# ephemera | forum
## *theory & politics in organization*

# An *Other* World is Possible? On Representation, Rationalism and Romanticism in Social Forums[*]

Sian Sullivan

**abstract**

In this paper I engage with the question of what place the Other and 'otherness' have in the so-called 'open space' of Social Forums? In doing so, I attempt to coax into the open some of the multiple experiences of being and becoming human that are excluded within and by the construction of these spaces, and by the discourses – the powerful knowledge-frames and their epistemologies – which to a large extent they uphold. My hope is to open up the key terms of my title, namely representation, rationalism and romanticism, via a consideration of the cross-cutting domains of subjectivity, ontology and experience in contemporary resistance politics. I write as simultaneously part of, and co-opted by, the distributed society of control of Empire; *and* as othered by the assumptions of what it means to be human on which it seems based. My intention is to explore the possibilities for presence of such othernesses in Social Forums, and therefore of the potential for Social Forums to genuinely respond to its stated and radical desire for 'an*other* possible world'.

**Open**: … *adj.* 1 not closed or locked or blocked up; … 2 … b (of a container) … in a position allowing accessing to the inside part. 3 unenclosed, unconfined, unobstructed … 4 a uncovered, bare, exposed … b unprotected, vulnerable. 5 undisguised, public, manifest; not exclusive or limited … 6 expanded, unfolded, or spread out … 8 a (of a person) frank and communicative. b (of the mind) accessible to new ideas; unprejudiced or undecided. 9 … b admitting all … 11 … receptive to enquiry, criticism … 12 … a willing to receive … *v.* … 8 *intr.* … come into view; be

_____

revealed. 9 *tr.* reveal or communicate (one's feelings …) 10 *tr.* to make (one's mind, heart, etc.) more sympathetic …[1]

**Other**: … *adj.* 1 not the same as one or some already mentioned or implied; separate in identity or distinct in kind … 2 a further; additional … b alternative … [2]


## Openings …

Somewhere every culture has an imaginary zone for what it excludes, and it is that zone we must try to remember today.[3]

There is a voice crying in the wilderness … – the voice of a body dancing. Laughing, shrieking, crying. Whose is it? It is … the voice of a woman, newborn and yet archaic, a voice of milk and blood, a voice silenced but savage.[4]

Supposing truth is a woman – what then?[5]

Many commentators on Social Forums and other contemporary resistance activities of the alternative globalisation movements refer to the existence of, and need for, 'new movement subjectivities'.[6] Such a call draws on a significant intellectual lineage. Foucault, for example, observes "the immense labour to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce … men's (*sic*) subjection: their constitution as subjects in both senses of the word". And, by commenting furthering on the fragmentations and ignorance of self accompanying this process, seems to imply that, through 'working on itself', thought and subjectivity (i.e. sense of self) might transgress the distributed docility and subjective ignorance required by modernity in its present embodiment as the 'society of control'.[7] More recently, Hardt and Negri take up this project in their call

--------

1   Fowler, H. G. and F. G. Fowler (1990) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 8th ed., R. E. Allen (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 830.

2   *Ibid.*, 841.

3   Clément, C. quoted in S. M. Gilbert (1996) 'Introduction: A Tarantella of Theory', in H. Cixous and C. Clément (1975/1996) *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. B. Wing. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, ix.

4   Gilbert, S. M. (1996) 'Introduction: A Tarantella of Theory', in H. Cixous and C. Clément, *ibid.*, ix.

5   Nietzsche, F. (1886/1966) *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. W. Kaufman. New York: Vintage Books, 2.

6   E.g. Sullivan (2002) 'Altered States: The Cultural Politics Of Subjectivity In Resistance To Globalisation'[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/research/keytopic/resistance/sian_research_p roposal/]; Sullivan, S. (2004) 'We Are Heartbroken And Furious!' (#2): Violence and the (Anti-)Globalisation Movements. *CSGR Working Paper* no. 133/04 [http://www. warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CSGR/wpapers/wp13304.pdf]; Nunes, R. (2004) 'Territory and Deterritory: Inside and Outside the ESF 2004, New Movement Subjectivities' [http://fluke.omweb.org/ modules/wakka/InsideOutsideESF2004]; Osterweil, M. (2004a) 'De-centering the Forum: Is Another Critique of the Forum Possible?' in J. Sen, A. Anand, A. Escobar and P. Waterman (eds.) *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 183-190.

7   Foucault, M. (1976/1998) *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. R. Hurley. London: Penguin Books, 60, 70; Foucault, M. (1984/1985) *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume 2*, trans. R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 9. This is not the same as saying that there is some essential core or kernel of self occluded by layers of personal history, revealed intact through processes of psychoanalytical excavation. It is to affirm that 'the self' is continually

for finding "an ontological basis of antagonism within Empire, but also against and beyond Empire".[8] They suggest further that such an autopoietic (i.e. self-making) subjective and socio-political movement is inescapable, given the escalated and multiplicitous possibilities for exchange and relationship immanent in the use of new communications technologies.[9] The flipside of such developments, of course, is an unprecedented escalation of civilian surveillance, with all the actualising fears for the erosion of civil liberties that this entails;[10] as well as the emergence of a 'just war' continually intervening against all those desiring, (self-)organising and experiencing beyond Empire's historically-situated and constructed ontology.

Poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial domains of theory iterate this theme of the possibility of going beyond, subverting, transgressing, and unravelling the assumed (and enforced) ontological bases of patriarchal modernity. Deleuze and Guattari, in particular, theorise the movement – the transgression – pregnant in the process and possibility of becoming: becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-sorcerer, becoming-molecular, becoming-outside. Becoming-*other*, in other words:

> Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing [along an established series]; … Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to or lead back to "appearing," "being," "equalling," or "producing."[11]

But if the assumptions that inform and produce contemporary being flow from – are potentiated and necessitated by – patriarchal modernity (or phallogocentrism to use Irigaray's provocative term[12]), as well as from the circumstances that in turn produced this historical epoch, then becoming-other implies opening to what is othered by this epoch, the current incarnation of which is Empire. And what is othered is what is simultaneously outside/excluded *and* required to sustain the logic of this emerging, self-reinforcing 'culture': witches-women, madness, indigenes-nomads, shamans, nature, life/spirit/vitality. Thus the European rationalist 'Enlightenment' was preceded by a viciously and maliciously violent holocaust – a purification – of witches-pagans-

---

produced in relationship with circumstance and history; that a becoming-'I' implies awareness of these multiple contexts; and that, given the power dynamics and inequalities pregnant in all relationship, such awareness might engender a simultaneous transgression of both contexts ('the rules'/ 'authority'/ 'expertise') and of subjectivity/self. On this point, it is worth noting that 'even' Foucault, famous for his analyses of all subject positions, of all resistances, as located within and constructed by the multiplicitous micro-forces of power/discourse, also framed his life and work in Nietzschean terms as an ethical and purposeful endeavour to 'become what one is' (e.g. see Miller, J. (1993) *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 5-7).

8 Hardt, M. and A. Negri (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 21. I use the term Empire throughout this essay as shorthand to refer to the contemporary assumption and vesting of sovereignty in a globalising neo-liberal project that prioritises corporate, military and US interests, whilst giving the impression of civil society's 'participation' through 'representative democracy', particularly at national and subnational levels.

9 *Ibid.*, 33.

10 E.g. Ball, K. (2005) 'Organization, Surveillance and the Body: Towards a Politics of Resistance', *Organization*, 12(19): 89-108.

11 Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, 239.

12 Irigaray, L. (1977) 'Women's Exile', trans. C. Venn, *Ideology and Consciousness*, 1: 62-76.

'heretics', predominantly women.[13] And, as emphasised in postcolonial theory and social anthropology, the 'developed' world – the colonisers – require the 'other' (the native, the primitive, the savage) of the 'developing world'; an other that can be simultaneously 'civilised', Christianised, proletarianised, 'developed', suppressed and violated, in sustaining the power, wealth and expertise of the metropole, the core (as explored in the paper by Biccum, this issue).[14]

But what might this mean *in practice* for alternative globalisation struggles? Why subjectivity? And what might it mean to go beyond – to become other to – the subjectivities that permit and organise modernity and Empire? Do Social Forums answer or obfuscate this call? Can they meet the challenge set by their organisers: to create an 'open space' for the bringing together and interlinking of civil society movements and organisations seeking to produce 'an*other* world' – one departing from the extreme inequalities, environmental transformations, identity-based exclusions and militarism characterising neo-liberalism, speculative-capitalism and US-imperialism?

The concept of 'open space' and its manifestation in Social Forums has been interrogated in depth in a number of recent publications. These include Patomäki and Teivainen[15] and a recent *International Social Science Journal* devoted to exploring the virtual and actual vibrations of the open space ideal in Social Forums.[16] Unsurprising, these ruminations observe an outcome embodied by the concept itself: that since any opening will come from somewhere, i.e. will actualise from a striation – from a set of initial conditions in which inequality and difference will play a part – then the open space of the Forum will itself manifest these inequalities and differences. Giving pattern to the included and the marginalised. Structuring Forum form. Thus it has been argued, for example, that some expressions of identity seem more comfortably received than others,[17] and that the secularistic vocabulary, grammar and culture prevailing at the Forum is a narrowing of possibility for many participants.[18] Further, it frequently has been the spaces on the margins of, or beyond, the 'formal Forum' where arguably the more cogently radical and creative organisational and other practices (or spaces) for

---

13  E.g. Merchant, C. (1980/1990) *The Death Of Nature: Women, Ecology And The Scientific Revolution.* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco; Ginzburg, C. (1990) *Ecstacies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, London: Hutchinson Radius; Frederici, S. (2004) *Caliban And The Witch: Women, The Body And Primitive Accumulation*. Autonomedia.

14  This was a process that also was vehemently resisted in many contexts: see, for example, R. Gordon and D. P. Sholto (2000) *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Westview Press.

15  Patomäki, H. and T. Teivainen (2004) 'The World Social Forum: An Open Space Or A Movement Of Movements?', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21(6): 145-154.

16  Keraghel, C. and J. Sen (eds.) (2004) 'Explorations in Open Space: the World Social Forum and Cultures of Politics', *International Social Science Journal*, Special Issue, 182.

17  Khan, T. N. (2004) 'Trio', *International Social Science Journal*, Special Issue, 182: 541-549.

18  Daulatzai, A. (2004) 'A Leap Of Faith: Thoughts On Secularistic Practices And Progressive Politics', *International Social Science Journal*, Special Issue, 182: 565-576.

becoming human have manifested.[19] As Michal Osterweil observes on reading accounts of the WSF 2004 in Mumbai:

> I was struck … by the choice of emphasis. Rather than spend a great deal of time discussing the contents of particular workshops, or even of central debates over forms of governance, specific policies, and alternatives – things which we would typically expect out of a *political* event – many authors tend to focus on a different register. They point to the Forum's lively sounds and colours; the exhilarating mix of different languages and cultures; and even the uncanny and ubiquitous sense of magic and possibility. In other words, they focus on a register that includes feeling and energy, that values difference and subjective location.[20]

It is as though it is what happens at the Forum's own 'outside' that is most significant culturally – and therefore politically – about the Social Forum.

My desire then in this paper is to ask explicitly to what extent Social Forums engage with, learn from and become modernity's multiplicitous Other. Given the multiple exclusions, purifications and disappearances associated with modernity in its (non)relationship with the Other, it seems to me that it is this question that moves towards the heart of what a contemporary radical politics might constitute. This then is my conventional opening:

1.  The raising of a question: do Social Forums open spaces, representational and otherwise for 'the other(s)' of rationalist modernity?

2.  The suggestion of a hypothesis: in themselves, they do not, and may even maintain and foster the continuing exclusion of what is othered by modernity's hopeful but constrained humanism;

3.  And a hint of my conclusion: that Social Forums, while opening significant networking opportunities for those able to participate (see Juris and Mueller, this issue), tend to iterate the constructed universalisms associated with modern and patriarchal humanism; that this iteration (or repetition) obfuscates the possibility of conversation with, and/or the becoming of, 'the Other'; and that this acts against the movement and emergence of a significantly counter-hegemonic culture able to unravel the ontological assumptions underpinning modern institutionalism, and the multiple rationalist exclusions on which such organisational culture is constructed.

My discussion moves through a consideration of three terms that I think are illuminating in this context, namely representation, rationalism and romanticism. I move from a critique of the inescapable disempowerments (over-decision-making) accompanying modern representational politics; to a review of the excluding rationalisms infusing

---

19  De Angelis, M. (2004) 'Opposing Fetishism By Reclaiming Our Powers: The Social Forum Movement, Capitalist Markets And The Politics Of Alternatives', *International Social Science Journal*, Special Issue, 182: 591-604; also his paper in this issue; Osterweil (2004a) *ibid.*; Osterweil, M. (2004b) 'A Cultural-Political Approach To Reinventing The Political', *International Social Science Journal*, Special Issue, 182: 495-506; also see Dowling, Juris, L. Sullivan, Tormey, this issue.

20  Osterweil (2004b), *ibid.*, 495.

modernity's *culture* and on which representational politics is based; and to a suggestion that modernity's *other* – which remains the other of the formal Forum – is embodied and inspired by the presence of a radical and revolutionary romanticism. By this I mean that it is animated by the subjective experience and generation of meaning and possibility in all relationship.

\*\*\*

So far, so good. But I also write here as 'irrational Other'. This is an academic space – a 'radical theory' journal constituting an ephemeral space for thinking ephemeral confluences of organisation and politics. It is a space for writing as theoretician, intellectual, researcher, academic. But this is not the only realm of experience that I bring to my understanding of phenomena, to my *thinking*, Social Forums or otherwise. I also am woman, body, ecstatic, anthropologist, indigene (i.e. at home here), activist, learner, raver, animal, pagan, ecologist, 'sufferer' of 'bipolar personality disorder' (how interesting that modernity makes a 'disease' of strong emotion[21]), dreamer, occasional seer. A schizoid, wandering/wondering rhizomatic becoming.[22] Desiring to embrace the constitutive possibilities of being always present in the world.[23] Yearning for spaces where *a philosophy and praxis of openness* might nurture practices of desire and creative imagination that go beyond the dualistic *cul-de-sacs* of Being and Otherness, of transcendence and immanence, that seem to be enlightenment philosophy's devastating gifts to our world(s). And desiring possibilities for exchange and permeability with those of 'other cultures' and locales, and with the non-human but nonetheless sentient and communicative world,[24] while acknowledging, even celebrating, the 'othernesses' that I myself embody.

Bringing these realms of experience to bear on my analytics in this paper is not (I hope) motivated from an ego-driven desire to assert difference and thereby make some sort of case for special expertise; claiming what Foucault calls "speaker's benefit"[25] (by stating this I, of course, reveal that I am not blind to its possibility). It flows instead from an intuition (and hope) that even in the rationalist academic world that I occupy I am not alone. That there are others for whom the languages gained through particular socialisation and education processes permit the playing of the discursive games required by this particular club, but in doing so participate in the masking and silencing

---

21   On which, see for example: James, W. (1902) *The Varieties Of Religious Experience*. New York: The Modern Library; Laing, R. D. (1967) *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*, London: Penguin Books; Foucault, F. (1861/2004) *Madness and Civilisation: A History Of Insanity In The Age Of Reason*, trans. R. Howard. London: Routledge; and, of course, Deleuze and Guattari's encyclopaedic volumes on capitalism and schizophrenia, *ibid.*; Clarke, E. (2000a) 'Psychosis and Spirituality. Finding a Language', *Changes* 18(3): 201-214, and (2000b) 'Madness and Mysticism: Clarifying the Mystery', *Network. The Scientific and Medical Network Review*, 72: 11-14.

22   Yes, very (and unashamedly) D & G! Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*

23   Kristeva, J. (1997) 'Psychoanalysis and the Body', in S. Kemp and J. Squires (eds.) *Feminisms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 228-231.

24   Cf. Abrahm, D. (1996) *The Spell Of The Sensuous: Perception And Language In A More-Than-Human World*. New York: Mantheon Books; Narby J. (1995/1999) *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and The Origins of Knowledge.* London and Phoenix: Orion Books Ltd.

25   Foucault (1976/1998), *ibid.*, 6.

of our 'other worlds'. And who also have painfully twisted, contorted and subsumed experience so as to fit the arrogances and epistemic violences[26] of expert discourses, observational distance and the ideal of objectivity, whilst producing in the bland and unengaged language seemingly required in much academic work: sensing throughout our complicity in ontological heresies and culturally constructed falsehoods. It also reflects a call made by Foucault in a different context: "for the knowledge to be gained from … [experience] *and the right to speak about it*".[27]

So, below and beyond the layers of what I experience as normative practice, I hereby attempt to *do* anthropology – as in a transdisciplinary philosophy (and practice) of being human (isn't this what all social 'sciences' engage in?) – beyond the methodological conventions of 'participant observation', 'observant participation', and debates within 'social movement studies' regarding the relative values of the organic or traditional intellectual.[28] I try to unlearn my own discipline (and disciplining): to become the three-year old child; and to stalk Steven Biko's challenge to 'write what I like'.[29] Groping towards opening and legitimating a space for that 'other voice': the voice that speaks as a yawn at the incessant talking and the NGO (Non-Government Organisations) trade fair of the formal Forum; that feels distanced and bored by the glitzy concert of popstar-politicians on the opening night of this year's WSF – a performance that constructs 'us', the audience, as conventional consumer-receivers of 'art' – of the 'stars', the personalities – displayed/staged 'up there' and out-of-reach; that feels alienated (unheard and thereby silenced) by the predominance of white men embellishing the plenary platforms or shouting out the droning chants on left-political protests; and that passionately desires something other:

> … the Muse is the other voice. … the passionate cry laden with the hopeless force of its own idealism … there are always two voices, the safe voice and the dangerous one. The one that takes the risks and the one that counts the cost. The believer talking to the atheist, cynicism addressing love.[30]

## On Representation (or, 'Not In My Name')

> High up in the mountains of the south east of Mexico an experiment is taking place which tests some of the most cherished notions … held about the nature of politics, of rationality, of order, of emancipation. The experiment is being conducted by the Zapatistas … [who] are seeking a way in which people … can not merely find their own voice, but be heard by those who would otherwise

---

26  My thanks to Vanessa Andreotti for opening me to this term in recent email correspondence.

27  Foucault, *ibid.*, 6, emphasis added.

28  E.g. Barker, C. and L. Cox (2003) '"What Have The Romans Ever Done For Us?" Academic and Activist Forms of Movement Theorizing', [http://www.iol.ie/~mazzoldi/toolsforchange/afpp/afpp8.html], accessed 20 January 2004; Gramsci, A. (1971/2003) *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and S. G. Nowell. London: Lawrence and Wishart; also see Euromovements 2005 'Activist Research: Practice(s) to Challenge the Investigation' [http://www.euromovements.info/html/index.htm].

29  Biko, S. (1978/1989) *I Write What I Like: A Selection of Writings.* Oxford: Heinemann International Literature and Textbooks.

30  Duncker, *ibid.*, 61.

remain deaf, which, predictably, includes those who would seek to 'represent' them: the official parties of the Mexican political establishment; various Marxist and revolutionary groups; and movements representing the poor or particular indigenous groups. … Why have they set their face against what, for occidental political thought, *is* politics?[31]

The quote above speaks of the critique of representational 'democracy' associated with 'new social movements' worldwide, and that has been most clearly articulated in Zapatismo and autonomist political tendencies. But, as Candeias (2004) comments, today's longest established liberal democracies, whereby elected *representatives* more-or-less are given carte blanche for a number of years to make decisions on behalf of their electorate, also are experiencing 'a deep crisis of representation'.[32] This is indicated in part by low voter turnout in major elections, and in part by the resounding '*Not In My Name*!' that epitomised a broad public mood against the recent US-UK war on Iraq (which was, of course, fought (ironically? cynically?) in the name of instituting democracy). As Tormey says, "[f]ewer people are voting (particularly at sub-national level and for supra-national institutions such as the EU), joining political parties, or engaging with 'official' political processes, which are for the most part resolutely 'representative' in orientation".[33] This withdrawal frequently is 'written-off' as voter apathy flowing from the high material wealth of the electorate in the world's 'advanced democracies': people, it is argued, are too materially comfortable to care about politics.

But politics/power is not only about voting. At the same time as people seem to be withdrawing their participation from representative democracies in the West, the last few years have seen a proliferation and intensification of expressions of dissatisfaction with the contemporary distribution of power and resources; as well as with the 'culture' of modernity in its current incarnation as patriarchal neo-liberalism, authoritarianism, hypercapitalism and militarism. The scale of this dissatisfaction – the multiple alienations (authority's 'nos') that become articulated in a subject's 'NO!' – can be hinted at by the recent eruptive moments of the (anti-)globalisation 'spectaculars' (Seattle, Prague, J18, Quebec City, Genoa, Evian, Thessaloniki, Miami, Cancun, etc.), as well as the Social Forums of the last few years. History clearly did *not* end with the post-1989 'arrival' of neo-liberalism.[34] Or with the current elision of right-left political parties into the somewhat indistinguishable 'mush' of liberal/representational democracy under Empire. Given that hegemony requires the consent and participation of the dominated in their (our) own domination[35] – producing 'the [oppressed] mind of

--------

31  Tormey, S. (forthcoming) ''Not in My Name': Deleuze, Zapatismo and The Critique of Representation', submitted to *Political Studies*, 3.

32  Candeias, M. (2004) 'Antimonies: Relations Between Social Movements, Left Political Parties And State. Reflections on the European Social Forum in London and Beyond', in O. Reyes, H. Wainwright, I. Fuster, M. Morrell and M. Berlinguer (eds.) *European Social Forum: Debating the Challenges for its Future* [http://www.euromovements.info/newsletter/] *ESF Newsletter*, accessed 10 January 2005, 3.

33  Tormey, *ibid.*, 3. In a sense, the organisation of Social Forums is even worse, since there is no attempt at democratic representation in decision-making processes regarding its organisation.

34  As famously espoused in Fukuyama, F. (1991) *The End of History and The Last Man*. New York: Free Press.

35  Cf. Gramsci, *ibid.*; Stirner, M. (1993) *The Ego and its Own*, trans. S. Byington. London: Rebel Press; also analysis in Newman, S. (2001) *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*. Oxford: Lexington Books.

the oppressed'[36] – each saying of 'NO!' becomes a movement beyond easy consensus in the hegemonic order. It has been accompanied by further deterritorialisations – the 'opting out' suggested by consumer activism, direct action politics, and DiY culture in multiplicitous manifestations[37] (which, of course, since nothing is static, also are open to potential reterritorialisations/recuperations/cooptations). Such deterritorialisations – such assertions and praxes of autonomy and autarky (i.e. self-sufficiency) – create conditions ripe for resistance: the resistance of the state and Empire against those who refuse representation, and who refuse the policies and practices, not to mention the assumed authority, of those who seek to represent. Of those who seek *power-over* others.

This then would seem to embody a paradox: people in today's 'democracies' are both less and more politically engaged. There are many ways in which this simultaneous engagement and disengagement with discourses and practices of power can be interpreted. Bourdieu, for example, speaks pragmatically of the alienations and distrust generated over the last few years by an increasing separation between what he terms the right and left hands of the state: between private and public, between business and welfare. Speaking of France and beyond, he writes that:

> I think the left hand of the state ['"social workers": family counsellors, youth leaders, rank-and-file magistrates, … secondary and primary teachers … the set of agents of the so-called spending ministries which are the trace, within the state, of the social struggles of the past'] has the sense that the right hand ['the technocrats of the Ministry of Finance, the public and private banks and the ministerial *cabinets*'] no longer knows, or, worse, no longer really wants to know what the left hand does. In any case it does not want to pay for it. One of the main reasons for all these people's despair is that the state has withdrawn, or is withdrawing from, a number of sectors of social life for which it was previously responsible: social housing, public sector broadcasting, schools, hospitals, etc., which is all the more stupefying and scandalous … because … it was done by a Socialist government, which might be expected to be the guarantor of public service as an open service available to all, without distinction … *What is described as a crisis of politics, anti-parliamentarianism, is in reality despair at the failure of the state as the guardian of the public interest*.[38]

These processes, and this despair, is mirrored in supranational contexts flowing from a globalising neo-liberalism: in the advocacy and institutionalisation of privatisation policies worldwide; in Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPS) and the range of neo-liberal conditionalities built into loan, aid and debt relief packages to 'developing countries';[39] in the 'free trade area' agreements mediated by the WTO (World Trade Organisation), a supranational institution in which US interests are grossly over-represented; and in the justifications for, and timing of, military interventions by the

---

36  Biko, *ibid.*

37  E.g. McKay, G. (ed.) (1999) *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain.* London: Verso.

38  Bourdieu, P. (1998) 'The Left Hand And Right Hand Of The State', in Bourdieu, P. *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*, trans. R. Nice, Cambridge: Polity and the New Press, 2, emphasis added (First published as interview with R. P. Droit and T. Ferenczi, in *Le Monde*, 14 January 1992).

39  Look underneath the rhetoric of debt relief and debt cancellation and there are a host of IMF structural adjustment type conditionalities regarding the opening of markets and resources to corporate interests, and for the privatisation of utilities.

United Nations and/or NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organistion), or by the West into the rest. These are distributed globally by virtue of the structural power of a 'centre' that also is to some extent distributed: the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, the US, the UN (United Nations) Security Council, and so on. Unsurprisingly, these initiatives which are supposed to be good for 'them' – the public, developing countries, labour etc. – just so happen to be extremely good for business/capitalism/militarism/US hegemony (also see Biccum, this issue).

Increasingly, when people attempt to have a voice to speak for themselves about both desires and despair, even if by simply using their right to protest under democratic systems, they find that they are not listened to (and therefore not heard: i.e. silenced). Even Tony Blair recently acknowledged the need to at least give the impression of listening more to 'the people' if he is to sustain his power. Such silencing is, and feels, patronising, alienating and frustrating. But when protests and protestors also are criminalised and violently policed – and when the world's leaders of states meet in contained zones, protected against 'civil society' by armies of armed police – then the contradictions built into the democratic state under global corporate capitalism and neo-liberalism become blatant. As described by a woman involved with the Argentinean MTD – Movimento de Trabajadoras Desoccupadiso/Desempleados, the Movement of Unemployed Workers – in a meeting at the Caracol Intergalaktica, in the Intercontinental Youth Camp held to coincide with the WSF 2005:

> The state always plays the same role – whether under dictatorship or democracy. This is to maintain those in power. While government might change, political economic circumstances and realities don't. … The enemy is clear to us – it is the capitalist state, be it dictatorship or democracy.[40]

It seems that the emperor indeed is wearing no clothes. But more importantly, is there an emerging multiplicity of adult-3year olds validating and voicing that this is what they see?

As well-articulated in Zapatismo and autonomist politics, in post-structuralism and an emerging post-anarchist and antiauthoritarian politics, serious conceptual contradictions arise from affirming a need to take the power of contemporary institutions in order to effect change. Modern institutions and forms of organisation themselves flow from a self-sustaining grid of rationalities – a culture – that sanctions, requires and perpetuates the (violent) will to *power-over* others – and over difference. This will-to-power-over others – this authoritarianism – is built into modern representative democracy, and in the authority of state institutions and rationalist organisational structures.[41]

As noted by Holloway,[42] there is a critical lack of equivalence between this and the will-to-*power-to*-become. By this I mean a subjective sense that "[t]he State does not let me come to my value, and continues to exist only through my valuelessness",[43] as well as a

---

40  At 7pm, 28th January 2005, personal notes.

41  Also see Tormey, *ibid.*

42  Holloway, J. (2002) *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today.* London: Pluto Press.

43  Stirner, *ibid.*, 254, quoted in Newman, *ibid.*, 72.

sense of the possibility that subjectivity might work on 'itself' in contesting and resisting its subjectification, and in permitting the desire for, and embodiment of, difference. Of coming into oneself – of becoming one's own, minoritarian.[44] This also is an affirming of the possibility – the uncertainty – always present in the holonic[45] and necessary organisational dance between autonomy/individualism and community/structure (both of which are compromised and fragmented in today's 'representative democracies' and bureaucratic [militarised-]society of controlled consumption[46]). And it is the possible-becoming latent in agentic experience of, and

_____

44  After Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, also see discussion in Tormey, *ibid.*

45  The term 'holon' refers to a seemingly consistent organisational phenomenon that organs/organisations always are both parts (of broader scales of organisation) *and* wholes ('in themselves'). Holons also are open such that information flows bidirectionally between different holonic scales such that parts influence wholes and vice versa, i.e. they are in communicative relationship (e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holon_%28philosophy%29, after Koestler, A. (1967/1975) *The Ghost in the Machine*. London: Macmillan). A complementary organisational phenomenon can thereby emerge: namely a holographic principle that means that all parts simultaneously contain information about wholes, such that the character of broader scales is both distributed and emergent and *to some extent* can by 'read' or implied from smaller scales (D. Bohm, in R. Weber, 'The Enfolding-Unfolding Universe: A Conversation with David Bohm', in K. Wilber (ed.) *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes*. London: Shambhala, 44-104). 'To see a world in a grain of sand …', as William Blake observed. These phenomena give rise to the qualitative self-similarity – the eternal return, perhaps? – observed at multiple scales (e.g. illustrated at http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/; or http://www.wordwizz.com/pwrsof10.htm; or in computer-generated fractal geometries of the Mandelbrot set and other fractal equations e.g. http://www.jracademy.com/~jtucek/math/picts.html; Gleick, J. (1987) *Chaos: Making A New Science*. London: Cardinal). Further, because 'holons' always also are open, i.e. are relational, as well as having a character that exhibits qualitative persistence, then connectivity, relationship and feedback between holons and between different holonic 'levels' or scales also is always present, generating the potential for emergent phenomena, i.e. changes at broader scales that might not be predictable from observation at smaller scales. This is the always enfolding-unfolding, implicate-explicate (virtual-actual?) universe (or holoflux to use David Bohm's term), whereby the 'zone' of enfoldment is the generative, unmanifest meshwork where parts are distributed throughout wholes at the same time as every part of the whole contributes to – is in relationship with – the part. In terms of social-political organisation, these organisational phenomena and theories affirm the possibility of a *proliferation* of democratic processes (also see Gilbert, this issue) in which people participate and which people self-organise, together with fostering the dynamic feedback possible via connectivity between scales. A *fractal democracy*, in other words. Instead, patriarchal organisation and civilisation, including Empire today, tends towards circumstances in which wholes – the molar structures – of modern institutions (including representative democracy), constrain and violate the desire for molecular movement – for becoming (as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*). Such conceptualisations provide theoretical succour for the possibility (and necessity?) of a molecular and minoritarian politics that might infiltrate, infect, dislocate and counter-balance the predominating molar structures whose destructive (i.e. unhealthy) tendencies seem only to clear (mass production/proliferation of death technologies; unprecedented suicide rates; palpable disregard for the non-human world (unless amenable to commodification), etc.). Such ideas also mesh well with Max Stirner's suggestion of reaching towards a 'union of egoists'. While frequently misread through the lens of the 'rugged individualism' – the ego-driven selfishness – sanctioned by neo-liberalism, hyper-capitalism, neo-Darwinism, etc. Stirner's thesis is that healthy (valued, empowered) parts (individuals/egos) will recursively constitute dynamic and healthy wholes (communities) (*ibid.*).

46  Cf. Lefebvre, H. (1984/1971) *Everyday life in the modern world*. London: The Athlone Press.

participation in, 'imaginal' realms: of intermediary and ecstatic spaces between the sensual and spiritual – what the ancient world referred to as *nous*.[47]

How can there be a meeting, a conversation, between these different constitutions of power: the juridical-monarchic power-over of institutions and the law, and the omnipresent power-to-become that is "local and unstable … produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another".[48] How can minimal voting and representation by others satisfy the desires of questing seekers – self-conscious egos[49] – able and wanting to participate in everyday choices regarding how we produce, consume and organise our lives?[50] When Holloway, for example, asks the question of 'how to change the world without taking power' he is denouncing the former conception and sedimenting of power whilst simultaneously affirming a seizing of the multiplicitous and distributed will-to-power-to-become that is the desire animating all presence and relationship. As he states: "[t]he only way in which revolution can now be imagined is not as the conquest of power but as the dissolution of power"[51] (although it is unfortunate that he uses the term 'anti-power' to describe the latter). This is possibility that the distributed *will-to-power-to-become* of conscious subjectivities (people) can participate – can assert agency – in the unfolding – the becoming – of their/our lives. It is to make an opportunity of Foucault's formulation that "there is no escaping from power, … it is always-already present, constituting the very thing which one attempts to counter it with". This is "[p]ower's condition of possibility";[52] or "frontlines are everywhere".[53] The possibility that we can 'conceive of sex without the law, and power without the king': inflaming "a plurality of resistances"[54] and embracing the uncertainty – the 'maybes' – of opening to a 'post-representational' politics.[55]

---

47 Indicative of more fundamental closures, more structured discourses, is the following discrepancy between the contemporary dictionary definition of this philosophical term, and its apparently ancient Greek conception. For the former, it is '*n.* … **2.** *Philos.* the mind or intellect. [Gk]' (Fowler, H. G. and F. G. Fowler (1990) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 8th ed. R. E Allen (ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 811). For the latter, it is the *psyche* – the 'intermediate realm between the purely sensory and the purely spiritual'; the *creative imaginal* zone of experience that both embraced and transcended body, mind and affect to constitute something akin to 'our' notion of 'soul' (Leloup, J-Y (2002) *The Gospel of Mary Magdelene: Translation from the Coptic and Commentary*. Rochester, Vermount: Inner Traditions, 14).

48 Foucault, *ibid.*, 93.

49 Stirner, *ibid.*

50 Nb. this is not the same as saying that the practice of voting and/or of representation by a trusted other is never useful.

51 Holloway, *ibid.*, 20.

52 Foucault, *ibid.*, 93.

53 Sullivan, S. (2003) 'Frontline(s)', *ephemera*, 3(1): 68-89 [www.ephemeraweb.org].

54 Foucault, *ibid.*, 91, 96.

55 E.g. Tormey, *ibid.*

# On Rationalism (or, 'Capitalism Is Boring!'[56])

> Scientific rationalism – the rationalism of the mathematical models which inspire the policy of the IMF or the World Bank … that of rational-action theories, etc. – is both the expression and justification of a Western arrogance, which leads people to act as if they had the monopoly of reason and could set themselves up as the world policemen, … Economic coercion is often dressed up in juridical reasons. Imperialism drapes itself in the legitimacy of international bodies. And, through the very hypocrisy of the rationalizations intended to mask its double standards, it tends to provoke or justify, … a very profound revolt …. These 'irrationalisms' are partly the product of our rationalism, imperialist, invasive and conquering or mediocre, narrow, defensive, regressive and repressive…[57]

> So be filled with spirit but lacking in human reason, for human reason is only human reason …[58]

In the previous section I make reference to pragmatic issues regarding power, authority, representation and organisation. I also noted a range of assumptions empowered in Empire regarding the most 'efficient' way for wealth, resources, labour and services to be distributed; which also conveniently create conditions ripe for the consolidation of expansive and colonising business/capitalist/militarist interests. But infusing, inside and *underneath* these practical, political and policy outcomes are a range of constructed rationalities: the taken-for-given norms – the *culture* – that permits, sustains, and breathes life into modernity's assumed ontology. These have been extended and sedimented into the institutions associated with, and conventionalised/normalised/ naturalised by modernity; making consideration of what is othered by these institutions key to finding and conceptualising radical resistant praxes today.

But what might be discerned as significant elements of patriarchal modernity's rationality/discourse/culture? And why are the (ir)rationalities of 'the Other' established as so different (and dangerous), and therefore radical, in relation to this referent?

A starting point is the dichotomous thinking – the thinking in terms of fixed and essential binary categories (male/female; culture/nature; reason/emotion; mind/body; civilised European/savage other, etc.) – embodying the heart of 'Enlightenment thought'. This is the privileging of a static splitting of 1 from 2: without appreciating either the dynamic relationship of 1 with 2; or their possible and unpredictable emergent union or communion into something different (3). It is accompanied by the conception that each member of a category is the same – a replicant, a clone – rather than distinct: its own being/becoming in relationship with other beings/becomings. Given a further discursive (and recursive, i.e. self-referential) privileging of the first part of the pair as the ruling sex, race and class, a rupture (or at least a range of conceptual constraints) regarding the possibility of relationship with 'the other' occurs:[59] and so '*Men are from*

---

56 Slogan seen on a placard at the Mayday protests in London, 2002, personal notes.

57 Bourdieu, P. (1998) 'Abuse of Power by the Advocates of Reason', in Bourdieu, P. *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*. Cambridge: Polity and the New Press, 19-20. (Intervention at a public discussion organized by the International Parliament of Writers at the Frankfurt Book Fair, 15 October 1995).

58 'The Secret Book of James', in Meyer, M. W. (1984/1986) *The Secret Teachings of Jesus: Four Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Vintage Books, 5.

59 Cf. Irigaray, L. (2002) *The Way of Love*, trans. H. Bostic and S. Pluháček. London: Continuum.

*mars, women are from venus*', as the popular book proclaims.[60] Never mind that the ensuing veneration of rational waking ego consciousness as the norm, the referent, the One, is an ontological heresy for many.[61] This is modernity's hopeful and universalising humanism as that of the essential, but constructed, white, male, bourgeois experience, against which 'women, people of colour, … the insane, homosexuals and other identities' have been constructed and differentiated "as exclusions of the white heterosexual bourgeois man, as 'the Other'".[62]

And so modernity's expansionary, expropriating and ordering/enclosing discourse and practice becomes the 'mania for the One, one country, one truth, one way'.[63] Such closure precludes constitutive relationship with 'the irrational Other': constructed and named as the essential categories of women, indigenes, non-human nature, the sacred imaginal – the other, demoted half of the pair. These then constitute *danger* to the emergent hegemonic order, and are vigorously purified as such. As Cixous and Clément write '[w]e almost forget that there were thousands of sorceresses burned throughout Europe – real disappearance, sanctioned by real death – for which the ecclesiastical power was legally responsible'.[64] Indigenes everywhere were and are proletarianised through violence: from Columbus' genocidal encounter with the 'New World'; to oil companies currently involved with the violent removal of West Papuans from their land and lifeworlds; to multinational corporation sweat-shops and Export Processing Zones creating cheap labour out of 'developing' country populations. And the logic, the rationality, of the modern state – fascist, secular Arab, dictatorship, democratic – has sanctioned and perpetuated repeated disappearances: from Nazi Germany's sustained eradication of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and anarchists; to Saddam Hussein's gassing of Kurds, and the disappearances of some 30,000 Argentineans under dictatorship. It is this logic – the fear and suppression of difference – that prevails in the violence, death and arrests silencing neo-liberalism's protestors everywhere; and in the criminalisation and suppression of rave and informal economies wherever these occur and grow. As

---

60 Gray, J. (1993) *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. London: Thorsens.

61 Lumpkin, T. (2000) 'Perceptual Diversity: Is Polyphasic Consciousness Necessary for Global Survival?' Paper presented at the Anthropological Association of Southern Africa conference on 'The African Renaissance' held in Windhoek, May 2000.

62 Habermann, F. (2004) 'Economic Man – Superstar: Identities, Hegemonies and Economic Theory', paper presented at the Conference of the International Association for Feminist Economists, Oxford 4-7 August 2004.

63 Hölderlin, F. (1946/ late 18<sup>th</sup> century) *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Beissner, F. W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, quoted in Blechman, M. (1999) 'The Revolutionary Dream of Early German Romanticism', in M. Blechman (ed.) *Revolutionary Romanticism, A Drunken Boat Anthology*. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1-34.

64 Cixous and Clément, *ibid.*, 5. This speaks of an astonishing and long-lasting *misogyny* in the consolidation of patriarchal state-church authority and their denial and fear of contamination by direct experience of the erotic. The following words, for example, are attributed to Martin Luther – the 16<sup>th</sup> century *father of a church*: 'I would have such venomous, syphilitic whores broken on the wheel and flayed because one cannot estimate the harm such filthy whores do to young men …'. By this time women had been burned at the stake and subjected to other violent deaths and torture since the council of Salzburg in 799, which approved the torture of witches. In Jensen, D. (2000) *A Language Older than Words*. London: Souvenir Press, 92.

© 2005 ephemera 5(2): 370-392
forum

An *Other* World is Possible?
Sian Sullivan

Foucault writes: "so many precautions to contain everything, with no fear of 'overflow'".[65]

Thus, while the operations and bio-politics of capitalist power have produced proliferations (i.e. possibilities) of their own, repressions and exclusions also have infused modernity's rationalisms. All that these othered became "a sentence to disappear, … an injunction to silence, an affirmation of non-existence, and, by implication, an admission that there … [is] nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know".[66] As a paradigm for organising sensory and conceptual experience it has generated the peculiarly and totalising modern "order of things"[67]: an amoral canvas of predictabilities discernible/understandable through stabilising binaries ordering 'the same' into arboreal, descent-based classifications (rather than generative processes).[68] This rationality itself is recursively ordered and produced by particular practices of objectification, classification, categorisation, ordering and universalising produced by (and for) the colonising classes, races, and sex: practices which animated the emergence of science and capitalist colonialism alike, a partnership producing the technoscience of such utility to contemporary neo-liberalism and militarism.

Flowing from these categorising orientations are the denying and dehumanising numbers games – the 1+1=2 rationality – that transforms the body count in Iraq, the numbers of children dying of poverty every several seconds, into the 'collateral damage' abstractions of the cost-benefit analyses guiding war and neo-liberalism. They produce the banal proliferation of sameness – of mass production (and reproduction/repetition) – and sustain the silencing of variety, of excess (i.e. life), of difference, of Other beyond its own self-referential parameters. Thus certain 'things' – ontologies, experiences, subjectivies, becomings – are "taboo, non-existence, silence[d]".[69] And 'we' thereby arrive at "the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie";[70] the "horror of dailiness", and "terrifying indifference"[71] of wage-slavery, 'leisure' and war. "[T]he order of things that are counted".[72]

This modern *episteme*, to use Foucault's term,[73] further informs a range of additional and fetishised assumptions regarding how people organise and make decisions, and what they/we might desire: about what it means to be human. That 'we' conceive and experience ourselves primarily as individual/particulate; as competitive and narrowly self-interested; as requiring reining-in – controlling – in order to mediate our necessarily aggressive tendencies, and so as to become productive in terms beneficial to states and

---

65  Foucault, *ibid.*, 5.

66  Foucault, *ibid.*, 4.

67  Cf. Foucault, M. (1966/1997) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Routledge.

68  Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, ibid.; Ingold, T. (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.

69  Foucault, (1998, 1976) *ibid.*, 5.

70  Foucault, *ibid.*, 3.

71  Duncker, *ibid.*, 109, 111.

72  Foucault, *ibid.*, 4.

73  Foucault, (1997, 1966) *ibid.*

**384**

business; as ontologically separate from each other and the non-human world; as aspiring to a disembodied rationality as the highest-state of being. Such assumptions – classically articulated in the unbelievably empowered modern humanist notion of 'economic rational man' – recently have been critiqued as informed and maintained by an 'autistic economics'.[74] Notwithstanding the problematic reference here to the experience of what is categorised as autism, such a critique is instructive since it implies that politically and economically we are guided and constrained by an economics that curiously embodies symptoms exhibited by what is understood as autism or Asperger's syndrome: of difficulty relating with others; of withdrawal from community, sometimes associated with destructive behaviours; and of often astonishing literacy with numbers (remember the Dustin Hoffman character in the film *Rainman*?).

But arguably, the experience(s) of being human also constitutes a more dynamic conversation between being both individual *and* member of community; both self *and* social being; bounded *and* in relationship; particulate *and* relational. Dancing from the '[e]xcess essential to the production of austerity', and back again.[75] This is not to affirm some sort of mirror deep structure which provides predictable and deterministic form to what it means to be human (i.e. what has become humanism's universalising Achilles' heel). But it is to affirm a different '(dis)order' based instead on the ontological possibility of mutually constitutive and continuously present relationship between 'things'.[76] Such a possibility would underscore a very different ethical openness to the world and to processes of living, emphasising for example the continual constituting of, and participating in, self, society and nature as 'one community',[77] whilst also affirming relationships of respect and fascination for the ontological distinctness of beings/becomings.[78] And it would posit a very different kind of political engagement and 'productivity'. An embracing and becoming of *other*.

> The news travels fast that the secret of men is nothing, in truth nothing at all. Oedipus, the phallus, castration, "the splinter in the flesh" – that was the secret? It is enough to make women, children, lunatics, and molecules laugh.[79]

## Romanticism (or, Forums and 'Freaks')

> Romanticism is not only a literary and artistic school from the early nineteenth century: it is … a powerful worldview, a style of thought, a structure-of-sensibility that is present in all spheres of cultural life …. One could define the romantic *Weltanschauung* as a protest against the modern

---

74  E.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post_Autistic_Economics, accessed 19 June 2005.

75  Duncker, *ibid.*, 31.

76  Ingold, ibid.; Brody, H. (2001) *The Other Side of Eden: Hunter-gatherers, Farmers and the Shaping of the World*. London: Faber and Faber.

77  Sullivan, S. in press. 'Reflections on 'new' (Neoliberal) Conservation (with case material from Namibia, Southern Africa)', *Africa e Orienti*.

78  Tormey, *ibid.*, 5, after Deleuze, G. (1994) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton. London: Continuum.

79  Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, 289.

> (capitalist) civilization, … a cultural critique of the bourgeois-industrial world responsible for the quantification and mechanization of life, … for the *disenchantment of the world*.[80]

As now numerous texts relate, the recent wave of anti-establishment protests – from the poetry of Zapatista subcommandante Marcos to the rave-inspired Reclaim the Streets (RTS) of UK nineties;[81] in the libertarian antiauthoritarian politics of self-organising groups and networks worldwide; from antipsychiatry and mental health activism to a tangible and global upwelling of paganism, shamanism and psychonautical exploration – draw on and derive their potency variously from the *transgressive* character of the Festival,[82] from the distributed empowerment of self-organisation and DiY (Do-it-Yourself) politics, and from an affirmation of polyphasic consciousness and 'non-ordinary' experiences of 'reality'.[83] Within the wave of global protests characterising the neo-liberal era, many groups actively seek these spaces as embodying their protest. In the context of Social Forums, however, and as noted above, these practices typically are marginal to, even excluded by, the formal Forum process and events. This is despite their apparent embodiment of radical and prefigurative organisational and communicative praxes, as well as their embracing of subjectivities and ontological experiences kept outside of – othered by – modernity.

In literature and documented experience there is a rich *oevre* exploring the subversive (to modernity) potential of such 'beyond-self' transgressions. Thus, '[t]he great medieval carnivals were a time of inversion, of mockery of authority, of ritualised transgression, a celebration of excess and of the low, and of the body with all its appetites and unpalatable functions … creating renewal and the possibility of social change'.[84] *Noise* signifies and embodies revolution – the entrance into liminal, outside, *other* spaces – everywhere.[85] It is here – in these times and spaces at the edges of chaos – where different and sometimes chaotic rhythms are delved into, and where unpredictable possibility is released and becomes. Of cause, such subversions also can be viewed as 'safety valves'; times of brief release that permit everything to stay the

---

80  Löwy, M. (1999) 'Under the Star of Romanticism: Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse', in Blechman, *ibid.*, 197.

81  http://www.reclaimthestreets.net/

82  Which, as Lefebvre noticed, is everyday life's potentially revolutionary, i.e. disordering, celebration '… resurrection of the Festival' called for by Lefebvre (*ibid.*, 36).

83  Narby, *ibid.*; Kharitidi, O. (1996) *Entering the Circle: Ancient Secrets of Siberian Wisdom Discovered by a Russian Psychiatrist.* San Francisco: Harper Collins; McKay, G. (ed.) (1999) *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain.* London: Verso; Pinchbeck, D. (2002/2003) *Breaking Open the Head: A Visionary Journey from Cynicism to Shamanism.* London: Flamingo; Notes From Nowhere (2003) *We are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism.* London: Verso.

84  Letcher, A. A. (2004) 'Bardism and the Performance of Paganism: Implications for the Performance of Research', in J. Blain, D. Ezzy, and G. Harvey, (eds.) *Researching Paganisms.* Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 7 (page numbers refer to draft chapter from author), after Bakhtin; also see chapter on 'Carnival', in Notes From Nowhere Collective (2003) *We are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism.* London: Verso.

85  Cf. Knight, C. (1997) 'The Wives of the Sun and Moon', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 3(1): 133-153; hence the reclaimed and energising significance of percussive music, sound systems and noise in protest everywhere, from the pots and pans demonstrations in Argentinean city plazas to samba from Sao Paulo to London, e.g. www.rhythmsofresistance.co.uk.

same. On the other hand, and as Letcher asserts, these are real 'non-ordinary experiences' that 'demand to be taken seriously'.[86]

In this reading it is the very noise and colour of the Dalits at the WSF 2004 in Mumbai that made them radically Other and thereby so noticeable (e.g. see Biccum, this issue). It is the overflowing excess, and questioning of authority (i.e. which defines the normative parameters of the possible) that make Reclaim the Streets, Yo Mango, raves, self-organised and open distribution systems, Indymedia, paganism etc., radical, fun and *interesting* (i.e. meaningful) to be involved with (and therefore subject to systemic resistance by the modern state, both nationally and supranationally). These incorporate what we might consider as pre- and post-modern rationalities; *amodern* praxes of human becoming that modernity's endlessly consumptive and trivialising possibilities is without the tools to engage or converse with. And they also are present as always constrained, coopted, effervescences in many contexts beyond the Forum: think eco-pagans, ravers, psychonauts, 'New-Age travellers', urban shamans, Harry Potter, psychedelic trance, etc. People are *hungry* because they/we have been starved: hungry for meaning and mystery – for a resacralisation of the world and of the experiences of living as relational beings.

For anyone who has seen the recent film *King Arthur*,[87] We are the Woads! Earth(ed)-people. A galactic network of communications and differences, imperfectly manifesting the idiom of 'unity *in* diversity'. Shapeshifters tumbling between perspectives, walking between worlds, juggling perceptions and uncertainty. Pagan (atheism is *so* modern). Variously nomadic, tattooed, painted and not. Excessive and entwined. Bedded with the rhythms and cycles of the world: of female and human periodicities, of the lunar cycle, of the solstice. We are warriors, not victims: contesting and reconstituting our own consumption of 'the system'. Overflowing and rhizomatically escaping the predatory enclosures of the economies of the body, sensation and sexuality that constitutes modernity's biopolitics:[88] in temporary autonomous zones;[89] in DiY self-organisations; in reclaimed yet criminalised mind-body-spirit spaces; and in multiplicitous desires for autonomy, autarky and affective affluence.[90]

This is *not* the romanticism that molarised into the kitsch Bavarian rationalism of the hideously homogenising Nazi utopia. And neither is it something just invented, making 'us' pioneers of the future, subversive sufferers of repressions silencing our own lineages.[91] It is the anarchic, revolutionary and subjective sense of possibility of the early romantic poets and artists.[92] It is 'an anomic longing for an enigmatic and utopian

---

86  Letcher, *ibid.*, 20.

87  Touchstone Pictures, 2004.

88  Foucault, *ibid.*, 106.

89  Bey, H. 'The Temporary Autonomous Zone: Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism', [http://www.t0.or.at/hakimbey/taz/taz.htm, accessed 20 June 2004.

90  Sullivan, S. (2001/2005) 'On Dance and Difference: Bodies, Movement and Experience in Khoesān Trance-Dancing – Perceptions of 'a Raver'', in W. A Haviland, R. Gordon, and L. Vivanco (eds.) *Talking About People: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, 4th Edition. Harcourt.

91  Foucault (1976/1998), *ibid.*, 6.

92  Blechman, *ibid.*

world'.[93] It is an affirmation of desire, meaning, mystery and creative play – *jouissance* – as central to the experience and possibility of being human; a brave embrace of the logic of uncertainty.

But, in the formal Forum, where are the spaces for reflecting on, communicating about and experiencing the possibility of being/becoming radically other? Where are the anti-psychiatry discussions? Or the radical critiques of prisons and detention centres? Where are the possibilities for shamanic and psychonautical experiences? Where are the men participating in discussions regarding feminism and 'women's issues': not as a way of creating more possibilities for women to participate in patriarchal institutions, but as opening to a conversation with *other* experiences that might permit the emergence of something beyond the hegemonised discourses of women's rights and equality with men (which is not to discredit the achievements of these movements)? Where are the possibilities for learning from those who tread relatively lightly on the land? Where are the bodies entrained in rhythmic movement? – or the possibilities for a conscious accessing of *zoē* – the 'bare/biological life', that although now regulated and controlled by the modern state,[94] also is an experiential zone that opens up these territorialisations, making possible the desire for, and actualisation of, subjective biopolitical resistances in encounters with Empire.

In other words, how *other* – how radical – are the Forums prepared to be?

## Making it up As We Go Along: Building a Politics of Possibility and *Openness*

> That is how we sorcerers operate. Not following a logical order, but following alogical consistencies or compatibilities.[95]

> Only through walking this path will we build it…[96]

> … modernity's 'freaks', everywhere?[97]

I am not suggesting a replacing of one suite of essentialisms with another. This would amount to a simple turning of the tables; enabling some essential, marginalised Other to become the centre. It would imply the banal replacement of one form of institutionalised and strongly hierarchical power-over with another: as arguably occurred with the revolutions of the former USSR and China, and post-independence in many African states, with devastating impacts on many people and communities.

---

93  Letcher, *ibid.*, 2.

94  After Agamben, G. (1995/1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

95  Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, 250.

96  Woman Speaker from the Argentinean MTD (Movimento de Trabajadoras Desoccupadiso/ Desempleados, Movement of the Unemployed Workers) at the Caracol Intergalaktica, the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, 7pm 28th January 2005.

97  Sullivan (2004), *ibid.*, 32.

No. Without devaluing the immensely important successful struggles in locales worldwide for concessions such as legal tenure to land, rights for women and indigenous peoples, etc. (and with cognisance of probable dismissal as a liberal hippy, idealistically anxious for the promised dawning of an Aquarian age), a globally revolutionary politics today surely is something more complex, emergent, multiplicitous, responsive, aware, heart-full, transgressive. As guiding slogans such as 'think globally, act locally', and 'the personal is political' declare, it also is consciously and holographically holonic: affirming the mutually constitutive relationships between parts and wholes (as well as the presence of information regarding the whole in each part); linking the knowing *anthropos* or full, listening, human to global and other communities. Whole individuals – egoists – wrestling or quietly breathing in 'authority's' power, and thereby dispersing and dissipating power's molarising structures.[98] Playing and infusing the "the polymorphous techniques of power".[99]

Without indulging in some sort of modern nostalgic romanticism for a constructed ideal of 'indigenous peoples', is this not something of what we can glean and learn from the processes and embodiments of dwelling and lifeworlds that seem consistent amongst land-involved cultures around the world?[100] And, in circumstances where the house of cards that is neo-liberalism has come crashing down (e.g. Argentina in December 2001), is this not something of what we might learn from the processes and practices of building different livelihoods and lifeworlds that necessity has asked of people experiencing these circumstances? But further, and without falling into some sort of

---

98  I am not naïve to the immense questions for movement(s) raised by the weaponry of the state. I have no answers regarding how best to contest the brute force exerted by institutionalised power, in support of the orders and rationalisms it protects. Nor do I believe that any simple answers are available. In the two references that follow, however, I do consider at some length the issue of violence in relation to 'anti-capitalist'/globalisation struggles. Whilst I do not dismiss the value of confrontational violence against property and police in these struggles, I cannot help but arrive at the overall conclusion that violence to, and violation of, an-other, always sediments into structures and ways of being that generate more violence/violation (Sullivan, 2004: *ibid.*; Sullivan, S. in press ''Viva Nihilism!' On Militancy and Machismo in (Anti-)Globalisation Protest', in R. Devetak, and C. Hughes, (eds.) *Globalization of Political Violence*. London: Routledge).

99  Foucault, *ibid.*, 11.

100  Kuper argues that such a romanticism, and a delineating of 'indigenous peoples' more generally, effects a 'return of the native' in anthropology, i.e. echoing the characterisations used by the discipline and the modern powers it served to denote the 'other', conveniently understood as primitive, backward and savage and in need of civilisation through colonisation; Kuper, A. (2003) 'The Return of the Native', *Current Anthropology*, 44(3): 389-395. Today, labels such as 'indigenous people' also become a means whereby people can play the games of identity politics, with winners and losers created by the ability or otherwise to assume labels valued by the development and rights discourses sanctioned by modernity (discussed in Sullivan, S., 2001, Difference, identity and access to official discourses: Hai‖om, ''Bushmen', and a recent Namibian ethnography', *Anthropos*, 96: 179-192). In a sense, however, there is a risk here of throwing the baby out with the bathwater; of implying that a concept such as 'indigenous' can only be understood within a modern frame that devalues all that is associated with this label, and is thus unable to witness or listen to the experiential differences and alternatives of which it might speak. It becomes, in other words, another means of silencing 'the other'.

liberal universalism that discounts difference, are these not also the openings of possible ontologies for any human inhabiting the world?[101]

Thus, if you've experienced the ecstatic creative freedom forming the calm on the edge of chaos you cannot settle for anything less than this *possibility*. This experience permits the *gnosis* – the direct knowledge – that 'My life has value, *goddammit*!'[102] Not the quantifiable 'value' of economic 'rationality', but the value latent in knowing that we can experience and become more full, less alienated, than contemporary structures permit – from those reining in and pathologising our psyches (as brilliantly expressed in the image below), to those harnessing our labour. This is not to promote some sort of 'cult of transgression without risk',[103] whereby irresponsibility and non-observance of individual and collective limits lead to violation and harm. It is to affirm that 'we' cannot and do not live as 'full humans' under the structures bequeathed us by modernity, and that we thereby look to, and attempt to create, experiences and futures that are more enabling for more beings/becomings.
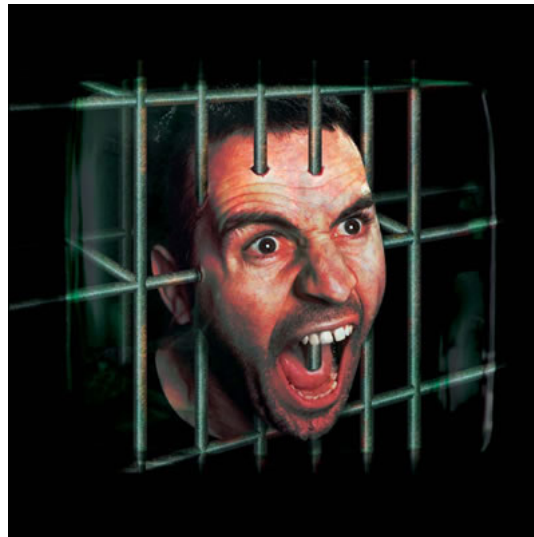


Figure 1. The cage within our heads, the walls within us.[104]
Source: Anne Stokes and Yap, One Minute Silence album art, used with permission.

Isn't this is why we struggle: why we desire; why we dream? And isn't this why the rationalities of the modern world and its colonising power-over the Other resist us; with platitudes, with laws, with violence, with terror? It will require an epistemological shift of seismic proportions for a reversal of history, an effort of unlearning modernity, to occur. But this is what I understand by 'radical politics' and revolution. By changing the world without taking the means to exert power over others. By walking a different road into existence; engaging in a path-dependent, glocal, sinewy dance that is opened, but

_____

101 Cf. Sullivan, 2005, *ibid.*; Lumpkin, 2000, *ibid.*

102 Quote from the TV series '*The Prisoner*' sampled on Ronin, *Chronic subversive*, Black Headfuk Records.

103 Bourdieu, P. (1998) 'Sollers *tel quell*', in Bourdieu, P. *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of our Time*. Cambridge: Polity and the New Press, 12 (First published in *Libération*, 27 January 1995).

104 Duncker, *ibid.*, 119.

not determined, by what has been before. To do/create/perform this magic requires delving into the chthonic and archetypal energies of Pan, Dionysus and Bacchus; the *amodern* and thus revolutionary disorder of woman and nature – of periodicity and rhythm; of wanton, excessive, non-equilibrial unpredictability.[105] Invoking, rekindling, inviting, desiring the life of sex and nature in transgressing modernity's and patriarchy's violence and art.[106]

Social Forums provide significant networking spaces for a range of contemporary social movements, campaigns and socio-political concerns, and as such constitute important moments in the building of trans-border alliances, at least for those fortunate enough to be able to participate. And they have generated substantial and dynamic critique regarding modes of organising: e.g. in the articulations and non-articulations between the Youth Camp and the formal Forum at the Porto Alegre WSFs (see Nunes, this issue), and between the 'verticals' and 'horizontals' in the London ESF 2004 (see de Angelis, Dowling, Juris, Laura Sullivan and Tormey, this issue).[107] Nevertheless, in their current form they appear unable to embrace or embody the radical and irrational othernesses implicit in any significant departure from the rationalities of patriarchal modernity, rationalities that manifest today in hyper-capitalism, neo-liberalism and perpetual war. Indeed, by coopting the creative excesses of the 'counter-summits' of the late 1990s and their brave lineages of Zapatismo, rave, eco/pagan activism, indigenous peoples movements, Reclaim the Streets, and DiY culture, it could be argued that Social Forums have seduced struggles into the niceties of liberal universalisms and normative, talking ideals, while doing little of value to reach out to the experiences and knowledges of modernity's depressed, immobilised, violated 'Other'.

Indeed, speaking with palpable anger at the perceived sell-out of the WSF 2005 (given its problematic support by public corporations such as Petrobras and the Banco de Brazil, see images in S. Sullivan and Böhm, this issue), a woman from Patagonia asserted that:

> We don't want a piece of the cake. We want to make a new cake so that we can all share it. … And *we* have the models for other worlds.[108]

------

105 Cixous, H. and C. Clément, (1975/1996) *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. B. Wing. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers.

106 Paglia, C. (1991) *Sexual Personae: Art & Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. London: Vintage.

107 Unfortunately, such debates and conflicts reproduce many of the the previous schisms and sell-outs that have characterised the relationship between the socialist and anarchist left, from the Bolshevik Revolution to the Spanish Civil War to May 1968. Thus, for example, '[t]he role played by the French Communist Party in May 1968 paralleled that played by the Spanish Communist Party during the Spanish Civil War; that is, counter-revolutionary', Christie, S. (2004) *Granny Made Me An Anarchist: General Franco, The Angry Brigade and Me*. London: Scribner, 280.

108 Open meeting of Forum and 'Youth Camp' organisers in the Caracol Intergalaktica, International Youth Camp, WSF 2005, 30th January 2005, personal notes. Compare to the transcription of this meeting; Caracol Intergalaktica, this issue. Strangely, this echoes a statement by Foucault on seeking something more radical than 'revolution': that '[a]bove all, it is essential that the stick be broken' (quoted in Eribon, D. (1989/1993) *Michel Foucault*, trans. by B. Wing. London: Faber and Faber, 247.

Perhaps the Forum can go some way to opening constrained spaces for the beginnings of conversations with, and productions of, such an *other* world to emerge. But as I have suggested in this piece, in its discursive structuring the Forum falls short of its desire to be an incubator of an*other* possible world. Indeed, some the accounts included in this issue indicate that the 'formal' organising process actively reproduces a neo-liberal, representational and narrowly humanist encounter, while suppressing the ability for different organisational and experiential tendencies to participate. On the other hand, several commentators have remarked that the vibrant alternative/autonomous spaces characterising the ESF in London, October 2004, *were* the Forum; not the local government, party-backed and privatised and professionalized NGO/campaigns 'trade fair' at Alexander Palace that constituted the official Forum. If the formal Forum thus is hegemonised – i.e. coopted by the contexts it claims to contest – then this implies thinking and communicating hard regarding the political value of participation in and/or beyond the Forum. In other words, the Forum brand is not necessary for organising effective forums (also see Böhm, this issue): places of, or meetings for, public discussion;[109] spaces for listening, exchange and relationship, for open-ended, uncertain encounters where the unpredictable – the *other* – might emerge.

Openings, for hoping, and for remembering.

For,

> [w]hen *"The* Repressed" of their culture and their society come back, it is an explosive return, which is *absolutely* shattering, staggering, overturning, with a force never let loose before.[110]

**the author**    For the last three years Sian Sullivan has held a Research Fellowship at the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation (CSGR), University of Warwick (www.csgr.org). She is soon to take up a Lectureship at the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia. Sian is a member of the editorial collective of ephemera - and she also dances.
E-mail: s.sullivan@warwick.ac.uk

---

109 Fowler, F. G. and H. W. Fowler (1924/1984) *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, R. E. Allen, (ed.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 291.

110 Cixous, *ibid.*, ix.