize, the central features of these heated debates—"race," "discrimination," "individual," and "merit"—lack mutually identifiable structure. Intelligent people disagree about what these concepts mean and find little common basis for their measurement. European Americans and people of color, in frighteningly large proportions, disagree about the significance of color in early twenty-first-century America. The interpretive possibilities for assigning significance to racialized experiences are overwhelmingly complex and competing. An efficacious defense of affirmative action must accept this lack of structure and embrace its textual and genealogical complexity.

Defending Affirmative Action:
Understanding the Sustaining Genealogies

Both critics and proponents of affirmative action seek to produce a realist normalcy for their viewpoints and to render those of their opponents deviant and unnatural. Typically, a detailed normativity is spelled out and used as the basis for constructing its own foil. Through a binary logic, one's opponents are painted as threats to venerated cultural narrations that operate with the power of folklore in Americans' self-understandings. All sides appeal to older, sacred images and narratives. These genes (this genealogy) are the conditions of possibility of the most politically powerful arguments for and against affirmative action. Scholars also work within these unstable discourses. Academic works necessarily take their point of departure from the logics that these culturally specific, discursive-formations maintain.[17]

From March of 1995 until November of 1996, I collected hundreds of newspaper articles, magazine features, talk-show recordings, and news programs focused on affirmative action. This period includes the November 1996 passage of a state ballot measure (#209) overturning affirmative action policies in California and the July 1995 end to affirmative action programs on all nine University of California campuses. I also recorded nearly five hours of testimony from many dignitaries who spoke before the University Board of Regents prior to that decision.

I found four binary themes to be regular features of the debate. Opponents of affirmative action speak and write regularly of "merit" versus "special preferences" and "quotas"; and of "unity" (read "Americans") versus "racial divisiveness." Proponents repeatedly articulate their positions as "equal opportunity" versus "continuing discrimination" and as "inclusion of diversity" versus "policies of exclusion."[18] Affective, politically focused sociology calls for being aware of these binary politics, their genealogical possibility, and devising, accordingly, specific textual strategies.[19]

In an essay on genealogy and history, Foucault recounts the fundamental link between interpretive work and politics.

> If interpretation were the slow exposure of meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations. The role of genealogy is to record its history: the history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts, the history of the concept of liberty or of the ascetic life; as they stand for the emergence of different interpretations, they must be made to appear as events on the stage of historical process. (1971/1977:151–52)

Our responsibility, as we learned in chapter 3, is to understand something of the "systems of rules," the discursive domains that are the historical possibility of our self-understandings. We are to understand these ruling discursive logics, this "history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts" as "imposing direction." And these impositions are "surreptitious" and "violent" inasmuch as they avoid our critical interrogation. That is, they are "surreptitious" because they operate in the unquestioning, unaware darkness of simple assumption and acceptance. And they are "violent" because our lack of critical attention limits the opportunities leading from other possibilities, from other competing interpretations. Finally, our attention to the long history of interpretations teaches us that complex genealogies can be "bent to a new will." Existing domains of discursive logic can be "forced to participate in a different game."

In an essay on social science and humanism, Derrida makes a similar point.

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words, throughout his entire history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play. The second interpretation of interpretation, to which Nietzsche pointed the way, does not seek . . . the inspiration of a new humanism. (1966/1978:292)

In both citations we find the now familiar abandonment of any search for metaphysical truth, the abandonment of "ontotheology" (of any theologically constant theme underlying human existence). Derrida's "interpretation of interpretation" celebrates the recognition that analysis always happens within textual economies of différance. Far from "deciphering a truth or an origin," analysis poststructuralist style does not "dream of the full presence" of studied objects. We have no dream of an epistemology that "escapes play [of différance] and the order of the sign." Because poststructuralists understand that we are constituted in this play, we are not "exiles." We do not long to stand outside of politics. We are cultural and political workers for social change. We turn now to the genealogy that sustains the binary themes just outlined.

We begin with the "merit" versus "special preferences/quotas" binary. For centuries, Americans have been taught to value our unique abilities, to celebrate individual accomplishment, and to emulate those with "drive and determination." In his classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* Max Weber (1904–5/1996) traces this veneration of self-created accomplishment to the seventeenth-century, Puritan settlements of eastern North America. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination taught that all were saved or damned from birth and that created immense anxiety among Puritans. This

ever-present angst found its only relief in vigilant industriousness. Since the Puritan God did not exchange glances with his subjects, did not post grades or hold office hours, evidence of one's salvation or damnation was to be found only in the earthly blessings that he bestowed. Those who believed without question—and waning faith was a sure sign that one was not among the saved—led ascetic, disciplined lives. When hard work and thriftiness brought earthly rewards, the faithful knew that God was pleased and that they were among the chosen.

By the colonial period, Weber teaches, the doctrine of predestination had "died away," but the cultural ethos that equated hard work and frugality (asceticism) in the pursuit of earthly accomplishment with the highest moral behavior had been institutionalized. The "self-made man" or, as Weber says, "the man of vocation" had by the late eighteenth century become an American ideal. Weber hears the epitome of this cultural ethic in the words of Benjamin Franklin. Although Americans may not be able to trace the pithy, sometimes rhyming moral maxims of Franklin to the man himself, most of us have heard them, can repeat them from memory, and understand them intuitively. Who has not heard: "A penny saved is a penny earned"; "time is money"; and "early to bed and early to rise make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise"?

This cultural lore of self-made success and failure is a widespread theme in our children's stories. As kids, virtually all of us heard the story of the industrious ant that worked all summer while the happy-go-lucky grasshopper fiddled and sang through the long months of sunshine when prudence demanded he should have been working—"saving for a rainy day" as another colloquial example of the same mythos describes. We know of the "slow but sure" dedication of the tortoise and the overconfident, over-indulgences of the hare who our shell-encumbered hero beat to the finish line. And how many of us smiled in our youth when Charlie, the only economically unspoiled kid in the group, handed over the ill-gotten "everlasting gob-stopper" to Mr. Wonka, thereby earning his rightful place as heir to the throne of a candy dreamland?

Although the following list is far from comprehensive, it contains movie titles, musical lyrics, epigrams, and popular quotations:

Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.
The Lord helps those who help themselves.
If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
Winners never quit and quitters never win.
Full of pith and vigor.
You have to want it more than the other guy.
Only the strong survive.
The Right Stuff.
You can't keep a good man down.
We all get what we deserve.
Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
Got everything I own by the sweat of my brow.

The power of these pieces of cultural text is evident in the fact that they need no explanation. Their meaning appears self-evident to virtually all Americans. Their genealogical trajectories are old, multifaceted, and wholly institutionalized. Given the time and space, we might trace their emergence as discursive organizational schemes to multiple historical sites. Certainly their governing power, their capacity to discursively narrate American subjectivities into dutiful agents of an ideology of individual "merit," have not only a religious genealogy but also an extended complex of political genes. The bloody class politics of the French Revolution and the laissez faire economic liberalism it gave birth to are powerful conditions of possibility of these bits of American collective consciousness. The learned and inherited rules for how one becomes and acts as a "good person" in American culture, then, is much older than American society. These inherited teachings have an extended genealogy stretching across political and economic revolutions, oceans and continents, and several centuries. As former senator Jesse Helms notes in one of his frequent attacks on affirmative action, "the Founding Fathers intended the American republic to be 'a merit based society'" (Cose 1995:34).

Because the long discursive trajectories that make individual merit a sacred American ideal are wholly reified, these cultural maxims act as a kind of analytic ground-zero where debates about morality and agency take shape. These teachings feel reassuring because they cut to the very core of Americans' self-perceptions. As Senator Phil Graham articulated this ethic in a nationally televised speech during his unsuccessful run for the presidency, "my momma said . . . if you work hard and make good grades some day you can have a house like that" (1995).

No proponent of affirmative action can hope to combat a binary that successfully places her inside this discursively produced normalcy and positions her as its opponent. When critics of affirmative action invoke "merit," they are activating, via textual and genealogical relations, all of these elements and their long emotional histories. This cultural reservoir was the possibility of the power of former governor Pete Wilson's words attacking affirmative action at the University of California. "[E]very high school graduate in California should have an equal opportunity to compete for admissions to the UC system based on individual merit. . . . Admission to the UC isn't an entitlement that should be distributed based on some quota. It's something to be earned based on hard work and individual excellence" (1996:A21).

In the months leading up to the overturning of affirmative action policies at the University of California and statewide in California via ballot measure, proponents of affirmative action were painted as opponents of meritocracy and, thereby, as virtually anti-American. Opponents blasted these policies as a "regime of race and sex-based quotas, preferences, and set-asides" (California Civil Rights Initiative Web Site 1996). *Time* magazine chastised a successful businessman for receiving "a federal handout . . . simply because he is black" (Birnbaum 1995). *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published an editorial by

the president of the National Association of Scholars charging affirmative action to be "conspicuously at odds with evaluating the intellectual merit of individual students, scholars, and ideas" (Balch 1996:A44). Although not mentioning affirmative action specifically, Newt Gingrich made political use of textual imagery featuring race and merit by blaming a brutal triple murder on "a welfare system which subsidized people for doing nothing" (Associated Press 1995). Puddington (1996:76–77) asserted, "thousands of whites have . . . been passed over for civil-service jobs and university admissions because of outright quotas for racial minorities." And, to vote against a ballot measure eradicating the taking of affirmative action to force compliance with the Civil Rights Act, progressives found themselves rejecting ballot language that mimicked that same Civil Rights Act.

Imagine voting to protect a policy designed to force compliance with federal antidiscrimination legislation by voting against language contained in that same legislation! Those of us on the losing side of this struggle were forced to mark "no" next to a ballot measure that read in part, "Generally prohibits discrimination or preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, education, and contracting." This example alone should suffice to prove that affirmative action itself has no inherent structure, "no essential meaning," beyond the discursive struggles to narrate its reality. What it is and what it is understood to accomplish or promote are always already part "of structure, of sign, and of play." Indeed what critics have done so successfully in their attack on affirmative action is to hijack the discursive formations of the civil rights movement and "bend [them] to a new will," "forc[ing] participation in a different game." This highly successful maneuver continues, and affirmative action beneficiaries are everyday painted as undeserving recipients of "special preferences" that steal opportunities rightfully belonging to more meritorious white men. Consider, for example, the following linking of racial prejudices to patriotism: "One of the patriotic Americans who flew a bombing mission over Afghanistan last Sunday was a guy named Vinnie. A few more bombing raids and President Bush will be able to cruise over Afghanistan in a Piper Cub puddle-jumper without risk. But guys like Vinnie are discriminated against by their own government in favor of Pakistani immigrants named 'Osama' (Coulter 2001:7).

It is folly to attempt to combat these attacks by trying to prove who and what is most meritorious. Every attempt to measure something as elusive as "merit" is doomed to simply reveal its designer's political choices. There is no structure here and the search for one is a waste of political and intellectual energy. What is required is an understanding of the discursive combat surrounding the concept. What we ought to be asking is how we might seize, strategically, this "series of interpretations" and return its genealogical power to our side.

With this in mind, it is no great feat to portray middle-class whites as the largest beneficiaries of "special preferences." The goal of progressive social scientists should be to place these depictions before the public in nonacademic,

popular forums. David Wellman (1997:317–18), quite strategically, wonders why so few combatants "show much concern for the 'unqualified' but wealthy white recipients of the preferential admissions policies practiced by expensive and exclusive Ivy League colleges. . . . In 1988, more than one in six of Harvard freshmen (280 of 1,602) had fathers who had attended Harvard. If these alumni children were admitted at the same rate as other applicants, their numbers would drop by nearly two hundred. That figure is more than the total number of students of color enrolled in the entire 1988 entering class."

More than any other interested party, sociologists have the academic tools to illustrate these advantages—these "special preferences" that are taken for granted and thus largely invisible to those who enjoy them. As Michael S. Kimmel (2003:3) quite aptly notes:

> To be white, or straight, or male, or middle class is to be simultaneously ubiquitous and invisible. You're everywhere you look, you're the standard against which everyone else is measured. You're like water, like air. People will tell you they went to see a "woman doctor," or they will say they went to see "the doctor." People will tell you they have a "gay colleague," or they'll tell you about a "colleague." A white person will be happy to tell you about a "black friend," but when that same person simply mentions a "friend," everyone will assume that the person is white. Any college course that doesn't have the word "woman" or "gay" or "minority" in its title is a course about men, heterosexuals, and white people. But we call those courses "literature," "history," or "political science."

This lack of perception of their own advantages should be publicly linked to the economic power that whites continue to disproportionately enjoy. For example, isn't growing up in a stable household with well-educated parents who can provide for one's every material need a "special preference"? Should attending and assuming that one has the right to attend the wealthiest schools, even as the grossest inequalities exist in neighboring school districts populated largely by ethnic minorities, be considered a "special preference"? What about the fact that disproportionately greater percentages of black and brown children are exposed everyday to street violence and to the mistakes of overzealous police forces? Do the cozy suburban nights of middle-class, white kids constitute "special preferences"? And what of the behaviors modeled by well-educated, "well-adjusted," suburban parents? Do these kids, because they are less often forced to witness (in the most stark terms born of immediate proximity) the self-destructive behaviors of neighbors, parents, siblings, and friends enjoy a "special preference"?

When these re-articulations are placed front and center in the debate over affirmative action, notions of "merit" and "special preferences" are redeployed against those whose advantages must not be allowed to remain conspicuously absent from the fray. Defenders of affirmative action (civically

minded sociologists) need to apprehend and redirect the invisibility of white privilege into the plain view of those who benefit from it each and every day.

To combat the long and deeply rooted textual chains called forth by discourses of meritocracy, defenders of affirmative action resurrect equally powerful genealogies that recollect the vast imagery of American ideals of fair play. Belief in the sanctity of "equal opportunity" and disdain for the racial segregation that fomented the civil rights movement remain powerful emotions for modern Americans. The "equal opportunity" versus "continuing discrimination" binary proves to be an efficacious discursive weapon.

Once again, I offer a list of textual inscriptions. This one includes slogans, excerpts from famous speeches and documents, moral maxims, a song title, and other folkloric elements.

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.
> I have a dream!
> Every little boy can be president.
> Prime-time television and cinema movies featuring all-white juries and
>   black defendants.
> "Good ol' boys."
> Old film clips of police and dogs attacking civil rights activists in Southern
>   cities.
> A fair fight.
> Healthy competition.
> A level playing field.
> Pull for the underdog.
> Watch out for the little guy.
> An equal opportunity employer.
> We shall overcome.
> Cheaters never win.
> A chance to prove myself.

Defenders of affirmative action testifying before the University of California Board of Regents prior to the vote overturning that university's admissions policy spoke eloquently from painful memories of discrimination. They recalled the humiliation visited upon Japanese Americans by World War II internment camps, the genocide carried out against Native Americans, and shared many personally endured examples of contemporary racism.

In one particularly dramatic moment, Jesse Jackson linked former governor George Wallace of Alabama to the quietly listening governor Wilson of California. Urging Wilson to "stand on the right side of history," Jackson (with remorse in his eyes and honesty in his voice) insisted that the withholding of equal educational opportunities "was the platform for Wallace in Alabama and now, Mr. Governor, it is the platform for you here in California." Looking directly into Wilson's eyes, he urged the governor to "look back on the images

of burning buildings in Los Angeles in May of 92 and be reminded of the crushed hopes and expectations."

Establishing a textual lineage running from sacred images of civil rights activism in the South to more recent violence rooted in urban racial antagonism and then to the preservation of affirmative action is a powerful political maneuver. Indeed, a television campaign aired in the days before measure 209 passed went so far as to visually associate, hooded Klansmen, burning crosses, and anti-affirmative action politicians. Wrongfully denied opportunities to compete for a piece of the American dream is a theme that will continue to resonate with the voting public. As defenders of affirmative action, we should continue to exploit the discursive power made possible by the quickly accessed imagery and thus potent genealogy of earlier civil rights struggles.

Although I already argued that scientific attempts to tell the truth about affirmative action are destined to reassert metaphysical aspirations, it is foolish to neglect the political authority that social scientific depictions of social inequality provide. In our intellectual era, still so heavily colored by Plato, Descartes, and Bacon, the persuasive power of all things deemed "scientific" is immense. Strategically exploited, this faith can work to the overwhelming advantage of those defending affirmative action.

William J. Wilson (1996:111–46, 243–46) has gathered interview data from 170 Chicago-area, private employers. These data are stark, candid, and extended. They illustrate *deeply* racist attitudes that can be juxtaposed and linked to claims that "color blindness" is a reality or that minorities deserve our plight. Asked if he believed that some racial groups are more employable than others, the head of a car transport company responded:

> Definitely! I don't think, I know: I've seen it over a period of 30 years. I have it right in here. Basically, the Oriental is much more aggressive . . . than the Hispanic. The Hispanics, except Cubans of course, they have the work ethnic [*sic*]. The Hispanics are mañana, mañana, mañana—tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. (Wilson 1996:112)

From the vice president of a printing firm, speaking of blacks, we hear:

> Well, I worked with them in the military, and the first chance they get, they'll slack off, they don't want to do the job, they feel like they don't have to, they're a minority. They want to take the credit and shift the blame. (Wilson 1996: 118–19)

A suburban employer adds:

> You have . . . inner-city women who are, in effect, paid to have more children that they can't support. Doesn't make any difference whether they have a husband or not. They will have more children because the welfare check will be

bigger. They will abandon them . . . the bad ones will abandon them. . . . They have no intention of looking for a job. (Wilson 1996:126)

Feagin and Sikes (1994) have published an equally impressive collection of interviews with hundreds of middle-class, African American professionals. The indignities recorded there illustrate that middle-class status does not ensure equal treatment. Consider, for example, the ignominious hassle a news anchorperson has while attempting to do something as simple as rent a car over the telephone.

> I could get a wonderful, enthusiastic reaction. . . . I would work that up to such a point that this person would probably shower me with roses once they got to see me. And then when I would show up, and they're surprised to see that I'm black, I sort of remind them in conversation how welcome my [business] was, to . . . embarrass . . . them, and I go through with my dealings. In fact, once my sister criticized me for putting [what] she calls my "white on white" voice on to get a rental car. . . . I knew that if I could get this guy to think that he was talking to some blonde, rather than, you know, so . . . I don't have to deal with that, I want to get the car. (Feagin and Sikes 1994:54–55)

And an African American professor, speaking of the need for careful interaction with police, offers the following insight:

> [One problem with] being black in America is that you have to spend so much time thinking about stuff that most white people just don't even have to think about. I worry when I get pulled over by a cop. I worry because the person that I live with is a black male, and I have a teen-aged son. I worry what some white cop is going to think when he walks over to our car, because he's holding onto a gun. And I'm very aware of how many black folks accidentally get shot by cops. I worry when I walk into a store, that someone's going to think I'm in there shoplifting. And I have to worry about that because I'm not free to ignore it. And so, that thing that's supposed to be guaranteed to all Americans, the freedom to just be yourself is a fallacious idea. And I get resentful that I have to think about things that a lot of people, even my very close white friends . . . simply don't have to worry about. (Feagin and Sikes 1994:68)

In a sadly humorous passage, Feagin and Sikes (1994:53) recount how then presidential candidate Jesse Jackson was mistaken for a bellhop and tipped by a white woman awaiting the same elevator in an upscale New York hotel. Although Jackson was impeccably dressed and a regular feature of the national news, she reportedly handed him a dollar bill and gushed, "I couldn't have made it downstairs without you."

Increasingly, social scientists have sought to solidify a broader more comprehensive account of affirmative action and its societal effects. Barbara Reskin

(1998:ix), in her preface to a summarizing compilation of empirical research, a compilation sponsored by the American Sociological Association, refers to this effort as an attempt to "ferret out myth from reality based strictly on scientific data and research." Even as a poststructuralist balks at her Cartesian appeal to an extra-political, objective structure, the book can only be read as an overwhelming endorsement for staying the affirmative action course in the United States.

Reskin's (1998:26) analysis emphasizes the long list of major corporate employers convicted of racial and gender discrimination in recent years. These include Texaco, Circuit City, British Petroleum of the United States, Burlington Industries, Canon Business Machines, Honeywell Corporation, Kimberly Clark, Lucky Stores, Mariott Hotels, Merril-Lynch, and Shoney's restaurant chain. Concluding that "discrimination in job assignment and promotion—whether the result of intentional acts or customary business practices—is still common" (22), Reskin asserts,

> Despite the impact of anti-discrimination law on job integration and the good-faith efforts of many employers to diversify their workforces, the strength of habit in people's ways of thinking and organizations' ways of doing business means that more concerted efforts are necessary to eliminate discriminatory barriers. Weakening or ending affirmative action at the very least would slow the progress that minorities and women have made in entering the economic mainstream. . . . Without government pressure for affirmative action, cronyism will reign supreme, and those protected by affirmative action . . . will stand to lose. Eliminating affirmative action will increase job discrimination based on sex and race and the wage gap between white men and other groups (1998:92).

In an equally comprehensive review of the economics scholarship on affirmative action, Harry Holzer and David Neumark (2000:499–500) are only slightly less enthusiastic:

> . . . it is our view that increasingly subtle arguments are needed to explain away evidence consistent with discrimination as newer, more reliable evidence is obtained in response to earlier criticisms. In contrast, a uniform, relatively simple behavior—discrimination—can explain much of both the older and newer evidence. . . . [A] reasonable conclusion from all of the evidence that the "playing field" in the labor market is not yet level across the various groups.

These are the authoritative pronouncements of scientists adorned with impressive credentials, but they are not enough to secure political victory. We cannot afford to assume that the "equal opportunity" versus "continuing discrimination" binary is securely in our bag of discursive weapons. Opponents of affirmative action are willing and quite capable of identifying and attacking the political decisions that go into all scientific research. Indeed, as we heard

in the opening epigraph to the chapter, Connerly (2000: 225) refers to victims of discrimination as "theoretical speculations."

As a key architect of the scrapping of affirmative action in California and a leading spokesperson for similar attempts in other states, Connerly is a highly prominent figure in this battle. In his autobiographical text, *Creating Equal,* he asserts that his cause is the rightful heir to the civil rights movement. In one impassioned passage, he maintains that it is defenders of affirmative action who are "the heirs of George Wallace." As such, he claims, we are "protecting a corrupt and outmoded way of life." Calling us "bitter-enders," he accuses us of furthering a modern echo of Wallace's infamous words: "Preferences today! Preferences tomorrow! Preferences forever!" (2000: 241).

Connerly's strategy is not uncommon. Color blindness is the only fair avenue to advancement and achievement in the modern United States, this argument proceeds, regardless of what inequality statistics might indicate about the present. These detractors seek nothing less than to turn powerful civil rights genealogy against modern day civil rights activists. For example, color blindness, they claim, was the real goal of Martin Luther King Jr.; and, accordingly, they used King's 1997 birthday to announce the formation of their "American Civil Rights Institute." This is a bold tactic but one that can be soundly defeated, if proponents are intelligent in our rejoinders.

First of all, we have the elders of that great fight for equality squarely in our camp. We also have the familial heirs of those leaders, including Martin Luther King III, publicly expressing their outrage over this turn of events. In the days after the stunt on his father's birthday, King III exclaimed that he was "appalled at the audacity" (Lempinen 1997:A 17) of Connerly and of the other foes of affirmative action. Second, we need to publicly and resolutely interrogate Connerly about the dubiousness of his color blindness ideal. Does he really believe that his own status as a person of color has nothing to do with how his words play in the minds of his white supporters? Does Connerly not see that were his supporters as color blind as they claim he would not now be the prominent anti-affirmative action spokesperson that he is? Indeed, it is precisely because they are *not at all* color blind that Connerly gets the press that he does. No white businessperson, politician, or activist saying the things that Connerly says would receive the same attention. His political utility (and those of other reactionary people of color) is that he makes the arguments that right-wingers want to hear *and that he is a person of color* making them.

Seeking to combat the power of social scientific narrations of racial inequality, opponents of affirmative action argue that they are in favor of equality of opportunity but opposed to any forced "equality of results." This is, of course, an attempt to turn the discussion back to the genealogical terrain of merit, where their advantage is a distinct one. However, to force this re-articulation, they are increasingly required to acknowledge that poverty—regardless of the color of its victims—is a serious impediment to merit-based competition. Accordingly, we have begun to hear opponents of affirmative

action (including Connerly) announce their support for policies that recognize the structural impediments presented by economic hardship while strictly forbidding considerations of race and gender. This is a remarkable turn of events in American politics.

For more than a century, serious public discussion of class antagonisms has been effectively stifled by a discourse of jingoistic, anti-communism that Americans thoroughly internalized. While still mostly unable to say the actual words "socioeconomic class," media personalities and politicians have begun to talk substantively about a concept that has long been of critical importance to the work of sociologists. This amounts to an opening of textual terrain, a political opportunity that can be exploited. Talk of social class can now be associated with a genealogy of fair play and, for the political moment, will not to be completely overwhelmed by textual associations with patriotic anti-communism. As such, it is an occasion for civically minded sociologists to push class politics into a substantially larger feature of American political contests.

For example, because the affirmative action debate will continue to force Americans to consider connections between wealth and limited access to the best schools and universities, it also provides an opportunity for strategically minded social scientists to publicly articulate the relationship between wealth and the political decisions that result in these artificial limits. Why isn't there enough space in schools and why aren't the schools and the universities that we do have, better and more equitably funded? Whose money, we should be asking everyday on the talk shows and editorial pages, contributes to legislative decisions that rank prisons over schools, military weaponry over schools, and corporate subsidies (which we should pronounce as "welfare") over schools? Indeed, the whole corpus of conflict-oriented sociology could be pulled into productive use in a train of textual connections led by capable social scientists bent not on "remaining objective" but on wielding political influence.

Through careful political planning, sociologists can work to force widespread public recognition of connections between class inequality and the likelihood of exposure to environmental toxins, life span expectancies, rates of mental illness, rates of incarceration, and lack of health insurance. Conversely, sociologists who continue to expend energy attempting to separate politics from truth will remain hopelessly unequipped to understand the political possibilities contained in the textual terrains that are the ongoing and unstable conditions of possibility of their research trajectories.

Sociologists need to talk to the media. We need to pay attention to the narratives that are culturally current in media representations of the political problems we care about. What discursive imagery is afoot? What genealogies are at work? What aspects of our science must we deploy and under what polemically minded titles if we are to gain the attention of the media? If the media will only cover provocative, image-potent sound bytes, then we should speak in those terms. Although no scholar relishes having her analysis reduced to a few seconds of airtime, these seconds can be used to provoke further

discussions. For example, and as I have already said, we should make "special preferences"—a sound-byte-length phrase repeated again and again in "objective" media appraisals of affirmative action—about middle-class white folks. Again, the point is that our intellectual attention should be turned to assessing political discourse and our capacity to manipulate it for our own ends.

Opponents of affirmative action portray themselves as champions of "unity/Americans" and as opponents of "racial divisiveness." Being color-blind, they insist, means celebrating our commonality as citizens of the greatest nation on the planet. As former Republican nominee for president Robert Dole argues, "we must return as a people to the original concept of what it means to be an American." Apparently aware of the fact that his comment was overly vague, even for a political speech, he added that as president he would work to ban college courses aimed at "instilling ethnic pride" in what he called "the embarrassed to be American crowd" (Shogan 1995). Similarly, former governor Wilson of California has referred to affirmative action as "a virus that is leading to the tribalisation of America" (Gunnison 1996). Like the arguments organized through each of the other binary themes, these charges have political efficacy because they recall and strategically deploy (via *différance*) a larger and temporally extensive complex of discursive genes.

The following examples of this textual weave include the title of the former first lady's book, slogans that have been used to the point of cliché, additional famous words from a founding document of the republic, and an image of a crowd enveloped by the power of group-exacerbated patriotism.

One nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.
E pluribus unum.
United we stand and divided we fall.
There is no I in team.
Don't fight among yourselves.
Just one big happy family.
I got your back.
Divide and conquer.
No man is an island.
Take one for the team.
It Takes a Village.
60,000 standing baseball fans facing the flag, hats in hands, singing the
    National Anthem the day after the bombing of Baghdad.

The appeal of unity, of common bonds is most likely even older than the ideology of meritocracy. Probably, it has its origins in the communal roots of all human beings. Whatever its extended and species-wide origins, unity and "teamwork" are old and constant themes in American life. Our leaders sell themselves by wrapping their personas in red, white, and blue contexts and by incessantly reciting patriotic platitudes designed to evoke what social

psychologists call "we feelings" among their listeners. Most of us were taught to memorize the Pledge of Allegiance in primary schools and before we had any sense of what the words meant or why the standing recitation was any more important than any other moment of our daily routines. Millions of American kids have been dressed uniformly in Scouts' attire or seen a ball game dressed in team colors.

Defenders of affirmative action will lose should our critics succeed in painting us as protractors of unpatriotic civic division. Sensing the potential advantage contained in this binary, our opponents regularly go so far as to depict us as de facto racial segregationists. For example, in his testimony before the University of California Board of Regents, former dean of graduate studies John Ellis lamented that "any objective observer" recognizes that "affirmative action cases" are "a disaster for campus race relations [doing] enormous damage to the entire fabric of campus life" (Dumont 1998:228). Likewise, Adam Cohen (1999:58) accuses: "The Democratic Party is built around these hyphenated groups." And, a philosopher at the University of Michigan publicly proclaims affirmative action at his campus a "catastrophe . . . bad for the university and for society" that "polarized the campus" around "the issue of race" (Abouali 2002: 13).

Politically astute sociologists should quickly insist that little or no racial unity has ever existed in the United States. Strategically articulated amid the right textual openings, structuralist sociology can also become a potent attack on the "unity/Americans" versus "racial divisiveness" binary. For example, Jerome Karabel (1997:30), in a bimonthly publication reaching well beyond academic audiences, insists on the irony in William F. Buckley Jr.'s bombastic support of California ballot measure 209 (the so-called California Civil Rights Initiative). Watching Buckley invoke the 1964 Civil Rights Act as the foundation of his argument against affirmative action, Karabel (30) shrewdly retrieves and enlists ("force[s] participation in a different game") Buckley's very public opposition to that great legislation. In 1957, Buckley helped lead the charge against unity, stridently defending the discriminatory attitudes of white Americans who wished to avoid sharing the vote with black and brown Americans. "The central question that emerges is whether the white community . . . is entitled to take such measures as are necessary to prevail, politically, and culturally, in areas in which it does not predominate numerically. The sobering answer is Yes—the white community is so entitled because, for the time being, it is the advanced race. . . . The question, as far as the white community is concerned, is whether the claims of civilization supersede those of universal suffrage."

Sociologists and historians have accumulated massive documentation of the virulently imposed segregation visited upon minority populations by whites in the twentieth century. These anti-unity recollections should be explicitly linked—again, in public spaces and not just in academic forums—to the insidious segregation that persists at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

For example, Duster (1998:111–33) carefully and explicitly recalls the strategic inner workings of Congress and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in

the months leading up to the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935. I wonder how many Americans realize that this foundation of modern American citizenship was engineered to exclude agricultural workers and domestic servants? Agricultural workers and domestic servants were of course overwhelmingly racialized minorities.

We should ask, then, how many of today's white critics of affirmative action have benefited from their grandparents' inclusion in this institutionalized system of labor protections and wealth building? Conversely, how many black and brown grandchildren of field hands and servants have begun at a systematic disadvantage due to this government-imposed shackling of their grandparents? And what of the organized and methodical exclusion of racial minorities from labor unions and legalized collective bargaining? Obviously, the statutory exclusion of minorities from the American Federation of Labor and from other strong unions until the late 1950s gives the descendants of white unionized laborers a distinct advantage (a "special preference") in the modern competition for jobs and university admissions. But again, how many Americans know this history? Of the few that do, how many can place this recollection side by side in the same cognitive process with their individualist aversion to affirmative action?

Massey and Denton's (1993) detailing of the great lengths gone to by white politicians, real-estate agents, and neighborhood associations to ensure that blacks remained excluded from neighborhoods where home ownership and good schools acted as the foundation for wealth building in the twentieth century is equally damning to the argument that racial unity is somehow threatened by affirmative action. They convincingly demonstrate that black isolation in impoverished ghettos is the work of systematic and tireless manipulations by whites over several decades of the last century. With a thoughtful political deployment, such carefully gleaned evidence will reduce Governor Wilson's accusation that affirmative action is a "virus that is leading to the tribalisation of America" to an ugly display of blatant lying or to a reckless exhibit of historical ignorance.

Despite the significant progress made in race relations over the last century, nothing close to "American unity" has ever existed in the United States. Social science, stripped of its metaphysical desires and couched in the language of the political moment, can help make this ongoing racial apartheid into a prominent part of the struggle to maintain affirmative action.

The American celebration of diversity is our greatest genealogical weapon in this civic struggle. The westward migrating pioneers of the last century continue to be celebrated in our folklore as "free spirits." Tough guys ranging from martial arts experts to interstellar techno-warriors play out the cliché of the lone hero riding into the sunset over and over again in our movie houses. An asserted right to be different remains central to the socialization of our young. Some of this celebration of diversity is captured in the following list of textual elements:

Different strokes for different folks.
Live and let live.
A free thinker.
Do your own thing.
Broaden your horizons.
Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.
A nation of immigrants.
Multiculturalism.
We are all God's children.
An open forum of ideas.

Americans love to exclaim respect for diversity and allegiance to the equal inclusion of difference. The very idea of a legitimately functioning meritocracy depends, after all, on the assumption that all colors and creeds are free to compete in what *only* thereby becomes a fair race for prosperity. Yet, overly homogeneous, limited perspectives about race and merit will only survive where diverse experiences are locked out of the conversation.

Ironically, then, detractors of affirmative action have initiated for themselves the unenviable position of insisting that *only* those who are willing to tell courts and policymakers: "race does not matter" will be routinely admitted to the places where important conversations about race still manage to occur. As defenders of affirmative action, we will do well to publicly inquire: do our opponents believe, should they succeed in their exclusion of those most likely to disagree with them, that this exclusion can reasonably be expected to further Justice Scalia's claim that "we are all just one race here"? Is it not far more probable that forbidding talk of race in the rooms where decisions about admissions, hiring, and promotions are underway will have exactly the opposite affect? If restricting talk of race results in universities and boardrooms that are less and less diverse, doesn't this ultimately increase anxiety and anger about race? Can we heal our society by denying that the wounds of race exist, or does the healing process require Americans of different colors to hear from each other in as many contexts as possible about as many issues as possible?[20]

We might aptly read, then, the dubious claim that "affirmative action equals less-qualified minorities being admitted and hired" as a consequence of inadequate diversity in circles of power. Present in sufficient numbers and with sufficiently high statuses, racialized Americans will not allow simplistic and one-sided notions of what "merit" entails and does not entail to continue unchecked. Publicly promoted stereotypes and simplistic binaries cannot survive where adequate diversity is present.

We can illustrate this point by returning for a moment to our earlier discussion of Oprah Winfrey and black English. Because Winfrey is willing to "do black" when she feels the need, and because she is so visibly successful, her displays work to challenge the subtle (often unconscious) agreements about what black English means. Indeed, her bilingual abilities are rightly understood by

many of her viewers as a sign of social competence. Diversity in high places will make this type of challenge to institutionalized and discriminatory social agreements into a common occurrence. In other words, diversity in influential settings among high-status participants cannot help but set off definitional contests over "merit," "qualifications," and the meaning and significance of "race." Promoting familiarity with a wide range of discursive constructions of identity from many competing perspectives is key to widespread public recognition of differences of experience based on color.

The political efficacy of poststructuralist sociology, here, is the ability and will to understand subjectivity (and not a "theory of agency" or a "human nature" or any ontotheology) as a consequence of genealogical power struggles. What a racialized being "is" or "is not" has nothing to do with empirically verifiable structure. We are, rather, the effects of the many struggles that are, as Foucault says, the "history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts." Recognizing racializing discourses as political outcomes is civically empowering. Understood as discursive politics, identity can be publicly challenged and changed.

Coming Out of the Affirmative Action Closet:
Real Wo/men Do Need *these Programs*

Scholars of color who have enjoyed opportunity because of affirmative action need to get ourselves to the front of the line where politically expedient stories can be publicly given to other racialized Americans, allies who otherwise are at the mercy of the offensively debilitating, racializing discourses of our opponents.

Should our detractors succeed in painting affirmative action as the ill-begotten award of the underqualified, young people of color in this country will inevitably internalize the belief that "real wo/men don't need affirmative action."[21] Powerful lore that teaches that "strong individuals overcome all" is effectively countered when successful racialized and cultural others proudly and unabashedly proclaim (in all the colorful and painful details) that affirmative action made it possible for us to overcome great obstacles. Ironically, this long American tradition of naive individualism too often impedes the willingness of successful minorities to publicly confront this cultural lore. Accordingly, it is high time to come out of the affirmative action closet.

The following biographical narrative promotes an alternative appraisal of affirmative action, of what it does and what it is. Although my story could go back many more generations, I will take you only to 1940 and to the birth of my father on the Klamath Indian Reservation in southern Oregon. As a preschool age child he suffered the deep emotional traumas that come with being surrounded by raging alcoholism, violence, and other poverty-related social ills. He and his twin brother were often left at home alone for as much as a week at a time while my grandparents stayed drunk. Sometimes there was not

enough food, and they were left to fend for themselves. When they became old enough for the first grade, my uncle and my dad were taken on a Model T car trip that took days to complete. Farther away from home than either had ever been, they were deposited at a Catholic boarding school in Albany, Oregon. They saw little of their home for the next six full years. At Christmas, they were not allowed to return home, making do with boxes of Cracker Jacks sent in the mail as Christmas presents. During these formative years, Klamath ways and understandings were systematically, at times brutally, taken from and denied to them.

By the time they returned home from the boarding school, my grandfather was *the* town drunk and lived in a tent by the river. Although he remained a master carpenter, he carried a bottle of whiskey to work with him each day in his lunch pail. My grandparents divorced and my dad began getting into the kind of serious trouble that is to be expected of abused kids. Before long he was sent to a reform school in the northern part of the state where, ironically, he made lifelong friends with another Klamath boy who had endured a similar history. As dad tells the story, he and "Schultzy" were "the ruggies" of their respective "cottages," which meant that they were the toughest kids on campus. Respect at the reform school was awarded for hard fists and ruthlessness in a fight.

Remarkably (even heroically), my father finished high school, and, until I did the same twenty-two years later, he was the only member of our family to do so. After graduation, he enlisted in the United States Navy. However, the navy only brought a series of scarring confrontations with authority, and he was discharged before his time was up. When dad came home he was an alcoholic who got his respect by physically intimidating other men. He was feared and enjoyed the reputation. In 1961, he met and married my mother. She was the daughter of a logger and a logger's daughter. I was born shortly thereafter. When I was born, dad was in a logging camp not far from our reservation. When he was home, there was a lot of drinking and many vicious fights.

Some of my earliest memories are of my father in brutal brawls. As a boy of four or five, I watched from behind the windshield as two men holding him across the hood of our parked car repeatedly stabbed him in the head with a long screwdriver. Although my brother and mother and I were quite happy to see the police arrive that day, most of the time we were not. I saw my father and my uncle fight the police, and I saw other Indians brutally abused by the police. I remember my dad holding me on his shoulders to ensure that I had a clear view and instructing: "Watch! You see that? That's your cousin!" as police beat a handcuffed Indian man who they had bent over the back of their cruiser. I was well into my thirties before I was able to not instinctively hate all police officers.

When I was seven, my father quit drinking, and he fought much less often. This was the late 1960s, and it was also the era of President Richard Nixon's "goals and timetables." He became a crane operator and I remember our family being happy. I saw him as a responsible man who went to work every day

and was proud of the job that he did. By the 1970s, dad had given up his blue-collar job and became an extremely successful sporting goods salesperson. I loved to travel with him to the schools where he befriended and sold products to coaches and parents. He was an amazing salesman, brimming with confidence and intelligence. Later, he went to work selling insurance for New York Life and was, off and on, among the most successful in his office. Indeed, I vividly recall watching him in his suit and tie receiving an award at a large convention as he was applauded by hundreds of his fellow salespeople. I cannot say absolutely that my father's employers were following federal guidelines and desegregating their workforces, but it was the era when federal enforcement was at its strongest.

Although neither dad nor I was in the room when decisions to hire him were made, they were made. His successes at those jobs lasted through my early teenage years. I can tell you both as his son and as a sociologist that seeing him excel was fundamental to my own self-development. Although the good years did not last for our family, my father's chance to show what he could do when given the opportunity was profoundly important to me. Nevertheless, no one could completely overcome the trauma that as a sociologist I can locate in the racialized inequality of his origins. Those scars are deep, and, at least from my perspective, they are the reason why dad and I had a strained relationship for many years.

There is a long history of racial conflict between our tribe and the white police, merchants, and farmers who live on and around our traditional lands. We suffered a forced termination, and when my father and others of his generation were paid for those lands, stealing that money became something of a local sport. For example, when my parents tried to buy land that was to become valuable lakefront property, the paternalistic bank agent responsible for dispersing my dad's money would not agree to the sale because "it was a bad investment." Nevertheless, Indians routinely paid more than white folks for all manners of consumer goods—most notably cars. My mother vividly recalls a local pharmacist who brazenly invented charges for our family bill, and the current struggles over water in the region have dredged up all of the old racial antagonism anew. Although my Klamath friends and family might look at things differently, I feel that I have escaped from much of that life. The lives of my two sons are light years away from the hellish scenes that my father endured. Clayton and Jesse also live a much more stable and nurturing existence than my brother and I experienced.

I was the first in my family to graduate from college. I do not know if affirmative action played a role in my admission to Southern Oregon State College, but I graduated with a better than B average and a double major in political science and sociology. Although I certainly did not envision myself as the sort of person who would go to graduate school—I did not even take my undergraduate education very seriously—my professors and my grandmother urged me to apply. Because the alternative was working at a local grocery store

or at a lumber mill, I acquiesced and grandma typed my letter of intent on her old 1940s era typewriter. This time affirmative action definitely played a role, and I was admitted to the University of Oregon in the fall of 1985.

Although Eugene was only three hours from home, the Sociology Department and university campus might as well have been on Mars. Working-class kids were few and far between in graduate school, and I found myself surrounded by people who absolutely knew that they were destined to be accomplished scholars. I had never been around people who thought so highly of themselves, people for whom success and accomplishment were matter-of-fact expectations. I was overwhelmed and started slow, but I acclimated. Six years later, I had a Ph.D. and my family threw a two-day celebratory bash. Inebriated cousins slept in the hall, on the patio, and on the lawn of the apartment building where we lived. It was a grand occasion, and, if it had not been clear to me before, that celebration taught me that my accomplishments were about far more than myself.

When it came time to apply for jobs, I still struggled to imagine myself as a full-time academic, but I could at least envision it. Six years earlier, a whole different set of cultural assumptions and vastly alternative aspirations had made such a goal seem well beyond what I thought possible or even believed I desired. But my experiences in graduate school, it turns out, were an opportunity. And, all that I learned from professors and fellow students from all over the world transformed me. When I finally finished in 1991, I knew what I could do, and I was eager for the challenge. I also knew that without affirmative action, I, like my father before me, would not have gotten that opportunity to show myself and others (including my own sons) what we are capable of accomplishing.

I was hired at San Francisco State University in the fall of 1991. Once again, affirmative action played a role. My university has a longstanding commitment to the diversity of its faculty and its student body. I now come into regular contact with brown and black students, faculty, and *even* administrators whose backgrounds are not that different from my own. I thrive here and I am deeply passionate about what I do. And, with all due modesty, I am quite good at my work. With complete confidence, I would match my students, those which I teach, against those of any other professor at a comparable institution. Neither I nor, to the best of my knowledge, any of my students or colleagues have ever questioned whether I am "qualified" to do my work.

When I think back to before I was admitted to graduate school, I remember going to school full time and working thirty hours per week. I also worked every summer that I was in graduate school, which is something that almost none of my fellow graduate students did. I know that given the chance to work less or not at all while in college, I might have gotten straight A's as an undergraduate and finished my Ph.D. a year earlier. I also know, now, that with the boost from the high expectations that kids of more educated parents enjoyed, the wealthier extended families that they were surrounded by, and a

less tumultuous childhood, I would not have needed affirmative action. But I had to work those hours. I needed the opportunity that only affirmative action made possible. I clearly recognize, now, the direct connection between affirmative action and the transformation in self-appraisal that I underwent in graduate school and since joining the faculty at San Francisco State University. I also strongly suspect that my childhood pride for my father's transformation was directly connected to affirmative action. Without affirmative action, my life and my sons' lives would now be completely different. My boys go to decent schools, live in a stable home environment in a good neighborhood, and watch their parents strive for success in professional careers. They now have the "special preferences" that other middle-class kids have always had.

My story re-inscribes notions of "merit," "race," and "equal opportunity." The importance of diversity is also communicated in my narrative. When those of us who have benefited from affirmative action tell our stories publicly, we engage a powerful political tactic.

Summary

In this chapter, I again argued that sociologists, and particularly racialized intellectuals, are most effective when we reject the metaphysical imperatives of structuralist sociology. The key components of affirmative action politics—race, merit, individuality, and discrimination—have no essential structure. These regular features of the debate are textual inscriptions linked discursively to older genealogical trajectories. Thus their "reality" will not be revealed through disciplined epistemological stances.

I provided a poststructuralist analysis of how discursive political articulations create and maintain understandings of affirmative action. I have sought to reveal some of the long, complex genealogy that provides arguments for and against affirmative action with political power. I also offered a series of suggestions for how racialized and progressive sociologists can manipulate textual terrain for political gain. In direct opposition to claims of critics of poststructuralism, I argued that freedom from metaphysical longings enhances sociologists' capacity for civic work. In the tradition of C. Wright Mills, the promise of poststructuralist sociology lies in understanding how our theological and philosophical inheritances limit us. In the tradition of Friedrich Nietzsche, Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, it is also the chance to imagine going beyond those inheritances. With poststructuralism, as we heard Foucault say in the opening epigraph of the book, lies our best chance for achieving "the undefined work of freedom."

PARTING THOUGHTS

A modern democratic political community should be conceived,
as a discursive surface, not as an empirical referent.
—Chantal Mouffe (1992:14)

I have argued that structuralist dreams of a fully present and empirically available reality are faith-based inheritances that ultimately impede sociologists' capacity for formidable political influence. The hope that a perfect society will one day bloom from the understandings of scientific sociology is theological fantasy. There are no deeply hidden secrets of social life that disciplined duty to science will one day reveal as a logical, centered, and coherently structured foundation for moral living. The Greek and Christian location of morality in the phantasm of essential truths was, and is, folly. An inclusive society of respect, dignity, equality, and opportunity cannot be founded on faith in "objectivity."

This recognition is not politically debilitating. Epistemology may now appear to be fundamental to sociologists' capacity to produce valued understandings, but its assumptions are not basic to our species. An "ideal/ material" binary was beyond question for the great thinkers of European history—including Plato, Aristotle, Sir Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Georg W. Hegel, and Karl Marx—but it is not a pan-human ontology. It is a political and sociological effect with a long and complex genealogy. And the widespread assumption that it is the only possible avenue for meaningful intellectual work is a consequence of the history of European colonialism.

Intellectuals from marginalized sectors of society, including racialized and cultural minorities, have much to gain from this realization. If "objectivity" is not about truth, then it has only always been about a will to power. We are not, and are not anytime soon, likely to be the most powerful groups in American society, and the disciplined pursuit of objective truth will not save us from right-wing, reactionary politics. As scholars from marginalized populations,

we long for the simplicity of structuralist answers to our most pressing political problems at our own peril.

Political successes will come only with an increased focus on discursive warfare. As academics from the margins, our responsibility in the battle for a better world is best conceived as a contest over the power to narrate. The challenge is to conceptualize research strategies that further our politics and to attack those of our opponents in decidedly public ways. We need to pay careful attention to the political potential of our conceptual choices. Our research designs should be crafted in language that interrupts and redirects the narratives of our adversaries. Our sociological accounts should be constructed for the purpose of impacting public debates. We should look to appropriate the narratives of our opponents and recast them, strategically, within textual logics that will work for the benefit of our own peoples. Our sociology must be crafted for politics.

Responsibility, here, is no simple matter. Because we can no longer claim responsibility to metaphysical ideals, our work must be for living, breathing, feeling people with immediate problems. We must take explicit political responsibility for the political consequences of our research and writings. What simplifications do we further or create? Who do we consign to the conceptual margins and at what price? Finally, understanding that effective politics means looking for textual openings in discursive logics and bending them to our own narrative advantage must also mean recognizing that our opponents can do the same.

As poststructuralists, we need to be vigilant about our own professional well-being in academic environments. How are we to explain our research designs to the organizations with the dollars necessary to fund our research projects? How do we talk to our colleagues about our work that openly flaunts our loss of faith in scientific sociology? Heresy has its costs.

Much like early Christian intellectuals needed to speak and write Greek before they could legitimize their academics, poststructuralist sociologists need to be thoroughly versed in the classical epistemological arguments of our field. If we are to make intellectual headway with our structuralist colleagues, we must know Max Weber's *Methodology of the Social Sciences,* Emile Durkheim's *Rules of Sociological Method,* and Marx's *German Ideology* and *Theses on Feuerbach.* We need to be able to point with precision to their shortcomings, *as well as to their utility,* for scholarly renderings of our most pressing political problems. We will need to publicly insist that these works, and many other epistemological classics, remain valuable resources. Poststructuralist sociology, as I have tried to make clear throughout this book, cannot simply abandon the great corpus of structuralist sociology. No such break is possible or desirable. Only the status of these works as testaments to metaphysical dreams must be left behind. The question then is one of learning how to value and productively employ these resources without buying into their metaphysical aspirations.

Finally, a poststructuralist turn in sociology means a change in our forward thinking, our imaginary, about what constitutes a better society. If identities and their aspirations are always open-ended and subject to political re-articulation, if difference is always evolving, and if politics are permanent and never to be finally arrested by the hard work of axiom-discovering social scientists, then democracy must be imagined anew.

As Mouffe (1992) foresees "radical democracy," civic work will be interminable. Respect for difference will mean assuming the complexity and instability of identities. Inclusiveness of marginalized others will mean assuming that political platforms built on diverse and de-centered subjectivities must remain open-ended and adaptive. "Our understanding of radical democracy . . . postulates the very impossibility of a final realization of democracy. It affirms that the unresolvable tension between the principles of equality and liberty is the very condition for the preservation of the indeterminacy and undecidability which is constitutive of modern democracy. Moreover, it constitutes the principal guarantee against any attempt to realize a final closure that would result in the elimination of the political and the negation of democracy" (1992:13).

Perhaps above all else, then, the promise of poststructuralist sociology is that it teaches scholars from many cultural backgrounds to recognize the specific cultural origins of the longing for objective foundations, for epistemological centers. Our collective recognition of these earthly origins may one day free all of us from the faith-based burdens that this yearning has so long imposed. To confront this fear is to further the best impulses of the European Enlightenment—intellectually and politically. As Immanuel Kant said so many years ago, we must have the courage to "free ourselves from ourselves."

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. "The view from nowhere" is also the title of a book by a modern and influential philosopher who insists that "we are in a sense trying to climb outside our own minds, an effort that some would regard as insane and that I regard as philosophically fundamental" (Nagel 1986: 11).
2. In addition to Gitlin (1998) and Ritzer (1997), who we have already cited, Lemert (1997) and Denzin (1997) have also attempted such definitions. We will look closely at Rizter's criticisms of poststructuralism in chapter 3 and spend many pages with Lemert's and Denzin's move to define these difficult writings in chapter 4.
3. Butler (1992) describes this diversity in greater detail. I prefer the term *poststructuralist* because it is less conflated with opponents' attacks on what they homogenize as "postmodernism."
4. Perhaps most famously, Captain Janeway spent big parts of a whole series trying to help "the Borg," who were said to consider themselves "a collective," rediscover their long lost but always inherent individuality.
5. For discussions of these destabilizing events and the medieval intellectual systems that they disrupted, see Berman (1981/1989: 1–126), Greenblatt (1991), Hulme (1986/1992), and Lovejoy (1936/1985).
6. "Binary" means having two ("bi") parts: the knower (subject) and the known (object).

Chapter 2

1. A notable exception to this ethnocentrism is the work of Hirst and Woolley. In *Social Relations and Human Attributes* (1982), these sociologists demonstrate not only how social dynamics influence biological development but, more importantly, how biology can only always be understood through social lenses.
2. Cornford (1932/1976:17) maintains that as early as the sixth century BC a "few advanced intellects" among the Ionians were already confronting nature as "an impersonal world of things." However, he stops short of claiming that they had developed autonomous subjectivities.
3. The history of the word "abstract" depicts this sociological transformation. The prefix "ab" means to move away or be pulled away from. A "tract" is a path or trail,

a place where one finds (a related word) "tracks." Thus to be removed from one's tract and tracks is to be taken out of one's physical activity and condition.

4. Ironically, the relationship would prove to be a symbiotic one. Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the church became virtually the sole repository and thus sustainer of classical Greek philosophy in Western Europe.

5. Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1620) also equated light with the Holy Spirit. In part this was a reaction to Christian Aristotelians of earlier eras who discounted this association, most notably Thomas Aquinas. See Rubenstein (2003): pp. 191–93.

6. Daston (1991) argues that part of the appeal of Baconian induction was a focus on replicable "facts" that thus lent themselves to international discussions.

7. To be accurate, the struggle to reconcile the study of the natural world with theological orthodoxy had already been fought and won by medieval Christian Aristotelians. Bacon's contribution was his emphasis on the active, inductive interrogation of nature.

8. See Daston (1992) and Daston and Galison (1992).

9. Pointing out nineteenth-century scientists' inability to recognize the theological origins of their metaphysical desires was a favorite theme for Nietzsche and is found throughout his writings. For example, in *Twilight of the Idols,* he exclaims sarcastically and accusingly: "Moral: everything of the first rank must be the *causa sui* [the cause of itself] (1889/1968:37).

10. Indeed, historians of science tell us that the modern term *objectivity* in its current epistemological usage (as in an "objective" and thus knowledge-producing study) is only a few hundred years old. Although the terms *subjective* and *objective* were used by medieval scholars, they referred to metaphysical, theological, and ontological (the study of the nature of Being) questions, not to the quest for the empirical truth about the material things of the world. See generally "Symposium on the Social History of Objectivity" (1992).

Chapter 3

1. Once scientific subjectivity and the objects s/he studies are no longer conceived of as Platonic/Christian/Cartesian essences and purities (once they are de-centered), we can recognize that their description is forever incomplete. Every portrayal needs to be supplemented, both because it must call upon other (never fully present) meanings for its own coherence and because no account can ever fulfill metaphysicians' dreams of comprehensive description.

2. Macmullen (1997) notes that by the fourth century AD even the words "philosopher" and "philosophize" were thoroughly Christianized. They had come to designate "ascetic piety."

3. Certainly, the Protestant Reformation played a large role in reinvigorating this biblical story's emphasis on personal responsibility. Although his scholarly motivations are very different, Weber's (1930/1996) recollection of this important genealogical source substantiates my claim that our modern conception of responsibility is fundamentally theological in origin.

4. In German these words do rhyme, but of course Nietzsche's sarcasm is aimed at a much greater affinity than rhyming.

5. While Nietzche felt that the reduction of living into disciplinary regimens designed to produce "good" and to avoid "evil" was as ridiculous as it was dangerous in its imposed forms, he also felt that this desire signaled the revenge of the weak. He singled out Christianity for transforming all that was daring, strong, and sensually rewarding into something considered ugly, and he argued that Christians did so out of jealousy of those who were unafraid to enjoy life. See, in particular, the first essay of his book, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887/1969).

6. Derrida (1966/1978:285), rereading and redeploying a term borrowed from Levi-Strauss (1966), describes this work with the French word *bricoleur*. "The bricoleur . . . is someone who uses 'the means at hand,' that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used. . . ."

Chapter 4

1. These fields are far too large to summarize. Works that I have found useful include Bhabha (1994); Ferguson et al. (1990); Giroux (1992); Grewal and Kaplan (1994); Guha and Spivak (1988); Nandy (1983); Radhakrishnan (1987); Root (1996); Spivak (1987, 1990, 1993); Takagi (1994); and Trinh (1989, 1991). Useful anthropological contributions include Clifford (1988), Clifford and Marcus (1986), and Marcus and Fischer (1986).

2. I cited and briefly discussed additional American critics in the introduction and in chapters 1–2.

3. The *American Sociological Review,* another of the disciplines most venerated journals, also ran "a debate on deconstruction." Agger (1994), writing as a proponent, had only 5 pages and was sandwiched between the 25 pages awarded to Fuchs and Ward (1994a,1994b) who attacked what they called "radical DECONSTRUCTION." Although I do not have the space to deal with this exchange in a more complete way, I can say that Fuchs and Ward were intent on containing deconstruction and protecting the epistemological premises of structuralist sociology. To do so, they tried to locate deconstruction within a Kuhnian (1962) "paradigm shift." They assert that the more radical version of DECONSTRUCTION, which they claim "is rare," is destined to be "just one more fad." As Agger (1994:501) quite rightly asserts, "Fuchs and Ward have got deconstruction wrong" and "they have got Derrida wrong." In assuming the indispensability of structuralist epistemology, they miss the most productively provocative aspects of Derrida's work. This assumption is not unique to Fuchs and Ward, and I will deal with it in considerable detail in this chapter.

4. Students may want to know that Interactionist sociology became popular in American circles in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was largely seen as a reaction to what Blumer (1969) claimed was the structural determinism of existing psychological and sociological explanations. In other words, people were wrongly treated as only effects or consequences of sociological and/or psychological structures. That is, people were believed to behave as they had been molded to behave, by, for example, schools, churches, or struggles between the Freudian Id and Superego. Individual behaviors, then, were caused by forces largely beyond the control

of individuals. In contrast, Interactionists argued that people had agency, that they were interpretive beings who negotiated the meanings of things. Thus "social settings" were "accomplishments" inasmuch as those present understood the interpretive agreements shared by the group. "Competence," or the ability to effortlessly assume and use shared meanings, was expected by other members of a setting. It is also true that this thinking can be traced back to several of Weber's turn of the century essays. Both Weber and scholars from the American Interactionist tradition assumed that these "negotiations" were part of an empirically verifiable existence.

5. Owen's (1997:3) account of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' conversations with classical Greek philosophy is instructive. He argues that the debate during those centuries between "ancients and moderns" is critical to "the development of the idea of the essential sameness of humanity across time and space" and thus also to the "abstract sense of history as the process in which the self-development of history unfolds."

6. Students can find this imagery of the dialectic taken up in Lukacs (1922/1985). The argument is that Hegelian Marxists are better able to see the partial nature of historical truths because they alone recognize how economic systems infect the observations of any historical era. As dialectical materialists, these thinkers can theorize how limited historical perspectives fit into the "totality" of human history. Although not couched in precisely the same language, this logic is also promoted by Mannheim (1936/1985).

7. See Dumont (1995:308).

8. Students may want to recall the similar predicament discussed in chapter 1. The political discussions I had with Margaret are examples of a similar center-less interaction.

9. See Derrida (1966/1978:278–93). The essay was first delivered as a talk on October 21, 1966 at Johns Hopkins University.

10. Standpoint epistemologies, made famous by feminist readings of androcentric (male-centered) science, preserve objectivity as an ideal. Genuine objectivity, this argument suggests, is closer to actual realization when the male bases of therefore partial knowledges are exposed and corrected. This impulse is in keeping with the old, Greek fantasy of dialectical progress. For works in this tradition, see Harding (1986,1998), Hill-Collins (1990), Nicholson (1990), and Smith (1987).

11. Although Denzin distinguishes, at least nominally, between poststructuralism and postmodernism, the two are mostly conflated within what he has learned from Baudrillard and Lyotard. See, for example, Denzin (1997:263–64).

12. See, for example, Denzin 1997:253.

13. The new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, is a recent and powerful rejoinder to exactly this sort of "nativism." See Barker and Dumont (2006).

14. Students may want to review note 4.

15. In one frustrating passage, Denzin (1997:27) describes his project as follows:

> I seek an impossible generic term that refers to several schools of thought at the same time, including the neo-Marxist tradition of critical theory; the genealogical writings of Foucault; the poststructural, deconstrucionism [*sic*] of Derrida, Foucault, and others; the postmodernist

discourse of Lyotard, Baurdrillard, and Jameson; the recent antifounda-
tional turn in social theory; poststructural and postmodern feminist dis-
course; the critical Marxism of cultural studies; the interpretive and
postmodern turn in anthropological theory and ethnography; and mate-
rialist critical ethnography. A reviewer [of Denzin's work] suggests the
term "poststructural critical social science."

16. See also Bordo (1987).

17. An interstice is an in-between place. Recalling our discussion of text and *dif-
férance,* the meaning of things and people are never inherent to those things.
They are never Platonic essences. Rather, their interpretability is a function of
textually related meanings. Thus meaning comes from the unstable signifi-
cance of relationships between pieces of text. Male and female are related
meanings, and each meaning is the possibility of any of us understanding the
other. However, because their relationship is unstable (think about how our
understandings of gender fluctuate across time, culture, and geography), their
individual meanings cannot be contained within either of them. Maleness and
femaleness are constituted from the relationship (the in between, the "inter-
stice) of the two.

Chapter 5

1. Obviously there is no single "scientific community" or complete agreement about
this issue among Native Americans, either within or across tribes.

2. These numbers are compiled from the Notices of Inventory Completion pub-
lished in the *Federal Register,* from published reports of the NAGPRA Review
Committee, and from documents obtained at meetings of the NAGPRA Review
Committee. Although I have made every effort to ensure their accuracy, it is best
to consider them as a strong estimate.

3. National Museum of the American Indian (1/21/07) at: http://www.nmai.si.edu
/subpage.cfm?subpage=collaboration&second=repatriation.

4. For a provocative discussion of how the only centuries-old notion of "race" was
used by scientists to claim a person nearly nine thousand years old, and an ex-
change between one of the Native leaders of the repatriation movement and per-
haps the most progressive of senior American archaeologists, see Echo-Hawk and
Zimmerman (2006).

5. Other archaeological organizations filing briefs on behalf of the plaintiffs in the
Bonnichsen, Robson v. United States of America decision include two of the slowest
to comply with NAGPRA. The Ohio Historical Society (OHS) maintains that
because the Umatilla do not link the Ancient One to "an archaeological phase,"
their claim to cultural affiliation amounts to "rank speculation" (OHS 2003:8);
the Texas Historical Commission (THC), worrying about tribal claims on old re-
mains from what is now Texas, is still more dismissive, "without adequate testing,
the THC has no way to determine if any Native American Tribe is entitled to
consultation" (THC 2003:6–7).

6. The Klamath tribes include the Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin Indians.

7. A more developed account of this interview can be found in Dumont (2002).

Chapter 6

1. For sociologists, race and ethnicity are not the same things. *Race* is no longer an accepted biological concept. The term was once thought to refer to physiologically distinct, human subgroups which, as a result of their particular biological differences, naturally developed distinct social institutions. Ironically, the centrality of this scientific fiction in American history resulted in a present-day American society where "race" remains a sociological reality (meaning that it is significant to the organization of social reality), even as scientists award it no physiological reality. Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to cultural, political, linguistic, or otherwise social identities.

2. Additional accounts of widespread disagreement across racial lines can be found in Blauner (1992); *Good for Business: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human Capital: A Fact-Finding Report of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission* (1995); Kinder and Sanders (1996); and Schuman et al. (1997).

3. To speak of "racialization" is to call attention to the potent status of perceived racial qualities in oneself and in others. How important is my sense of race in my understandings of friends, acquaintances, enemies, and strangers? When I meet ethnic minorities, to what extent do my learned beliefs about these categories animate my at least initial appraisals of them? Similarly, do I assume that white men are (by virtue of their membership in this category) "angry," conservative, or somehow personally responsible for racial problems? Does their "race" become key to who they *are*?

4. The Infant Mortality Rate refers to the number of children per one thousand live births who die before their first birthday. It is widely understood by social scientists as an indicator of access to quality health care.

5. Duster (1998:111) maintains that Nixon's championing of affirmative action had little or nothing to do with a concern for civil rights. Rather, he suggests, the Republican president's support was a calculated strategy designed to fracture a traditional democratic coalition of labor, African Americans, and Jewish Americans.

6. In one particularly egregious example, a 1970 district court enjoined the state of Alabama, noting "in the thirty-seven year history of the patrol there has never been a black trooper" (quoted in Eisaguirre 1999:11). Similarly, in 1972 the Los Angeles Steam Fitters Local 250 still had zero non-white members (Duster 1998:121).

7. Although not directly part of admissions processes, federal programs designed to increase the competitiveness of minorities have been created. These include strengthening libraries at historically black colleges; recruiting minority, high school math and science teachers; and funding outreach programs aimed at increasing minority applications to colleges and universities. For an extended list of these programs see Leiter and Leiter (2002:13–16).

8. Ironically, a principal purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was to protect the citizenship of newly freed slaves. It did so by making it illegal "to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

9. An excellent account of the history of the shifting logics found in U.S. Supreme Court decisions can be found in Thomas and Garrett (1999).

10. While both Mead and Coolley succeeded in focusing attention on what Cooley (1902/1961:822) called "the empirical self," neither seriously questioned, as I have, the supposition of an ontological, pre-social, and abstract self.

11. O'Connor's dissenting colleagues do not miss the vulnerability of her position. In the first page of his opinion, Justice Scalia refers to her argument as a "mystical . . . justification" that "challenges even the most gullible mind" (539 U.S.:1 2003).

12. In a dissenting opinion in *Grutter v. Lee et al.* (2003), Justice Thomas also indicates his belief in the completely self-contained meaning of the Constitution: " . . . the Constitution means the same thing today that it will mean in 300 months" (539 U.S.:3 2003).

13. In dissent, Justices Ginsburg and Stevens each offer spirited analyses validating group-based affirmative action programs. Stevens writes of ongoing "racial caste systems." See 515 U.S. 200 (93–1841).

14. In recent years school districts in both Oakland and Los Angeles have endured strident internal battles over the meaning of black English. In Oakland, Jesse Jackson insisted on the continued pursuit of "standard English" for all students (Asimov and Olszewski 1997).

15. That D'Souza can read Boas's morbid preoccupation with the remains of dead American Indians as the early origins of what would become an institutionalized ideology of equality testifies to the lack of inherent meaning in that old anthropology. Indeed, D'Souza specifically cites Boas's "craniometry" as the basis of what he takes to be misguided modern doctrines of equality. (See chapter 4, "The Invention of Prejudice," pp.144–48, in *End of Racism* [1995]).

16. D'Souza does, however, make highly dubious claims. For example, he says that "black women at all levels of education earn about the same as white women with comparable credentials" and that "black women with college degrees earn more than white women with college degrees" (1995:301). Most social scientists will conclude that these are disingenuous interpretations designed to deceive or that he is simply wrong.

17. Some might confuse this situation with the Herculean efforts to protect and maintain epistemology found in Weber's classic essay on "Objectivity in the Social Sciences." "In the empirical social sciences . . . the possibility of meaningful knowledge of what is essential for us in the infinite richness of events is bound up with the unremitting application of viewpoints of a specifically particularized character, which, in the last analysis, are oriented on the basis of evaluative ideas" (1904/1949:111). Weber pursued as much objectivity as he dared hope for. While he was quite forthright about the impediments that sociologists face in the quest for objectivity, he was nowhere near our present point of declaring the pursuit to be a metaphysical tale chasing. Weber's epistemological difficulties led him to his famous (Platonic) logic of Ideal Types. Although too complex to describe in detail here, suffice it to say that he argued for a limited objectivity built upon the admittedly subjective choices of research topics made by sociologists. He understood that sociological concepts could never mirror empirical reality, but he hoped these conceptual simplifications could be objectively compared to a far more complex objective reality. In addition to his "Objectivity in the Social Sciences" (1904/1949), see also Hekman's (1983) *Weber, The Ideal Type, and Social Theory.*

18. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) have done similar work, but their epistemological imaginary is quite different from the explicitly political emphasis of my poststructuralist analysis. They seek to document politics, not act politically. Their work is in the tradition of "frame analysis" laid out by Goffman (1974) and Gitlin (1980), identifying "packages" of affirmative action discourse with longitudinal, temporal

"careers." Although they "make no claim that these packages reflect and underlying objective structure of affirmative action" (1987:144), they nonetheless proceed as if these "packages" are distinct entities whose borders can be clearly mapped, rather in the tradition of Khunian "paradigm shifts" (Kuhn 1962/1970). They also assume the familiar Christian and Greek metaphysical ontology of material/ideal separation.

19. An earlier and much abbreviated version of this analysis appeared in Dumont (1998).

20. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, in a dissenting opinion to the most recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action (*Barbara Grutter v. Lee Bollinger, et al. 2003*), has already moved to marginalize the importance of diversity. Thomas belittles the majority's ruling that diversity is a compelling state interest by reducing it to "an aesthetic."He writes, " . . . the law school wants to have a certain appearance, from the shape of the desks and tables in its classrooms to the color of the students sitting at them" (539 U.S. 6 2003).

21. I am grateful to Wellman (1997:324) for this apt phrasing that captures and challenges the deployment of a patriarchal ethic by critics of affirmative action.

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The Promise of Poststructuralist Sociology

Marginalized Peoples and the Problem of Knowledge

Clayton W. Dumont Jr.

In this fresh look at the serious challenges posed to sociology by poststructuralist philosophy, Clayton W. Dumont Jr. maintains that disempowered, marginalized peoples have much to gain from a poststructuralist interrogation of sociology's philosophical and theological presuppositions. He argues that debates among American sociologists in the 1980s and 1990s over the value of difficult poststructuralist writings failed to examine cultural assumptions rooted in the discipline's extended Greek and Christian inheritances. Writing in an accessible style, the author situates complex poststructuralist ideas in tangible examples drawn from everyday life. The book concludes with analyses of the heated political conflict surrounding the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and affirmative action programs, illustrating the promise of increased political efficacy and civic responsibility of a poststructuralist-informed sociology.

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Clayton W. Dumont Jr. is Associate Professor of Sociology at San Francisco State University.

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