

1-1-2002

Toward a critical ethic : Hobbes, Kant, and Nietzsche on feelings and foundations.

William W. Sokoloff
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1

Recommended Citation

Sokoloff, William W., "Toward a critical ethic : Hobbes, Kant, and Nietzsche on feelings and foundations." (2002). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 1995.
<https://doi.org/10.7275/pv70-2124> https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/1995

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

312066 0288 1379 4

TOWARD A CRITICAL ETHIC: HOBBS, KANT, AND NIETZSCHE ON
FEELINGS AND FOUNDATIONS

A Dissertation Presented

By

WILLIAM W. SOKOLOFF

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2002

Department of Political Science

© Copyright by William W. Sokoloff 2002

All Rights Reserved

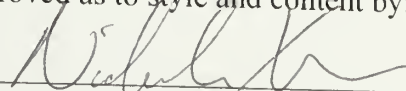
TOWARD A CRITICAL ETHIC: HOBBS, KANT, AND NIETZSCHE ON
FEELINGS AND FOUNDATIONS

A Dissertation Presented

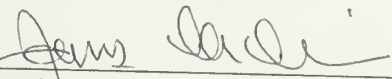
by

WILLIAM W. SOKOLOFF

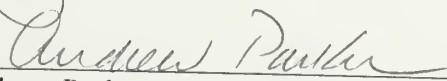
Approved as to style and content by:



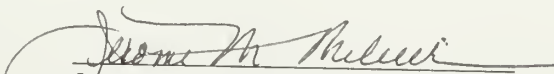
Nicholas Xenos, Chair



James Der Derian, Member



Andrew Parker, Member



Jerome M. Mileur, Department Head
Department of Political Science

DEDICATION

To my parents William J. and Nadja P. Sokoloff.

ABSTRACT

TOWARD A CRITICAL ETHIC: HOBBS, KANT, AND NIETZSCHE ON
FEELINGS AND FOUNDATIONS

MAY 2002

WILLIAM W. SOKOLOFF, B.A., CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY LONG
BEACH

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Nicholas Xenos

The texts that play a major role in my dissertation include Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, and Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Toward a Genealogy of Morals*. My research is situated on the border between ethics and politics because I challenge the belief that ethical conduct always requires universal laws. The articulation of an ethical sensibility that is not grounded on a universal law has been one of the thorniest issues in political theory. Ethical reflection has been unnecessarily trapped between the poles of moral universalism and/or relativism. Through readings of Hobbes, Kant, and Nietzsche in reference to foundations and specific human feelings, I demonstrate that the absence of moral universals does not put an end to ethics but is the condition for a new ethical sensibility that overcomes the this opposition. A critical ethic confronts the difficulty of articulating the relationship between ethics and politics in an age of disenchantment.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER	
1. TOWARD A CRITICAL ETHIC: HOBBS, KANT, AND NIETZSCHE ON FEELINGS AND FOUNDATIONS.....	1
A. The Necessity and Difficulty of Ethics.....	1
B. Strategies of Negotiation.....	8
C. Ethics “Without” Foundations.....	15
D. “Feeling”.....	18
E. A Brief History of Feeling.....	19
2. POLITICS AND ANXIETY IN THOMAS HOBBS’S <i>LEVIATHAN</i>	31
A. Passion and Politics.....	31
B. Fear.....	34
C. Panique Terror.....	38
D. Anxiety.....	40
E. Politics.....	50
F. Beyond Hobbes.....	54
3. KANT AND THE PARADOX OF RESPECT.....	55
A. Back to Kant.....	55
B. Paradox.....	58
C. Respect.....	60
D. Ground.....	71
E. Freedom.....	75
F. Ethical Paradox.....	81
G. Beyond Kant.....	85
4. NIETZSCHE’S ETHIC OF SINGULARITY.....	86
A. Back to Nietzsche.....	86
B. Feeling.....	92
C. <i>Toward a Genealogy of Morals</i>	94
D. <i>Ressentiment</i>	97
E. Priests.....	105

F.	Pathos of Distance	108
G.	Law of Life.....	117
H.	Letting Go	123
I.	Ethical Singularity	126
J.	Justice, not Convictions.....	128
K.	Beyond Nietzsche	130
5.	THE CHALLENGE OF CITIZENSHIP	131
A.	The Necessity and Difficulty of Ethics	131
B.	Birth of the Subject; Death of the Citizen	134
C.	Death of the Subject; Birth of the Citizen.....	136
D.	Shifting Ground.....	139
E.	Critical Ethic as Risk	141
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	143

CHAPTER 1

TOWARD A CRITICAL ETHIC: HOBBS, KANT, AND NIETZSCHE ON FEELINGS AND FOUNDATIONS

A. The Necessity and Difficulty of Ethics

Theorizing the relationship between ethics and politics today, as well arguing for their interconnection, is difficult. Not only did modern political thought announce the separation of the spheres of politics and morality but countless philosophers declared war on foundationalism, universalism, essentialism, humanism, and rationalism. The writings of Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Weber, Adorno, Derrida, Irigaray, and Foucault (to name only a few) have so thoroughly interrogated the philosophical tradition that some commentators have concluded that the Western philosophical is exhausted.¹ Recent thinking in the field of political theory has also attacked transcendental foundations and the tradition of Enlightenment universalism.² The targets of this attack include the

¹For Lacoue-Labarthes, ethics suffers from the "exhaustion of philosophical possibilities." Lacoue-Labarthes, Philippe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. by Chris Turner, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 31. For Alasdair MacIntyre, "the language of morality is in a state of grave disorder." Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), 2.

²In the words of Judith Butler, foundations have become "a site of permanent political contest." "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Butler & Scott, (New York: Routledge, 1992) 8. "Contingent Foundations" can be read as the ethical impasse that is apparent in her essay "Ethical Ambivalence" in *The Turn to Ethics*, edited by Garber et. al., (New York: Routledge, 2000). Butler views the turn to ethics as an escape from politics. Butler has accepted the colonization of ethics by those who conceive it in depoliticizing ways as opposed to contesting the domination of ethics and conceiving of it in political terms. For William E. Connolly, "nothing is fundamental." William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of*

disembodied subject, self-grounding reason, the possibility of a perspectiveless standpoint, and universality untainted by power.

The loss of these previous mechanisms of unification has contributed to the disintegration of bonds of solidarity, insecurity and disorientation, and moral confusion. In addition, the end of the bi-polar international order; the collapse of both Marxism and the Soviet Union; the increasing fluidity of borders as a result of globalization; the decline of the nation-state as the dominant actor in the international arena; the erosion of the legitimacy of political institutions; the ambiguous status of the United Nations; the collapse of the distinctions between peace and war, soldier and civilian; the proliferation of nuclear armaments; the equivocal character of "humanitarian intervention;" media disinformation campaigns; struggles for the recognition of new identities; the impact of the internet on social, political, and economic structures; the proliferation of computer, animal, and human viruses; and cloning has inaugurated an era marked by the feeling of vulnerability and the phantomalization of everyday life. To say that we are in an era of "posts" only captures part of the picture. These mutations in our experience of reality place us between epochs. As we lose sight of the world we have lost the one we are about to enter defies comprehension. We are "wandering between two worlds, one dead /

Pluralization, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 1. Inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, Connolly has sought to develop ethics without foundations. An ironic conception of subjectivity and an appeal to ontology de-problematizes the ground that he renders contestable. Connolly has too quickly abandoned the Kantian imperative tradition. This issue is discussed in greater detail throughout this study.

The other powerless to be born."³ The re-emergence of aggressive modes of nationalism, fundamentalism, and political extremism can be viewed as reactions to the destruction of historical markers of stability and the loss of transcendental foundations. It is unclear how to respond to these new developments and old re-visitations.

One strategy has been to deny moral insecurity and groundlessness. This is clear in the nostalgic reassertion of God, Tradition, Family, Country, or Nature that we have witnessed with the rise of the Right and Christian fundamentalism in American politics.⁴ Some strands of Leftist thinking have simply refused to reconstruct ethical foundations since they believe that they are inescapably implicated in ruses of power, discipline, or normalization. The retreat of the Left from the sphere of ethics has left us ill-equipped to respond to the contemporary ethical malaise and moral monopoly of the Right.⁵ Although there has been growing interest in the intersection between ethics and politics, apparent in the recent publication *The Turn to Ethics*, more needs to be done to advance a viable Leftist ethico-political agenda and to counter the caricature of it as relativistic,

³Arnold, Matthew, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," in *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*, edited by Tinker & Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 302.

⁴The denial of groundlessness is apparent in Jerry Falwell's "Moral Majority" insofar as it monopolizes the moral sphere and denies moral insecurity or uncertainty. Precisely how fanatical this movement is capable of becoming is evident in the claim made by Falwell that homosexuals are to blame for the WTC attack.

⁵Additionally, "political studies suffer from overemphasizing science while paying insufficient attention to the realm of morals." David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, Democracy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 304.

hedonistic, or incoherent on ethical matters.⁶ Many Leftists inspired by post-structuralism view the turn to ethics as a retreat from politics.⁷ This is simply not true and has made their work an easy target for accusations of irresponsibility.

Given the collapse of the Enlightenment ideals of progress, rationality, and emancipation, it is not clear what it would mean for the Left to develop a non-reactionary conception of ethico-political citizenship today. For the last 30 years, some academic leftists who take the critique of the Enlightenment seriously have been preoccupied with deconstruction, subversion, laughter, dissonance, and parody as opposed to building viable ethico-political alternatives.⁸ For Stephen White, the real challenge is "to shift the intellectual burden...from a preoccupation with what is opposed and deconstructed to an engagement with what must be articulated, cultivated, and affirmed in its wake."⁹ Can

⁶I conceive the ethico-political as a space of negotiation, indeterminate inter-relationality, paradox, ambiguity, sensitivity, critique, and the suspension of purposive subjectivity. A space where the absence of absolute ground is affirmed and where citizens are confronted by competing imperatives. The possibility of enacting context sensitive strategies of engagement are increased when these conditions are met. This is developed in greater detail throughout this study.

⁷See Mouffe, "Which Ethics for Democracy," and Judith Butler, "Ethical Ambivalence" in *The Turn to Ethics*.

⁸See Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). De-naturalizing gender is a good idea but the normative vision of this text needs to go further than "subversive laughter": "there is a subversive laughter in the pastiche-effect of parodic practices in which the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves constituted as effects"; 146. For another moment of an unhelpful "politics" of laughter see "Differance" in Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 27.

⁹Stephen White, "Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection," *Political Theory*, Vol. 25 No. 4, August 1997, 506.

there be ethical limits to thinking and practice that do not re-institute the foundations that have been rendered contestable? Ones that advance a normative vision of a better collective life? Can the chain connecting moral certainty, impatience with difference, and rage be broken in order to inaugurate a new moral epoch of generosity, receptivity, openness, and critical sensitivity?

Inspired by recent developments in post-structuralist thought in order to rethink the possibility of moral citizenship, these questions situate this study within a growing body of literature that explores the possibility of ethics without transcendental foundations. The conception of critical moral citizenship that I develop takes the critique of subjectivity seriously. For post-structuralists, subjectivity is as an obstacle to a generous sensibility. I demonstrate how a reformulated conception of the subject, one that maintains an affirmative relation with the other, can enlarge our sense of ethical possibility. Usually human feelings are viewed as an obstacle to ethical action, as potential contaminants that poison rational foundations for conduct. But not all feelings are the same. As opposed to constituting subjectivity, certain feelings yield a critique of it insofar as they disrupt its stability and sovereignty, complicate rational foundations for practice, and open spaces where the other can flourish without sacrificing its singularity. As paradoxical as this may sound, feelings can both constitute the subject as well as rupture it.

My assumption is that how we feel has an impact on our capacity to be generous, receptive, and sensitive. Feelings are often motives for political action; our corporal

responses to experience condition our conduct. Love and passion, not knowledge, lead to action. In contrast to the claims made by scholars who defend the cognitive content of morality, feelings do not necessarily destroy the capacity for rational action but destabilize the ground for conduct in ways that promote critical reflexivity. My turn to feelings is not a retreat into subjectivity to escape structural problems, but a strategy to explore how transformations in the subject can raise the stakes of ethico-political engagement.

To a large extent, how we feel is learned. Like Pavlov's dog, human's salivate emotionally in response to social scripts. During times when political regimes need the support of the populace, citizens are manipulated through the use of emotionally charged symbols (i.e. the flag). In extreme cases, emotions can be used to create passive subjects incapable of challenging the status quo: "one of the essential ingredients in fascism is *emotion*...and this emotion always joins itself to *concepts*."¹⁰ There are also feelings that fall outside all projects of stabilization, threaten the borders of atomized subjects, widen human sensibility, and create disruptive citizens.¹¹

In the search to locate abstract rules for conduct, moral feelings are given short shrift by universalistic theories of moral conduct.¹² But moral conduct always involves

¹⁰Lacoue-Labarthes and Nancy, "The Nazi Myth," translated by Brian Holmes, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, 1990, 294.

¹¹As for the disruptive citizen *par excellence*, I am thinking of Socrates even if he failed to adequately cultivate his aesthetic-affective dimensions.

¹²Benhabib maintains that "A major weakness of cognitive and proceduralist ethical thinkers since Kant...has been the reductionist treatment of the emotions and affects..."

competing imperatives. Strictly rational plans for action pay insufficient attention to the complexity and plurality of human attachments. As Martha Nussbaum puts it, "intellect without emotions is...value blind."¹³ But in contrast to Nussbaum's rehabilitation of pity and compassion, I defend moral feelings that may at first glance seem like unlikely candidates (i.e, anxiety) and argue that they should be permanent features of all democratic societies.¹⁴ Feelings are just as important as moral imperatives and overdosing on one or the other is not only dangerous but renders an incomplete image of moral conduct's motivational complexity.

My specific strategy for developing an approach to ethics attuned to the importance of imperatives as well aesthetic-affective dimensions of experience connects three of the most famous modern political thinkers with post-structuralism and recent research on feelings/emotions. Going back to the tradition of political thought in order to reread and rethink moments where spaces are opened for new conceptions of subjectivity and ethical citizenship is the subtext of each chapter of this study. Through readings of Hobbes, Kant, and Nietzsche that are motivated by the necessity of criticizing the present, I show that the complications in transcendental foundations (Reason, universality, the Subject, common sense, Nature, Nation, or God as the source of meaning and value) do not

Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernity in Contemporary Ethics*, (New York, Routledge, 1992), 49.

¹³Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) 68.

¹⁴For Nussbaum's discussion of compassion see "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion" *Social Philosophy & Policy*, Vol. 13 No. 1, 1996.

annihilate the possibility of an ethical sensibility, but are the enabling conditions for one conceived otherwise; one not rooted in virtue, rules, norms, natural laws, anthropology, utilitarianism, teleology, or consequentialism; but one "grounded" on the withdrawal of these grounds. Withdrawing these grounds frees ethical conduct from the inflexibility of rules and norms and opens spaces for generous and context-sensitive responses to moral dilemmas.

B. Strategies of Negotiation

Responses to philosophical disillusionment, cosmic disenchantment, the retreat of the gods, the lack of intrinsic purpose in the world, and moral skepticism have emerged from a wide variety of quarters in the academy. Although their motivations are not identical, advocates of liberalism (Rawls, Dworkin, Kymlicka), communitarianism (MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor, Walzer), discourse ethics (Habermas, Apel, Benhabib),¹⁵ radical plural democracy (Laclau and Mouffe), and post-structuralism (Derrida) have attempted to develop defensible conceptions of moral citizenship.

Grounded in the work of social contract theory and Kant's philosophy of right, liberals advocate individual rights, the rule of law, public versus private, constitutionalism, and institutional safeguards for the protection of individual liberty and equality. Liberals perpetuate the modern breach between politics and ethics by restricting difficult philosophical and religious questions that could arouse passionate debate to the private

¹⁵Benhabib has opened up Habermas's thinking in promising ways. Although she preserves his notion of interactive universalism, she combines it with an awareness of gender and sensitivity to context. See *Situating the Self*.

realm. The state is a neutral arbiter and offers neutral guidelines to resolve conflicts when competing moral views come into conflict.¹⁶ Deep moral dilemmas are better left in the private sphere because liberals fear conflict triggered by debate over competing conceptions of the good. Liberals want to protect individuals from totalizing, exclusive, and violent definitions of the good life that are likely to result from state interference in these matters. But the liberal fear of conflict (even in its healthy versions) has impeded public discussion. It has retarded the moral development of citizens that could result from encounters with individuals with competing perspectives. It is not difficult to interpret liberal tolerance, moreover, as a strategy of non-engagement. Getting presuppositions and fundamental assumptions out into the open can also unsettle their unjustifiable dimensions in ways that render the appearance and/or resurgence of fundamentalism less likely. Liberalism fails to confront the most serious problems facing democratic societies.

Communitarians protest against both the fundamental assumptions and the normative vision of the liberal model of politics. Inspired by the work of Aristotle, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Jefferson, and Arendt, communitarians view the liberal conception of the person as legalistic and narrow and emphasize the necessity of an active citizenry bound to notions of the common good, tradition, communal identity, and recognition for the success of democratic political life. Although they tend to be non-foundationalists,

¹⁶Many critics have claimed that the liberal ideal of a neutral state is a sign of the fear of power and conflict. See Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, (London: Verso, 1993).

communitarians seek ground in tradition or a vision of community conceived as the partaking of common substance and see liberal ideals as a threat to collective culture and identity. Hence a nostalgia for a lost morality/community permeates throughout this viewpoint. Although the concept of citizenship is more expansive than the liberal alternative, an ethical deficit is apparent in terms of the demand for consensus, the primacy of the collectivity, the possible unwillingness of the community to accept modes of difference that challenge its commonality, the absence of space for deviants, and the potentially complacent acceptance of tradition.

Another response to the crisis in transcendental foundations and the problem of moral citizenship has been articulated by advocates of "discourse ethics" and can be situated somewhere between the liberal and communitarian models. Habermas, the chief formulator of this perspective, takes the challenge of developing post-Enlightenment conceptions of reason and morality seriously. A second generation member of the Frankfurt School, he has attempted to reconstruct transcendental philosophy on universal-pragmatic grounds without falling back into traditional foundationalism. Central to this position is the idea of intersubjective communicative rationality as opposed to a conception of reason grounded on the isolated subject. For Habermas, communicative rationality is freed from coercion/power, has explicit rules and norms of competence, pursues consensus/understanding, publicity, and institutionally secured political action.¹⁷

¹⁷Habermas has a stringent definition of argumentation: "a practice may not seriously count as argumentation unless it meets certain pragmatic presuppositions. The four most important presuppositions are: (a) publicity and inclusiveness: no one who could make a relevant contribution with regard to a controversial validity claim must be excluded;

Language in his famous "ideal-speech situation" is conceived as neutral, transparent, and an ahistorical vehicle of communication. The goal is a "universalism that is highly sensitive to differences."¹⁸ A worthy goal.

Habermas's fundamental presuppositions about the ahistorical and transparent nature of language are difficult to accept. Language is often unintentionally deceptive; words have multiple meanings. In addition, his conception of discussion casts serious doubt on his effort to reach a universalism sensitive to differences. Habermas fails to acknowledge how his own rules of argumentation might be implicated in an act of power.¹⁹

Disagreement is always possible in this model so long as Habermas's basic assumptions about argumentation are not questioned. Critics who use reason to criticize reason succumb to a "performative contradiction." On this point, there is a lack of flexibility and generosity in Habermas's thinking. Acknowledging the interconnection between reason and power does not necessarily mean collapsing the distinction altogether and rejecting modernity. Although Habermas has made a significant contribution to developing a post-

(b) equal rights to engage in communication: everyone must have the same opportunity to speak to the matter at hand; (c) exclusion of deception and illusion: participants have to mean what they say; and (d) absence of coercion: communication must be free of restrictions that prevent the better argument from being raised or from determining the outcome of the discussion." "From Kant's 'Ideas' of Pure Reason to the 'Idealizing' Presuppositions of Communicative Action: Reflections on the Detranscendentalized 'Use of Reason' in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory*, edited by Rehg & Bohman, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001) 34.

¹⁸Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, edited by Cronin and De Greiff, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998) xxxv.

¹⁹I doubt that there is space for someone like Socrates in Habermas's model.

Enlightenment conception of reason and morality, he is inattentive to power and overestimates the capacity of reasoned argument to reach a consensus on moral dilemmas.²⁰

If an impatience with passionate argument (liberals), deviation from communal norms (communitarians), and linguistic ambiguity/the inescapability of power (discourse ethics) unites liberals, communitarians, and advocates of discourse ethics, the work of Laclau/Mouffe stands in sharp contrast. Driven by the effort to rejuvenate and reformulate the Leftist project in the wake of the collapse of Marxism, they reconceive democratic politics in non-foundationalist and anti-essentialist terms. Laclau/Mouffe emphasize the inescapability of power, conflict, contingency, antagonism, pluralism and the importance of a hegemonic articulation capable of uniting the "green," "pink," and "red" Lefts. A hegemonic articulation refers to the following fact: "the absent fullness of the structure has to be represented /misrepresented by one of its particular contents. This relation by which a particular element assumes the impossible task of universal representation, is what I call a *hegemonic* relation."²¹ For these anti-utopian political realists, the dream of consensus untainted by power is a symptom of the liberal evasion of the political.

But where is the ethical dimension to the Leftist hegemonic articulation?

²⁰As the lives of Socrates, Martin Luther King and countless others illustrates, persecution or worse usually awaits individuals who attack widely accepted modes of stupidity or dedicate their lives to exposing political hypocrisy.

²¹Laclau, "Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 59.

Laclau/Mouffe claim that they seek to re-establish the lost connection between ethics and politics but exactly how far they can go in this direction is mitigated by their conception of politics conceived as conflict between friends and enemies. These battles demand homogenization or, in the words of Mouffe, "equivalent articulations," between the claims of diverse groups.²² Although Mouffe asserts that "equivalence does not eliminate difference" it is not clear how this magic trick can succeed.²³ Once their conception of politics conceived on Schmitt's friend/enemy axis is brought into play, the ethical deficit becomes even more apparent: "every definition of a 'we' implies the delimitation of a 'frontier' and the designation of a 'them'...all forms of consensus are by necessity based on acts of exclusion."²⁴ Although they are correct to challenge the Rawlsian and Habermasian conception of consensus politics, they rule out in advance strategies of negotiation that are not premised on oppositions.

Laclau and Mouffe conceive politics as the construction of a Leftist collective identity that is destined for irrational conflict with its enemy in its effort to hegemonize the social sphere. But this risks the homogenization of differences and could even destroy spaces for engaging the other in terms other than a simplistic opposition between "us" and "them." There seems to be little space in this model for relating to the other as an indeterminate other. Laclau and Mouffe's conception of politics has yet to be fused with

²²Mouffe, "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, (London: Verso, 1992), 230.

²³Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, 84.

²⁴Mouffe, "Feminism and Radical Politics," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, 379.

adequate ethical limits.

This last point serves as an important point of contrast with the post-structuralism of Derrida. Influenced by the writings of Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, and Heidegger, he seeks to provoke a crisis in the foundations of Western philosophy through the deconstruction of metaphysical binary oppositions. Driven by a deep responsibility to the other, he locates aporias within canonical philosophical texts that disrupt foundational metaphysical oppositions (nature/culture; reason/madness; sense/non-sense). Over the last 20 years, Derrida has taken his critique of philosophical texts in explicitly ethical and political directions. For Derrida, the qualitative relation with the non-phenomenal other is both the essence of justice and the constitutive moment of politics. As opposed to the Hegelian liquidation of difference into a higher unity, he maintains that difference is irreducible; contamination characterizes all relations between self and other and renders self-identity impossible.

Derrida constructs new concepts that embody difference, paradox, and impossibility in order to transform human consciousness in ways that prevent thinking from assuming totalizing or homogenizing forms. The spaces left open in these these "undecidables" or, double contradictory imperatives, increase responsiveness to the other. Cognitive imperialism is held back and the messianic other is not forced to present itself in ways that efface its radical singularity.

Derrida has opened new avenues for thinking about political and ethical foundations that foreground justice as the relation with the other. Of the "strategies of negotiation"

that I have considered here (liberalism, communitarianism, discourse ethics, radical/plural democracy, and post-structuralism), Derrida's version of post-structuralism is the best available option for cultivating a generous sensitivity to the other without lapsing back into fundamentalism.²⁵ The tension that he creates between ethics and politics creates opportunities for rethinking their interrelationship that go beyond the shortcomings of the other approaches. Many unsympathetic critics of deconstruction have missed his effort to resignify the ethico-political and the affirmation of the other that is the fundamental motivation driving some of his most recent work.

C. Ethics "Without" Foundations

Political theorists usually battle over the interpretation of a limited number of key texts. The three core chapters of this study resist both the liberal appropriation of Hobbes and Kant as well as the postmodernization of Nietzsche in order to locate a middle position that can serve as an ethico-political alternative to currently available options. In the chapter titled "Politics and Anxiety in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*," I show that he is not a mechanical rationalist or an early liberal thinker but a philosopher who can be mobilized for a non-reductive conception of politics and an expansive notion of subjectivity. Although Hobbes may be the father of the fearful subject he also gave birth to one that is haunted by the suspension of her identity in anxiety. Fearful subjects are

²⁵Infused by a sympathetic reading of discourse ethics, Stephen White's "weak ontology" represents another possibility. See "Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection," *Political Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 4, August 1997.

closed to the possibility of experience; anxious ones still have a chance of relating to the other in ways that respect its dignity and singularity. Replacing the connection between politics and fear with a politics/anxiety model suspends self-preservation as the telos of the Commonwealth and opens the future to productive modes of ethico-political indeterminacy. Hobbesian anxiety emerges as a feeling that we should cultivate in proper doses.

In "Kant and the Paradox of Respect," I show that it is an over-simplification to label him an abstract transcendentalist, liberal theoretician, or advocate of sovereign subjectivity. In my rendering, Kant simultaneously lays and takes away the ground for morality; the ground oscillates and the moral agent is overtaken by the self-effected and paradoxical feeling/non-feeling of respect. And as opposed to constituting subjectivity, respect frustrates the subject's attempts at self-grounding and brings him face to face with the problem of acting in ways compatible with radical freedom. Respect also blurs the sharp opposition between the noumenal and phenomenal realms and opens a space for the possibility of a non-appropriative relation with the other. A subject overtaken by respect, finally, becomes a moral citizen and is less likely to panic, retreat, or retrench during encounters with the other.

In the chapter titled "Nietzsche's Ethic of Singularity," I show that Nietzsche is not a proponent of nihilism, subjectivism, or the "will to power." Rather, he presents the annihilation of transcendental foundations as the destiny of Western metaphysics and seeks to perpetuate the crisis in meaning and subjectivity in the paradoxical ethical

feeling called "pathos of distance." The individual who is overtaken by this feeling lets go of the will to meaning, affirms the law of life, overcomes the tendency to vent *ressentiment* on others as a result of the meaninglessness of suffering, and celebrates the other when it appears in its disturbing or threatening modes. She is free and autonomous; she risks herself in non-instrumental encounters with unknown others. Breaking the link between *ressentiment* and politics and putting the pathos of distance in its place re-establishes the link with ethics. It also gives birth to the citizen of the future, or what Nietzsche calls, the "genius of justice."

Taken together, the feelings that I bring into critical view do not call for therapy or medicalization but serve as ethico-political conditions of possibility for justice and positive *models of relationality* with the other. The cultivation of anxiety, respect, and the pathos of distance enable us to loosen our grip from transcendental security. It will be demonstrated that they are the preconditions for affirming the loss of absolute metaphysical foundations (as well as one of the possible responses to this fact) and do not necessarily produce a reflex that violates this groundlessness.²⁶ A critical ethic affirms groundlessness and contingency and promotes practices that remain within the limits prescribed by this condition. My research removes ethics from those grounds/reasons

²⁶What is commonly coined "road rage" is a current example of a pathological reflex. The perception of a wrong between drivers of automobiles produces a hyper-reaction -- rage. Often, this opens an unending series of pathological violations and barbaric counter-violations. This study will articulate the conditions for practices and imperatives that elevate the human above the pathological reflex. For this reason, I make distinctions between various feelings and I valorize those feelings that can be motives for practices that are simultaneously receptive to otherness and critical of acts of contempt for groundlessness.

that are posited in a zone immune to fundamental interrogation, ones that represent unlawful overextensions of reason, and resituates ethics in a permanent realm of paradox. Specific feelings linked to the experience of radical freedom move ethical reflection beyond the opposition (or stalemate) between universalism and relativism.

D. "Feeling"

My interest in feeling does not represent a jump into the irrational or mystical in order to flee from the Western tradition. Philosophical disillusionment with Enlightenment reason did result in leaps into the "irrational," appeals to "lived experience [Erlebnis]," and the search to recover a sense of lost "immediacy."²⁷ In contrast, I invoke feeling in this study to mark the interruption and suspension of representational thought and the problematization of conceptuality as opposed to its rejection.

The meaning of the word feeling is overdetermined. Historically, there have been multiple designations for feelings including passions, emotions, sensibility, sentiments, sensation, moods, affects, appetites, and physical stimuli. The ambiguity and complexity inherent to this word is clear in a dictionary definition:

Feeling n (12c) 1a (1) : the one of the basic physical senses of which the skin contains the chief end organs and of which the sensations of touch and temperature are characteristic : TOUCH (2) a sensation experienced through this sense b : generalized bodily consciousness or sensation c : appreciative or responsive awareness or recognition 2 a : an emotional state or reaction b *pl* : susceptibility to impression : 3 a : the undifferentiated background of one's awareness considered apart from any identifiable sensation, perception, or thought b : the overall quality of one's awareness c : conscious recognition : SENSE 4 a : often unreasoned opinion or belief : SENTIMENT b : PRESENTIMENT 5 : capacity to respond emotionally esp. with the higher emotions 6 : the character

²⁷*Lebensphilosophie* focuses on the "concrete" and "lived" elements of experience and life.

ascribed to something : ATMOSPHERE 7 a : the quality of a work of art that conveys the emotion of the artist b: sympathetic aesthetic response 8 : FEEL.²⁸

According to this definition, feeling involves sense, sensation, touch, awareness, reactivity, aesthetics, consciousness, emotion, the absence of agency, receptivity, irrationality, and subjectivity. Although I doubt that it would be possible to accomplish it in any meaningful way, it is not the purpose of this study to define feeling but to make a distinction between feelings that liberate humans from determination (what I call citizenship, or what Kant calls moral autonomy) and those sensations that constitute subjects and foreclose ethical practice (what Nietzsche calls the feeling of *ressentiment*, or what Hobbes calls fear). In the specific chapters of this study, I try to preserve the historical specificity and shades of meaning between competing designations for visceral experience in Hobbes, Kant, and Nietzsche. But, in the final one, I generalize about feeling in ways that permit overcoming the conceptual paralysis inherent to overly historicist orientations in order to draw conclusions about new possibilities for ethics, politics, and democratic citizenship.

E. A Brief History of Feeling

The concept of feeling (if it is one) has proved to be one of the most abused, dismissed, or overlooked categories in the tradition of political thought.²⁹ Whatever the word feeling

²⁸*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, tenth edition, (Springfield Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1999), 427.

²⁹Feeling/emotion has been conceived of as irrational (Habermas/Rawls); subjectivist (MacIntyre); rational (Nussbaum); hedonistic (Christianity); non-subjectivist (Terada).

may mean, it is always something that cannot be completely thought.³⁰ Perhaps this may account for philosophy's low valuation, if not rancor, against feeling. Feelings are the enemies of clear thinking, reason, order, stability, reliability, and self-mastery. For this reason, feeling is charged with treason in the court of philosophy and stands guilty as charged because it cannot give an adequate account of itself. If feelings are to remain in the *polis*, they must accept their subordinate status. But in privileging what is clear, measurable, and determinate, philosophers have built their cognitive empires on the denigration of what their language is incapable of grasping or defining. The repression of the margin, however, always comes back to haunt the repressor.

The marginal value accorded to feelings goes back at least to the foundations of classical political thought that inaugurated the opposition between reason and feeling, the former the master of the latter.³¹ A low valuation of the passions or feeling can be found, for example, in Plato's *Republic* where he claims that the guardians must subordinate their feelings to reason. That is why Plato bans the flute and multi-stringed instruments from his ideal polis. They tend to disturb the harmony of the soul that reason is supposed to master. Even though feeling plays a special role at precise moments in his thought,

³⁰The Greek word *aisthesis* means perception or sensation. It is contrasted by Parmenides with *episteme*. The result of the complete collapse of the aesthetic with the ethical would produce relativism. When ethics is a question of knowledge it becomes mechanical or dogmatic. A critical ethics is strategically related to both the universality implied in knowledge and the particularity implied by the word aesthetic.

³¹Perhaps it could go back even further where the steadiness of Adam's will is overtaken by the alluring charm of Eve's passion. Or even further still, when Eve is seduced by the charms of the reptile.

Plato nonetheless establishes an oppositional structure between reason and feeling, and values the former as opposed to the latter.³²

Plato's low valuation of the feelings was probably inherited by his student Aristotle. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses the relation between rhetoric and the emotions: "things do not seem the same to those who love and those who hate, nor to those who are angry and those who are calm."³³ Our emotional state has an impact on the way we perceive that world. But Aristotle restricts the part of rhetoric that deals with emotions to the realm of judgment. Feelings remain merely tools that are mastered by reason.³⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines feelings as "appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, emulation, pity, and in general things accompanied by pleasure

³²Of greater interest for this study is the following moment in the first book of Plato's *Republic*. While under Socrates's scalpel, Thrasymachus blushes: "Thrasymachus agreed to all this, not easily as I'm telling it, but reluctantly, with toil, trouble, and -- since it was summer -- a quantity of sweat that was a wonder to behold. And then I saw something I'd never seen before -- Thrasymachus blushing." See Plato, *Republic*, translated by Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1992), 350 c,d. Is it correct to say that Thrasymachus blushed? As self-contradictory as this may sound, he was the object, not the subject, of his own blushing, of his own displacement. Thrasymachus registered the breakdown of the representation of his own self-identity. Or, the image of his own self-coherence was short-circuited. His face and body spoke a non-verbal language in spite of himself or precisely because he tried to maintain his identity and coherence even after it was ruptured by Socrates. Plato could not give a better example of the absence of Thrasymachus's self-mastery. If it can be said that the experience called blushing exceeded Thrasymachus's intentions, perhaps we could see in this unforgettable moment the announcement of his suspension. He was stuck between the poles of self-mastery and the tyranny of his own passions.

³³Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, translated by Lawson-Tancred (New York: Penguin, 1991), 141.

³⁴In the lesser known text by Aristotle, *De Anima*, he claims that sensation is always of particulars. (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1996), 52.

or pain."³⁵ Nothing less than the possibility of a polis grounded on reason is at stake in the distinction between reason and feeling: "feelings seem to yield not to argument but to force."³⁶ Aristotle maintains that "if someone were to live by his feelings he would not listen to an argument to dissuade him, nor could he even understand it..." Without a rational foundation for politics, it seems, human life would be impossible to distinguish from animality.³⁷

The status of feeling has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis in modern political thought. In the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a growing interest in feeling that could be traced back to Descartes in the 17th. Descartes privileged the self-identity seeking activity of the *cogito*, or the subject that grounds itself in its own reflection and establishes its own certitude. The turn inward (*cogito ergo sum*) would constitute the modern subject. And with it the body had a new significance as an object of inquiry. This may explain the centrality of the body in his last book, *The Passions of the Soul*, even if he sought to distinguish the passions of the soul from the body as such, thus perpetuating the classical opposition.³⁸ His opening words about the quality of the

³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 28.

³⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 200. In the *Poetics*, he discusses how tragedy reduces feelings (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1998), 43.

³⁷ The Stoics also viewed feelings or the passions as disruptive of individual autonomy and sought to purge them from human life for the sake of self-mastery. Right action is completely freed from passion.

³⁸ Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, translated by Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1989). The passion of wonder, in particular, would be worthy of more investigation.

discourse on the passions is nevertheless noteworthy: "The defectiveness of the sciences we inherit from the ancients is nowhere more apparent than in what they wrote about the Passions."³⁹ Even though Descartes sought to overcome the limits inherited from the ancients, and even though the distinction between feeling and reason is partially blurred in his conception of "animal spirits" and the material location of the immateriality of the soul in the "pineal gland," he nonetheless promotes the subjective mastery of the passions that constitute the mind/body dualism that he provisionally put into question. Cognition would remain primary, feelings secondary. They needed to be subdued, controlled, or even eradicated.⁴⁰ Descartes's text on the passions nevertheless marked a Copernican turn that created a new space for an analysis of feeling.

Unlike Descartes, Machiavelli and Hobbes were the first major political thinkers who gave decisive importance to the relationship between feelings/passions and political order. The human body would become a space for social and political transcription. For Machiavelli, the strategic manipulation of love and fear in the groundless world of politics were central to the prince's attempt to keep his grip on power.⁴¹ That

For Descartes, wonder is the first of all the passions and has no opposite. Descartes also has a provocative definition of respect: "Veneration, or Respect, is an inclination of the soul not only to esteem the object it reveres but also to submit to it with a certain apprehension, in order to try to render it propitious"; 109.

³⁹*Passions of the Soul*, 18.

⁴⁰Descartes's relation to Hobbes is important in this regard. Hobbes's sought to manage the passions, even if he viewed their total eradication as an impossibility. The Commonwealth would always, it seems, float slightly above them.

⁴¹Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by Bull, (New York: Penguin, 1981).

Hobbes viewed the relationship between passion and politics as inextricable was probably the result of his experiences during the social breakdown in 17th century England. Given this context, it is not surprising that Hobbes identified fear and anxiety as the political feelings *par excellence*. How they were managed had a massive impact on public order. Stimulating fear and quelling anxiety constituted subjects, kept them in their place, and reinforced the necessity of centralized power. Hobbes accepted the fallen status of the subject; no elevation or moral improvement was possible through the feelings. Feelings were nonetheless the condition of possibility of the Commonwealth as well as the source of its potential rupture. Even if they could pose problems, passions and feelings became a permanent feature of political life.⁴²

With Kant the status of feelings underwent a decisive shift, apparent in his *Critique of Judgment*, insofar as he granted philosophical legitimacy to the investigation of human feelings -- the sublime and the beautiful -- and he went so far as to connect the feeling of the sublime to moral concepts.⁴³ But feelings in Kant nevertheless remained on the edges

⁴²See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The problem of governing the passions occupies a central place in the *Federalist Papers*. Passions could be diffused through their dispersal in a large space (*Federalist* 10) and their harmful effects neutralized through their reciprocal cancellation (*Federalist* 51). *The Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay (New York: Bantam Books, 1982). For a discussion of the relationship between liberalism and passion see Stephen Holmes, *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); see also Albert Hirschman's *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) and *The Soft Underbelly of Reason: The Passions in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Gaukroger (Routledge: New York, 1988).

⁴³Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1978).

of his thought, as something he struggled to incorporate into his thinking. This is apparent in the complicated and paradoxical feeling/non-feeling of respect.⁴⁴ But at times the peculiar philosophical rancor against the feelings appears even in Kant. Feelings interrupt the sovereignty of reason and threaten it with an incurable disease. In the third book of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* called "On the Faculty of Desire," he distinguishes passion from emotion. The emotions are "honorable and unconcealed" but passions are "cancerous tumors" for pure practical reason.⁴⁵ Kant nevertheless pushed the thinking of feeling further than any prior philosopher insofar as he broke the clear opposition between reason and feeling. More importantly, he demonstrated how and under what conditions the intermingling between them is not only possible but how the human can be morally improved through their interconnection.⁴⁶

Nietzsche marks another decisive shift in the legitimacy accorded to drives and feelings in philosophical quarters and goes further than Kant in important ways.⁴⁷ Like

⁴⁴Kant was influenced by the moral sense theory of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.

⁴⁵Kant, *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*, translated by Dowdell, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 157, 173.

⁴⁶Friedrich Schiller's *Ueber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen* sought to revise Kant's transcendental idealism and reconcile the noumenal and phenomenal components of the human. Schiller, *Ueber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen*, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000). For a useful discussion of this text see Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 138-44.

⁴⁷Heidegger would probably be the next German philosopher in this chain. For him, the moods of the subject, including anxiety and boredom, play a decisive role in his thought in *Being and Time*, translated by Maquarrie and Robinson (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962). For Heidegger, the experience of finitude produces the feeling of

Kant who sought to restrain the imperialistic drives of reason through feeling, Nietzsche's appeal to feeling is also a complex strategy. In his famous "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" and in many of his other writings, he sought to frustrate the opposition between cognition and feeling.⁴⁸ This was a declaration of war on the philosophical oppositions that ground the emergence of the conceptual world, oppositions that Kant for the most part left intact. In contrast to him, Nietzsche rearranges and interrupts the dominant Western philosophical discourse on feeling in ways that have a profound impact on his ethics.

More recent studies of feeling/emotions/affects have proliferated in a wide range of fields including psychology, philosophy, cognitive science, anthropology, and political theory. But most of these studies seek to assign feelings/emotions a cognitive status or see them as a threat to ethics instead of viewing them as an essential component of ethical practice.⁴⁹ Martha Nussbaum's recent book, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, is indebted to recent work on emotions, but precisely how emotions provoke

anxiety.

⁴⁸See *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, edited and translated by Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc, 1993).

⁴⁹See *Explaining Emotions*, edited by Amelie Oksenburg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) with contributions by Averill, Baier, Blum, de Sousa, Ekman, Greenspan, Isenberg, MacLean, Marshall, Matthews, Morton, Neu, Rey, Rorty, Scruton, Solomon, Stocker, Taylor, Tov-Ruach, Wollheim. See Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject,"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) for a discussion of some of these authors.

an "upheaval" of thought remains a question.⁵⁰ She purges undecidability and uncertainty out of emotions for the sake of complete cognition. In her effort to develop a "cognitive evaluative" view of the emotions, she comes close to turning emotions into thoughts. Nussbaum's work does more to perpetuate reason's mastery of feeling than it does to challenge it.

Alasdair MacIntyre maintains that any intermingling between emotion and ethics undermines the possibility of the latter. He went so far as to link emotivism to relativism in *After Virtue*. Emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and moral judgments are nothing but expressions of subjective preference, attitude, or feeling. In the world that circulates around the preferences of the subject, morality is impossible. In contrast to both Nussbaum and MacIntyre's work, Rei Terada's recent study *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"* develops and defends a post-structuralist theory of the emotions and provides an important point of support for my study. Terada's work is valuable because it takes emotion out of discourses of intentionality. For Terada, "destroying the illusion of subjectivity does not destroy emotion."⁵¹ My study builds on Terada's work in order to explore the relationship between a non-reductionist approach to feeling and ethico-political practice.⁵²

⁵⁰Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵¹Terada, 157. She does not explore the political or ethical implications of this insight.

⁵²See also *Language and Politics of Emotion*, edited by Lutz and Abu-Lughod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) for a discussion of the ways in which

In addition to the growing theoretical curiosity in the human body, an interest in the type of analysis I initiate in this study can be sighted in the field of political theory.⁵³ Chantal Mouffe, while discussing political theorists seeking moral consensus through rational discussion, suggests that "the prime task of democratic politics is not, as deliberative democrats argue, to eliminate passions or to relegate them to the private sphere in order to establish rational consensus in the public sphere. It is to mobilize those passions toward democratic designs."⁵⁴ But as I pointed out earlier, Mouffe has yet to see the connection between ethics and politics as indispensable. In *The Inclusion of the Other*, Habermas states: "the critical and self-critical stances we adopt toward transgressions find expression in affective attitudes."⁵⁵ But he nonetheless views these affective attitudes as a basis too narrow for social solidarity. In his effort to defend the rational content of morality, Habermas pays insufficient attention to the connection between moral sentiments and universal codes for conduct. In his recent text intended to revitalize the American Left, Rorty asserts that "emotional involvement with one's country...is necessary if political deliberation is to be imaginative and productive."⁵⁶ Like

emotions are connected to politics and how the medicalization of emotions only treats symptoms and denies context.

⁵³See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁴Mouffe, "Which Ethics for Democracy?" in *The Turn to Ethics*, 92.

⁵⁵Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 4.

⁵⁶Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 3.

most liberals, Rorty uncritically accepts the distinction between public and private and seeks to keep the discussion of difficult philosophical questions opened by Nietzsche and others in the private realm. His complacent liberalism discourages thinking about new ethical and political possibilities inspired by post-structuralism.

There has been a growing interest in feelings among political theorists but most of them have yet to see an adequate way to connect feelings and ethics. Influenced by the research of Michel Foucault and others, Connolly's emphasis on the "ethical importance of engaging the visceral register of subjectivity and intersubjectivity" has opened up new spaces for thinking about the connections between ethics, politics and feeling in ways that go beyond the shortcomings of Mouffe, Habermas, Nussbaum, MacIntyre, and Rorty.⁵⁷ He seeks to find a middle position between command and teleological conceptions of morality, one that is attentive to the visceral dimension of experience. My research is influenced by Connolly's but ultimately diverges from it. Connolly's phenomenological pluralism privileges the appearance of coherent identities as opposed to leaving spaces open for modes of being that exceed identity formations, recognition, or conceptualization altogether. More significantly, the specific modes of feeling Connolly promotes including "agonistic respect" are under-specified. And as I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3, he gives up on the imperative ethical tradition. As a result, his work becomes hard to distinguish from relativism. I seek to go further than Connolly's

⁵⁷See Connolly's *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, 15; Jane Bennett's *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) also falls here. See especially her "ethic of enchanted materialism" (157).

work and mobilize Derrida to connect specific feelings to an imperative ethics grounded on radical freedom.

It is important for political theorists to take feelings/emotions/passions seriously because they are inescapable features of political life and permit us to have a more complex understanding of it. Feelings can be manipulated and abused by regimes seeking the support of subjects for aggressive external ventures or for disciplinary action against internal dissent. But they can also cause the destabilization of these same regimes and serve as conditions of possibility for ethico-political citizenship. What and how we feel determines our capacity for generosity, receptivity, and patience; what we feel conditions our attachments and our loyalties and for these reasons can produce a more complex conception of the motivational complexity undergirding a dynamic ethical and political life. The human may try to rule his animality, and to some extent he should, but he nonetheless remains an animal. The following chapters demonstrate how a reconceptualization of the relationship between feelings and the ethico-political can help us rethink what it means to be both animals and citizens.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICS AND ANXIETY IN THOMAS HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN*

A. Passions and Politics

*Leviathan*¹ is famous for its account of fear. In order to achieve political tranquility, humans replace fear of each other with fear of the state. Fear stabilizes subjectivity and this makes the Commonwealth possible. But this claim only captures part of the picture. This chapter establishes the difference between fear and anxiety and traces the political implications of this distinction. While the centrality of fear has received substantial commentary,² I argue that anxiety, not fear, is the fundamental problem in *Leviathan* although it has received little analysis.³ A lot is at stake in this distinction. Investigating

¹Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by Richard Tuck (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996). All references to *Leviathan* refer to this edition unless specified otherwise.

²Although a wide range of concerns are apparent in scholarship on *Leviathan*, nearly all of them, even if only in a marginal way, underscore the importance of fear. See especially the essays by Wolin, Schochet, and Dietz in *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, edited by Mary Dietz, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1990); see also David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 34; Stephen Holmes, "Introduction" in *Hobbes's Behemoth or The Long Parliament*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) x; Paul D. Cooke, *Hobbes and Christianity: Reassessing the Bible in Leviathan*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996) 208-210; A. P. Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 159-160; Johann Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 55-56.

³Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*, translated by Elsa M. Sinclair, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1960), and Michael Oakeshott's, "Introduction" to Hobbes's *Leviathan*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947) overlook the distinction between

anxiety may not only provide access to a new interpretation of Hobbes, it may also stimulate thought about political possibilities foreclosed by Hobbes's politics of fear. As we shall see, Hobbes seeks to eradicate anxiety through fear of the state which replaces the cause of anxiety, the future, with a tangible object of fear -- the Commonwealth.

Even though Hobbes infrequently deploys the term, anxiety is connected to a network of fundamental concepts in *Leviathan* including law, causality, cognition, the future, sensibility, and the possibility of vision or foresight. It also names the breakdown of his empiricist conception of experience because anxiety disrupts the metaphysical foundation that is articulated by Hobbes in the section titled "Of Man" that grounds the Commonwealth in a determinist empiricist doctrine that locates the origin of all feelings, thoughts, and actions in the realm of sensibility. Anxiety irritates this foundation because it is both inside and outside of sensibility; it is a feeling that is caused by nothing in particular. Anxiety, we shall see, is a sign of the gap that separates sensibility from the sphere of cognition; this gap is impossible to bridge with a representation.

There are more reasons why we should examine the distinction between fear and anxiety. The first one involves a faithfulness to the text. Hobbes valued clear definitions because the possibility of the Commonwealth presupposed the consistent, and non-interchangeable, use of language. Given Hobbes's own emphasis on the consistent use of

fear and anxiety. Unlike Oakeshott and Wolin, Strauss focuses on the fear of death and overlooks anxiety altogether. Jan H. Blits in "Hobbesian Fear," *Political Theory*, Vol. 17, No. 3 provides a close examination of fear in *Leviathan*, but he too in the end collapses fear and anxiety. The inability to comprehend the future is not "pre-political" (418), as Blits maintains, rather it is the fundamental political problem Hobbes sought to overcome.

language, we ought to ask ourselves what the difference between fear and anxiety might be.⁴ Second, the distinction between fear and anxiety has proven to be important for continental philosophy. Both Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger, for example, have emphasized the importance of anxiety, insofar as it is related to freedom, and have sought to maintain a strict separation of fear from anxiety.⁵ Sigmund Freud claimed that "the problem of anxiety is a nodal point at which the most various and important questions converge, a riddle whose solution would be bound to throw a flood of light on our whole mental existence."⁶ Perhaps new light could be shed on anxiety by exploring the way not only Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Freud conceived it but Hobbes too.

Finally, anxiety is important to the quandaries, difficulties, and aporias of politics. Politics is not about procedures and rules, but rather risk, upheaval, crisis, and the destabilization of foundations; that is what gives the political meaning and reality. Anxiety, then, is inseparable from the surprise inherent to all truly political moments. For this reason, we ought to consider not only whether anxiety is essential to the human condition, but whether it is also the *sine qua non* of the political itself. Hobbes makes

⁴There is sufficient evidence demonstrating that Hobbes did not regard fear and anxiety as synonyms and this is the starting point of my critical engagement with him. Although he did not completely draw out all the implications of this difference, he nonetheless uses both fear and anxiety in a precise and non-interchangeable manner.

⁵Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, translated by Feidar Thomte et. al., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993) 184-191 for the distinction between fear and anxiety.

⁶Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, edited and translated by James Strachey, (New York: Norton & Company, Inc, 1966) 393.

this clear even though he wants to break the link between politics and anxiety. The point would be to intensify this relation in order to open politics to risk, possibility, and contingency. That would mean we would have to learn to live with, not against, anxiety.

B. Fear

Hobbes knew that fear was a difficult force to manage, but he nonetheless believed that its precise allocation was essential to creating and maintaining political stability. What Hobbes says about the relationship between fear and politics is original. He departs from a tradition of political thought that was skeptical about the positive function of fear. Aristotle, for example, discussed fear and maintained that it caused revolution, not cohesion.⁷ One of Hobbes's contemporaries was also critical of fear. In *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes states,

As for Fear or Terror, I cannot see that it can ever be praiseworthy or useful; consequently it is not a particular Passion--it is only an excess of Cowardice, Astonishment, and Apprehension, which is always unvirtuous...And because the principal cause of Fear is surprise, there is no better way to free ourselves of it than to make use of forethought and prepare ourselves for every eventuality the apprehension of which may cause it.⁸

In a crucial footnote in the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant claims that fear is a feeling that is analogous to respect; but the latter is superior to the former since respect is not caused by the realm of sensibility.⁹ Unlike respect, which is always linked

⁷Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by C. D. C. Reeve, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1998), Book 5.

⁸Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, translated by Stephen H. Voss, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1989) 116.

⁹Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W.

to freedom, fear makes freedom impossible. Edmund Burke also theorized fear. While discussing the sublime, he states, "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as *fear*."¹⁰ What does Hobbes say about fear?

According to Hobbes, fear is linked to determinate objects of sense. Objects of sense are an "External Body, or Object, which presseth the organ proper to each Sense" and continue inward to the brain, and heart and "causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart, to deliver itself: which endeavour because Outward, seemeth to be some matter without."¹¹ The pressure caused by an external object on the organs of sense causes an internal resistance and this collision creates "Motion" which makes the subject aware of the presence of an external object.¹² But what distinguishes a fearful object from a mere object of sense? The fearful object does not arouse the appetite but causes, as Hobbes states, aversion. Aversion is not a vague response to indeterminate phenomenon but linked to concrete objects. In Chapter VI, Hobbes defines fear: "*Aversion* with opinion of *Hurt* from the object, FEAR."¹³ Hobbesian fear, then, is the result of the human's relationship to threatening objects of sense.

For Hobbes, fear can hold society together, but not all fears have this productive

Ellington, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1993) 14.

¹⁰Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909) 51, emphasis added.

¹¹*Leviathan*, 13-14.

¹²*Ibid.*, 40.

¹³*Ibid.*, 41.

element. Fear is the possibility of the Commonwealth, and yet, if it is not properly managed, it can also destroy it. Fear as a political stabilizing force is apparent in many important places in *Leviathan*. In Chapter XXVII, for example: "Of all Passions, that which enclineth men least to break the Lawes, is Fear."¹⁴ And, in Chapter XIII: "The Passions that encline men to Peace, are Fear of Death..."¹⁵ Even though fear can create governable and law-abiding subjects it can also interrupt the identity, or "fit," between subject and sovereign: "If this superstitious fear of Spirits were taken away, and with it, Prognostiques from Dreams, false Prophecies, and many other things depending thereon, by which, crafty ambitious persons abuse the simple people, men would be much more fitted than they are for civill Obedience."¹⁶ Again: "The Passion to be reckoned upon, is Fear; whereof there be two very generall Objects: one, The Power of Spirits Invisible; the other, The Power of those men they shall therein Offend."¹⁷ On the one hand, obedient citizens can be created and sustained with those fears that point to the ultimate annihilation of the self, but, on the other, not all fears solidify proper political obedience. Hobbes was only troubled by irrational and superstitious fears of non-corporeal bodies and spirits to the extent that they could be used as a means to manipulate the credulous in order to incite a revolt against the secular sovereign. Hobbes feared ghosts, but for

¹⁴Ibid., 206.

¹⁵Ibid., 90.

¹⁶Ibid., 19.

¹⁷Ibid., 99.

strictly political reasons.

This fear materializes in a pivotal place in *Leviathan*. In a passage in Chapter XXIX titled "*Of those things that Weaken, or tend to the DISSOLUTION of a Common-wealth*" he states,

The *Spirituall* [Authority], though it stand in the darknesse of Schoole distinctions, and hard words; yet because the fear of Darknesse, and Ghosts, is greater than other fears, cannot want a party sufficient to Trouble, and sometimes to Destroy a Commonwealth. And this is a Disease which not unfitly may be compared to the Epilepsie...in the Body Naturall.¹⁸

The Spiritual Authority can destroy a Commonwealth, or trigger epileptic fits, because it competes with the secular realm for the obedience of subjects and frightens them with threats of ghosts and darkness. Citizens with divided loyalties are prone to rebel from their lawful sovereign. For Hobbes, it is not so important that these fears are absurd, as it is that these fears are greater than other fears. Those seeking power use extra-legal terror to dominate the populace independently of the civil power. But why are the fear of darkness and ghosts so potent?

Although Hobbes does not say where these peculiar fears arise, the imagination is a likely candidate since it is the only faculty which can generate impossibilities and lend reality, or sense, to that which is unreal, or non-sense. Since the imagination is not restricted to sensibility, it can create unlimited objects to fear, and this troubled Hobbes because the force of imagined fears might eclipse fear of the state.¹⁹ These fears, he

¹⁸Ibid., 227, italics in original.

¹⁹Recall Shakespeare's Macbeth: "Present fears Are less than horrible imaginings."

believed, would not only lead to civil disobedience but would generate unjustified, incoherent, and unpredictable actions; stable subjectivity would be shipwrecked. Only the pure materiality of fear could save it. A perceived fear may be nothing more than an imaginative projection and this is not equivalent to a real and concrete threat. This is important because, as Hobbes states, only the fear of "corporeal hurt," not "Phantastical" hurt, justifies the action it produces.²⁰ To summarize: political order required manageable subjects; only ones fearful of actual objects, not phantasms, were capable of being governed. Subordinating the spiritual authority to the political sovereign mitigates the disruptive and uncontainable fears the former implants in the imagination.

C. Panique Terror

But Hobbes's discussion of fear is not uncomplicated. Take, for example, the feeling he calls "Panique Terror." Panique Terror disrupts the potentially stabilizing force of fear because it has a mediated relation, or possibly no relation, to the realm of sensibility. He defines Panique Terror as "Feare without the apprehension of why, or what..."²¹ The why as the question of origin or ground is absent; the answer to the question "what is it?" is also lacking because the subject is unable to identify a sensible object. But if Hobbes assumes causal relationships between sensible objects and feelings, how is a feeling

Macbeth, Act i, sc. 3, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974) 1315.

²⁰*Leviathan*, 206-207. Such a distinction, however, seems to generate problems. How would one distinguish fear of fantastical hurt from fear of corporeal hurt?

²¹*Ibid.*, 42.

without an object possible? This assumption may explain why he reduces Panique Terror to a manifestation of causality: "There is alwayes in him that so feareth, first, some apprehension of the cause..."²² Although apprehension of the cause seems to make Panique Terror identical to fear insofar as it is caused by an object, Hobbes puts this identity into question: "Though the rest run away by Example; every one supposing his fellow to know why. And therefore [Panique Terror] happens to none but in a throng, or multitude of people."²³ The important word here is *suppose* which means "to put under, or assume to be true."²⁴ If everyone supposes that someone else has knowledge of the object of fear then the example, not the cause, sets the "throng" into a frenzied motion. One's relation to the actual fearful object of sense is mediated through the secondary effects of someone else's relation to the object. This weak series of links is set into motion by a rumor; no one may have originary access to the fearful thing in itself, and yet, everybody acts *as if* someone did. Panique Terror is a problem since no object is the authentic origin of this feeling.

Even if the problem of Panique Terror never ceases to be a question, the reason why Hobbes insists on the priority of the sensible character of fear is clear. Since the Commonwealth demands total obedience, it must be the most important object of fear and inspire unceasing terror. The differences that may arise between subjects and that

²²Ibid., 42.

²³Ibid., 42.

²⁴*Webester's New World Dictionary*, (Cleveland: Prentice Hall Press: 1984) 1431.

may produce mild forms of fear among them are ultimately insignificant; the presence of the sovereign must eclipse these distinctions: "And though they shine some more, some lesse, when they are out of [the sovereign's] sight; yet in his presence, they shine no more than the Starres in presence of the Sun."²⁵ The sovereign must have a monopoly on fear; without it, he would lose the capacity to persuade subjects to obey. He who inspires the greatest fear, apparently, is obeyed.

Fear plays a key role in *Leviathan*. And yet, Hobbes's own discussion of it is strained. Fear grounds the Commonwealth, and yet, it can also uproot it. But containing and managing fear is not easy. A hierarchy of fear is needed; everything should not be feared equally. Fear can be controlled only if it is restricted to the realm of sensibility. If it is not, the relationship between civic authority and fearful subjects unravels. Moreover, as we have seen, the relationship between fear and sense is often tenuous. But beyond fear, a more general and indeterminate feeling poses an even more fundamental problem for Hobbes. That feeling is anxiety.

D. Anxiety

Anxiety is linked to the future, causality, and knowledge, but in a paradoxical way. Anxiety does not correspond to anything entirely determinate or sensible, and it occurs, Hobbes explains, when one lacks a stable representation of the future; such a lack or gap generates anxiety. "*Anxiety for the future time*," Hobbes claims, "disposeth men to inquire into the causes of things: because the knowledge of them, maketh men the better

²⁵*Leviathan*, 128.

able to order the present to their best advantage."²⁶ For Hobbes, one has anxiety about the future, not the present, and this induces one to search for causes. One searches for causes, an inquisitiveness that is peculiar to man, in order to order the present, or suppress the surprise that the future promises. But, as the quotation stipulates, knowledge of the cause enables men to order the present, not the future, which means that the future remains a problem; and so there is anxiety.

Anxiety is not the only experience that induces men to seek causes. Wonder also does this:

The first origin of philosophy goes back almost to the origin of speech. For both were present among the most primitive men of the earliest times, who wondered at God's works. *And wonder stimulated their minds to seek the causes of the things they wondered at.*²⁷

Anxiety and wonder have a relation to a species of joy: "Joy, from apprehension of novelty, ADMIRATION; proper to Man, because *it excites the appetite of knowing the cause.*"²⁸ Anxiety, wonder, and admiration are felt when the human runs up against the limits of reason. In contrast to wonder and admiration, anxiety is the most important feeling in *Leviathan* because it names the experience of the groundlessness and incomprehensibility of human existence. The other two, in contrast, are a sign of a specific encounter with objects that exceed cognitive limits.

²⁶Ibid., 74, emphasis added.

²⁷*Leviathan*, edited by Edwin Curley, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1994) 469, emphasis added.

²⁸*Leviathan*, 42, emphasis added.

We must now make a fundamental distinction between fear and anxiety. The future as such, not a particular future, is the cause of anxiety; for this reason, it is a feeling more general than the fear of death. The fear of a specific form of death may be a part of this future, but it is not necessarily identical to it; the future always exceeds materiality. Since the assumption behind Hobbesian fear is the presence of an object of sense, then the fear of death is restricted to the realm of sensibility. That which engenders death, not death itself, causes the fear of death, so death as such, cannot be feared. Whereas the fear of death is linked to sense, anxiety lacks a relation to the sensible world and occupies a space somewhere between sense and non-sense.

Hobbes's discussion of sensibility and causality is central to his understanding of fear, anxiety, and the future as well as his effort to determine the undetermined. In an earlier section of *Leviathan*, he draws a line between the human and the animal; the human wants to know the cause, he wants to know why and how; this is our fate. He claims:

Desire, to know why, and how, CURIOSITY; such as in no living creature but *Man*: so that Man is distinguished, not onely by his Reason; but also by this singular Passion from other *Animals*; in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of Sense, by praedominance, take away the *care of knowing causes*, which is a *Lust of the mind*, that by a perseverance of delight in the continuall and indefatigable generation of Knowledge, exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnall Pleasure.²⁹

Man is distinguished from animals by the passion called curiosity and this mode of inquisitiveness seeks knowledge. Compelled to investigate, what man discovers is not satisfying. Knowledge of the cause disempowers because it does not give him pleasure

²⁹Ibid., 42, emphasis added.

or rest; nor does it allow him to order the present. Why?

For Hobbes, even if we can locate a cause, the cause of that cause is ultimately incomprehensible. The search for causes is destined to violate the principle of succession:

Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from consideration of the effect, to seek the cause; and again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause, whereof there is *no former cause*, but is eternall; which is it men call God.³⁰

Only God is free; He is outside the chain of succession and exists as an uncaused cause.

Hobbes again: "every act of man's will, and every desire, and inclination procedeeth from some cause, and that from another cause, in a *continuell chaine*, (whose first link is in the hand of God the first of all causes,)." ³¹ But, "The Name of *God* is used, not to make us conceive him; (for his is *Incomprehensible*; and his greatnesse, and power are unconceivable;) but that we may honour him."³² The result: the Hobbesian subject is held in a state of suspension between the first cause, God, which names the limit of human reason as the incomprehensible origin or causeless cause, and the future, which is also inconceivable. This inconceivability is written into the structure of the subject, since all life is grounded on ground that is ultimately ungrounded. A fateful question mark relentlessly imposes itself on man; this ambush is anxiety.

³⁰Ibid., 74, emphasis added.

³¹Ibid., 146, emphasis added.

³²Ibid., 23, emphasis added.

A problem awaits curious man opposite the investigation of causes. Even if he can locate a cause/effect relationship, knowledge of the cause boomerangs him into the pursuit of its consequences and this generates "Promethean anxiety." One might think that the discovery of a cause would gratify the "Lust of the mind" and put anxiety to rest, since it might permit one to have a better sense of the future, but this is not the case:³³

For being assured that there be *causes of all things* that have arrived hitherto, or shall arrive hereafter; it is *impossible* for a man, who continually endeavoreth to secure himself against the evill he feares, and procure the good he desireth, *not to be in a perpetuall solicitude of the time to come*; So that every man, especially those that are *over provident*, are in an estate like to that of *Prometheus*. For as *Prometheus* (which interpreted, is, The prudent man,) was bound to the hill *Caucasus*, a place of large prospect, where, an Eagle feeding on his liver, devoured in the day, as much as was repayed in the night: So that man, which *looks too far before him, in the care of future time*, hath his heart all the day long, gnawed on by feare of death, poverty, or other calamity; and has no repose, nor pause of his *anxiety*, but in sleep.³⁴

Prudence, the "supposing like events will follow like actions,"³⁵ becomes a curse that compels man to look "too far before him;" he is thrust into the future and this generates anxiety; sleep, the "silence of sense,"³⁶ provides the only refuge.

The character of this aporia is clear. On the one hand, the future brings forth anxiety and it compels one to inquire into causes; but, on the other, knowledge of causality also produces anxiety. One's gaze is fixed on the future, but he experiences it as a question

³³Ibid., 42.

³⁴Ibid., 76, emphasis added.

³⁵Ibid., 22.

³⁶Ibid., 17.

mark; one is also desperate to locate a fixed first cause, but that is also beyond his grasp. Trapped between an incomprehensible future that generates anxiety and knowledge of causality that also produces anxiety, the human is miserable. Everything is out of reach. Anxiety, caused by both the absence of foresight of the future and knowledge of causality, is the fundamental problem Hobbes must overcome.

The relationship between the past, the present, and the future is crucial to Hobbes's understanding of anxiety and what must be done to escape it. In order to erase the problem of anxiety, Hobbes must contain the future. But what is the future? He states, "The *Present* onely has a being in Nature; things *Past* have a being in the Memory onely, but things to come have no being at all; *the Future being but a fiction of the mind...*"³⁷ How is it possible for Hobbes to give a stable representation of the future, what he calls "foresight," if the future is merely a "fiction of the mind"? Only what Hobbes calls "compound imagination," a human faculty capable of exceeding the immediate bounds of sensibility, is able to fashion "fictions of the mind."³⁸ The imagination by itself, however, cannot construct a future; pure force, or an act of imposition, is also required. Hobbes states, "For the *foresight of things to come*, which is Providence, belongs onely to him by whose *will* they are to come."³⁹ Foresight of things to come cannot be obtained passively, hence art, as the imaginative and willful imposition of form on matter, is essential for

³⁷Ibid., 22, emphasis added.

³⁸Ibid., 16.

³⁹Ibid., 22, emphasis added.

Hobbes: "For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, which is but an Artificiall Man."⁴⁰

The fundamental challenge is this: to rescue the nascent Hobbesian subject from Promethean anxiety. This is a fate that accompanies knowledge of causality and the awareness of the unlimited possibilities of the future. This is the way out: Hobbes provides the subject with a vision of the future. Specifically, the Commonwealth gives him foresight of his self-preservation and this obviates anxiety. But the gift of foresight presupposes that the sovereign can secure, if not determine, the future. As Hobbes claims, the future is a "fiction of the mind." If this is the case, how can Hobbes's future, a fiction by definition, claim ascendancy over other fictions? Would not one future be as arbitrary as the next? The challenge for Hobbes is to construct a future that ultimately makes the presentation of alternative futures impossible. Representing the future is possible only if there is one future; if there are a plurality of futures, the future becomes possibility. But possibility does not correspond to anything and so it is impossible to represent.

Hobbes wants to end discourse on the future. He will assume the role of the last prophet. In order to do this, he judges, on the basis of his own first principles, competing futurists. He refutes scholastic conceptions of teleology that set an end higher than the mere reproduction of life. Hobbes believes, in contrast to philosophers schooled in Aristotelian metaphysics, that political stability is possible only when the aspiration for

⁴⁰Ibid., 9.

the *summum bonum* is purged from political discourse. Hobbes's denunciation of these philosophers is famous. He refers to their words as "insignificant sounds...whereof there have been abundance coyned by Schoolemen, and pusled Philosophers."⁴¹ The residue of Aristotelian metaphysics produces contradictions, absurdity, and if mixed with scripture, spiritual darkness. All of these problems, he claims, can be traced back to Aristotle:

And I beleeve that scarce any thing can be more absurdly said in naturall Philosophy, than that which now is called *Aristotles Metaphysiques*; nor more repugnant to Government, than much of that hee hath said in his *Politiques*; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his *Ethiques*.⁴²

Not only do specific philosophical texts distort the image of the future that will lead to political stability, but those who read tend to do so poorly and this has disastrous political consequences. According to Hobbes, most readers become confused and enthusiastic while reading because they uncritically accept the erroneous first principles of authors. In a stinging metaphor, Hobbes discusses the consequences of the seductive power of books on these readers. They are like "birds that entring by the chimney, and finding themselves inclosed in a chamber, flutter at the false light of a glasse window, for want of wit to consider which way they came in."⁴³ For Hobbes, books do not liberate; they

⁴¹Ibid., 30.

⁴²Ibid., 461-462.

⁴³Ibid., 28. See also 225-226 for the relation between reading and rebellion. Hobbes believed that the mimetic relationship the reader had with the text could lead to civic revolt.

enslave. Readers are trapped when scholarly treatises mediate their relationship to reality; they are ungrounded and hover in a cage of shadows as opposed to standing on the stable ground provided by first principles and "Perspicuous Words."⁴⁴ Enthusiastic and credulous readers are "below the condition of ignorant men...For between true Science, and erroneous Doctrine, Ignorance is in the middle."⁴⁵ While ignorance may not be bliss, it is preferable, according to Hobbes, to floundering in falsehood. In contrast to both Scholastic philosophers and gullible readers, Hobbes reduces the future to a determinate image that eliminates discourse on it in order to secure "the Contentments of life;" care of time to come and the anxiety produced by it will be put to rest.⁴⁶

Hobbes's Commonwealth is the solution to the problem posed by the absence of foresight of the future, and its *telos* is prophecized in the first line of the second part of *Leviathan*, in Chapter XVII titled: "*Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a COMMON-WEALTH.*" The thematic of sight, or more precisely, a vision of the future that has been reduced to a determinate representation, is the justification underlying the

⁴⁴Ibid., 36.

⁴⁵Ibid., 28.

⁴⁶Ibid., 231. Even though Hobbes claims that the Commonwealth is based on more than self-preservation, or "all the Contentments of life," self-preservation is more significant. In his account of sensibility, Hobbes claims that humans are never content but fated to have insatiable desires: "Life itself is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense" (46). Given this, it remains a mystery how Hobbesian life could be said to be content. The sovereign, insofar as he secures foresight of the self-preservation of his subjects, is the only person who is not freed from care of time to come. The sovereign will have anxiety; his subjects will be fearful.

Commonwealth and the only possible way out of the state of nature:

The finall Cause, End, or Designe of men..., in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves,...is the *foresight of their own preservation* and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of Warre, which is necessarily consequent to the naturall Passions of men, when there is no *visible Power* to keep them all in awe, and tye them by feare of punishment to the performance of their Covenants...⁴⁷

The future produces anxiety; the way to eradicate it for Hobbes is simple. He defines the future in one way. The only possible future that will lead to political stability is foresight of one's own preservation. The visible power creates, secures, and represents this future. The image of the sovereign is simultaneously the reminder of one's preservation but also of one's death. His image erases anxiety and engenders fear. The sovereign must inspire fear but he must also possess foresight and that is the basis of his authority: "The Soveraign Power....," Hobbes claims, "foreseeth the necessities and dangers of the Common-wealth..."⁴⁸ Foresight as self-preservation is the future; time as possibility is erased and collapses into actuality. Since no other future is possible, discourse on alternatives can only be viewed as madness.⁴⁹

The question remains, however, whether Hobbes is totally successful in his effort to master the future and quell anxiety. A state based on self-preservation would only defer

⁴⁷Ibid., 117, emphasis added.

⁴⁸Ibid., 228, emphasis added. Given Hobbes's claim here, the sovereign occupies the most important political position in the entire Commonwealth.

⁴⁹William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) 68-73.

the fateful, if not apocalyptic, result: "And when all the world is overcharged with Inhabitants, then the last remedy of all is Warre; which provideth for every man, by Victory, or Death."⁵⁰ Perhaps that is the only possible conclusion to a state based on self-preservation. The goal of *Leviathan*, therefore, is the deferral of the coming catastrophe. A particular future, irrespective of how it is defined, can only be temporarily secured. A certain level of anxiety, it seems, will remain inside the Commonwealth.⁵¹

E. Politics

Hobbes's *Leviathan*, perhaps more than any other text during his time, illuminates the relation between the passions and politics. Stimulating and managing fear is viewed as the highest exercise of sovereign political power. But that is not the complete story. Hobbes's politics of fear receives its fundamental contours from the problem of anxiety which, Hobbes believed, is essential to both the human condition and to politics.

Given the political context of his day, perhaps it is understandable that Hobbes displays an impatience, if not hostility to politics, and that he sought to overcome anxiety through a politics of fear. But Hobbes demonstrated that anxiety is a mysterious yet powerful motivating force and that the Commonwealth, if it provides foresight of the future, can put an end to anxiety. Hobbes broke the link between politics and anxiety by temporarily determining the future as foresight of self-preservation. While this may have

⁵⁰*Leviathan*, 239.

⁵¹Another area that would need to be investigated in this regard is Hobbes's theory of language. Specifically, linguistic ambiguity justifies the continual presence of the sovereign. A linguistic state of nature continues in civil society, but this was not something that Hobbes would welcome.

been an efficacious response to the political turmoil of his time, we should consider whether our own political context should lead us in a different direction; whether we need more, not less, anxiety.

Living with anxiety would mean embracing politics as an activity without closure, finality and security; conceiving it as a practice grounded on contingency, risk, and possibility. Because he sought to master the future, Hobbes was unable to tolerate the disruptive character of anxiety. That is understandable because anxiety is the most difficult emotion; it tests and haunts the mastery of the subject because it is a feeling that we cannot completely control.⁵² And yet, the loss of mastery coincides with an important opportunity. Anxiety opens a space for critical reflection about political possibilities that are foreclosed when the future is declared as present. Anxiety should be permanent feature of the *polis*.

Under certain conditions anxiety may become paralyzing, debilitating, or worse. While there is no absolute guarantee against these risks, anxiety mitigates this threat because it interacts in a non-formulaic way with the hope that there are modes of living together open to the ambiguity, paradox, and aporias of politics.⁵³ An affirmative re-

⁵²For an account of hostility to politics in the tradition of political theory see Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁵³On the necessity of the link between politics and ambiguity see William E. Connolly's *Politics and Ambiguity*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Wolin (1960) for the paradox of politics. As for the aporias of politics, the work of Jacques Derrida, perhaps more than any other thinker, has thematized the aporia as the condition of possibility of politics, responsibility, and justice. See his "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" translated by Mary Quaintance in

evaluation of anxiety, in addition, could be an important first step in articulating the importance of an openness to the indeterminateness of the future so that we may discover ways to inscribe this indeterminacy into the political foundations that structure political life. Writing anxiety into our political institutions could be an antidote to the *Entzauberung* (demagification/disenchantment) predicted by Max Weber.⁵⁴ Not only would the active cultivation of non-paralyzing doses of anxiety install a reminder of the contingent basis of our political arrangements but, perhaps more importantly, it would intimate that these arrangements could be otherwise.

A politics of anxiety is already in progress in new and creative spaces and ways, especially in the work of Jacques Derrida and others, and political theorists should draw on these resources to expand its reach.⁵⁵ A politics of anxiety disrupts foresight of the

Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, (New York: Cardozo Law Review, 1990). Wendy Brown's *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) is another noteworthy example.

⁵⁴Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," edited by Gerth and Mills, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (New York: Oxford, 1958).

⁵⁵Derrida (1990) argues that anxiety characterizes the political moment of deconstruction and is the condition of possibility of justice: "This moment of suspense...without which, in fact, deconstruction is not possible, is always full of anxiety, but who pretends to be just by economizing on anxiety? And this anxiety-ridden moment of suspense--which is also the interval or space in which transformations, indeed juridico-political revolutions take place--cannot be motivated, cannot find its movement and its impulse (an impulse which itself cannot be suspended) except in the demand for an increase in or supplement to justice, and so in the experience of an inadequation or an incalculable disproportion:" 955-957. Foucault also valorizes anxiety in "The Anxiety of Judging" where he states that "I fear that is [sic] is dangerous to allow judges to continue to judge alone, by liberating them from their anxiety and allowing them to avoid asking themselves in the name of what they judge, by what right, by what acts, and who are they, those who judge. Let them become anxious like we become anxious when we meet so

telos of the *polis* and renders all representations of the future impossible. Despite the ultimately provisional character of his task, Hobbes wants to represent the end, or give foresight of the time to come; a political project based on anxiety, in contrast, interferes with even the most provisional attempts to represent the future. Hobbes's politics of fear forecloses the possibility of any behavior that is not caused by inclination, which in turn necessitates an external regulating state. His Commonwealth manipulates pain and pleasure through the fear of death in order to secure obedience. In contrast to fear, anxiety frees the subject from empirical determination, since it is a sign that there are always other possibilities. And just how one responds to these possibilities is impossible to predict. Enduring a certain level of indetermination may not only prevent the closing of the political but would also interrupt potentially totalizing formulations of the future. Non-totalizing formulations would not seek to represent the future, rather they would present the unbridgeable cleft between temporality and representation, always falling short of the complete mastery of its object.

A politics of anxiety is not a politics of passivity, paralysis, guilt, original sin, or paranoia, but it does require responsibility; one must act without the guide of incentives; one must be responsible to and respect the finite limits of human reason and the nonrepresentable character of the future. A politics of anxiety does not name the space for the continual heroic self-choosing of one's authentic self in the face of a formless

few who are disturbed. The crisis of the function of justice has just been opened. Let's not close it too quickly." In *Foucault Live: Essays and Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, edited by Sylvere Lotringer, (New York: Semiotext, 1996) 254, emphasis added.

future, but is, instead, the suspension between a rigid, if not dogmatic, present, on the one hand, and the complete exposure to the possibility of a better political life, on the other. As we have seen in the case of Hobbes, political programs that seek to eliminate anxiety for the sake of order foreclose and suppress the always tension-laden and perilous moments of politics.⁵⁶ A politics of anxiety seeks to cultivate these moments.

The project of political theory has been characterized as the attempt to see the unseen in a "corrected fullness."⁵⁷ A politics of anxiety is skeptical about such a position; it does not set its sight on the construction of a total vision of the future, but puts into question the presuppositions on which such a future is based. Fearless and unrelenting, this questioning is essential to politics and political theory.

F. Beyond Hobbes

Hobbes opened the problematic of feeling and situated it in the heart of politics. Even though I have taken an interpretive thread that was only intimated in his writings, Hobbes's words on anxiety and its relationship to both the future and foundations provided an entry point that complicates many contemporary interpretations about Hobbes but also sets the stage for challenging his domestication. Let us turn to a radical German thinker whose writings continue to have a decisive impact on contemporary understanding of both ethics and politics.

⁵⁶Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) theorizes the risk and contingency inherent to political action. The appearance of these moments could be counted on less than one hand.

⁵⁷Wolin (1960). See especially the discussion of "Vision and political imagination," 17-21.

CHAPTER 3

KANT AND THE PARADOX OF RESPECT

A. Back to Kant

This chapter reassesses the role of feeling -- the paradox of respect, in particular -- in Immanuel Kant and the ways it complicates his moral philosophy. Kant is classified as the philosopher of human reason but, as we shall see, he is also simultaneously a philosopher of feeling.¹ With the feeling of respect, Kant lodged a crisis in the center of his practical philosophy that has proved to be a significant source of contention among prominent commentators. Tracing the contours of this problem may lead to a reassessment of the value and limits of Kant's ethical meaning at a time when his writings are becoming increasingly unpopular.

Current critics of Kant including Bonnie Honig, Romand Coles, William E. Connolly, and others detect problems in his practical philosophy and conclude that he is, for lack of a better expression, conservative.² Although these readers have provocative and

¹This study owes much to Peter D. Fenves's *A Peculiar Fate: Metaphysics and World-History in Kant*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), Werner Hamacher's *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, translated by Peter Fenves, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), and Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Experience of Freedom*, translated by Bridget McDonald, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

²Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Although Honig claims that respect is a "paradoxically hybrid, rational, moral feeling" (26), she does not pursue the destabilizing implications of this insight and concludes that two of the three strands of Kantian respect are "didactic and disciplinary" (26); but Honig should be applauded because she acknowledges the plurality

insightful interpretations of Kant, I believe that they have overstated their case. Not only because there are resources within the Kantian project that can rejuvenate radical political thought, freedom for example, but also because Kant's writings do not constitute a unified corpus.³ Richard L. Velkley claims that Kant shifts from an analytical, logical, and cognitive orientation to a synthesizing, spontaneous, and practical one.⁴ Given this turn,

of respect. Romand Coles, *Rethinking Generosity: Critical Theory and the Politics of Caritas*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Coles argues that Kant's thinking "radically eclipses the other" (24) and that "'respect' is entwined with a systematic kind of oblivion, imperialism, and theft;" 4. I comment on Coles's remarks on Kant in greater detail later in this essay. See also William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). In the chapter titled "A Critique of Pure Politics," Connolly overemphasizes the purity of Kantian practical reason and insufficiently examines the ambiguous role that respect occupies in Kant's ethics. Even though there may be multiple traditions of respect, Connolly invokes the Kantian language he disavows when he appeals to "agonistic respect;" See also Connolly's *Ethos of Pluralization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 235; Theodor Adorno claims that Kant is repressive and authoritarian, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton, (New York: Continuum Press, 1973). In contrast to these critics, a thinker who never stopped insisting on the importance of Kant for the future of philosophy is Walter Benjamin. In his "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy," translated by Mark Ritter, in *Benjamin*, Edited by Gary Smith, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989): "It is of the greatest importance for the philosophy of the future to recognize and sort out which elements of the Kantian philosophy should be adopted and cultivated, which should be reworked, and which should be rejected;" 3.

³As for the first claim, Kant never stopped insisting on the importance of freedom, and in the words of Hannah Arendt, freedom is the "*raison d'être* of politics." For Kant, freedom is the ground of all action; but this ground is unstable and perhaps even groundless. See Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, (New York: Penguin, 1956), 151, italics in original. As for the second claim, Henry E. Allison's impressive *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) tends to overstate the overall coherence of the Kantian project. It is not clear to me how Kant's fact of reason is, in the words of Allison, "a genuine advance;" 230.

⁴Richard L. Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant's Critical Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

the Kantian project is haunted by ambiguity and tension, but these moments tend to be insufficiently examined or are ignored altogether.

Through an analysis of the feeling of respect and its relationship to philosophical foundations and freedom, my interpretation emphasizes the structural instability inherent to Kant's ethical project in order to defend it in post-structuralist terms. Kant is not "cognitivist, formalist, and universalist," as Habermas contends, but a radical thinker who anticipates the ideas of Jacques Derrida.⁵ Hence, my orientation also distinguishes itself from those who exclusively focus on Kant's notion of right in order to defend or presuppose the value of liberal institutions.⁶ John Rawls claims that the roots for *A Theory of Justice* can be found in Kant.⁷ But Rawls's domesticated image of Kant has little similarity to the critical Koenigsbergian thinker.⁸ For postmodern political theorists

⁵See Juergen Habermas's essay "Morality and Ethical Life: Does Hegel's Critique of Kant Apply to Discourse Ethics?" translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen in *Kant and Political Philosophy*, Edited by Ronald Beiner and William James Booth, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 321. As for the Kant and Derrida relation, I am thinking of the problem of freedom in Kant and Derrida's insistence that any political act worthy of the name must endure the ordeal of undecidability. Arguably, undecidability is Derrida's word for freedom. For both Kant and Derrida, freedom is beyond the order of knowledge and this rescues practice from mechanical implementation.

⁶Andreas Teuber claims that "Contingencies play no role in his [Kant's] conception of the moral person" in "Kant and Respect for Persons," *Political Theory*, vol. 11 no. 3, August 1983, 389. Similarly, John Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice*, claims that "the priority of right is a central feature of Kant's ethics;" (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 31.

⁷Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

⁸See Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory," *Journal of Philosophy*, 77, 1980, 515-72. Rawls gives primacy to the social even though Kant insists on the primacy of the practical. Rawls's preoccupation with institutions, moreover, ignores Kant's

Kant is too cold; for liberals, he is perfectly conservative. But there is another Kant.

B. Paradox

The word "paradox" appears in Kant's corpus infrequently, and this has led to its relative neglect as a theme among commentators. Perhaps it is even justifiable to direct our attention to other topics given the following: "*Consistency* is the greatest obligation of a philosopher and yet the most rarely found."⁹ Even though Kant valued philosophical consistency, he suggests that the paradox could serve a critical function. This is apparent where he explicitly discusses the paradox in a section entitled "On Egotism" in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.¹⁰ Although he knew that it could be used as a tool employed merely to make one appear unique and original, Kant also maintained that the paradox could serve more than one's vanity:

Preference for the paradoxical is logical obstinacy in which a man does not want to appear as an imitator of others, but rather prefers to appear as an unusual human being. Instead of accomplishing his purpose, such a man frequently succeeds only in being odd. But, because everyone must have and maintain his own intelligence, the reproach of being paradoxical, when it is not based on vanity or the desire to be different, carries no bad connotations. Opposite to the paradoxical is the commonplace, which sides with the general opinion. But with the commonplace there is as little safety, if not less, because it lulls the mind to sleep, whereas the paradox awakens the mind to attention and investigation,

valorization of autonomy. The contrast I seek to draw between Kant and Rawls is not absolute since Kant also theorized institutions, but to a lesser extent than is often emphasized.

⁹Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Edited and translated by Mary Gregor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 22, italics in original.

¹⁰Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, translated by Victor Lyle Dowdell, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

which often lead to discoveries.¹¹

Since, "everyone must have and maintain his own intelligence," taking delight in the paradoxical removes one from "general opinion." A self-imposed exile corresponds to intellectual independence. With the commonplace, one is prone to narcolepsy or perhaps even a dogmatic slumber. But Kant maintained that the paradox could be an antidote for cognitive apathy because it triggers attention and may lead to discoveries. If the paradox suspends reason, it also simultaneously enlivens it and "awakens the mind." Not a symptom of cognitive weakness, the paradox stimulates autonomous thinking and, Kant claims, it is also the sign of a "humorous intelligence."¹² Even though Kant is aware that it could be abused, he did not seek to devalue the paradox.

There are also infrequent references to paradox in Kant's practical philosophy. In many places, Kant acknowledges the enigma of practical reason. And even though a particular "circle" threatens Kant's project near the conclusion of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the word paradox appears only once in this text, and in a context somewhat removed from the feeling of respect.¹³ In the *Critique of Practical Reason*,

¹¹*Anthropology*, 12.

¹²In a section of the *Anthropology* entitled "On the Specific Differences Between the Comparative and the Argumentative Intelligence:" "Intelligence in punning is stale; while needless subtlety (micrology) of judgment is pedantic. Humorous intelligence arises from directing the head to appreciate paradoxes, in which the (sly) knave peers from behind the naive sound of simplicity in order to subject somebody (or even his own opinion) to laughter;" 120.

¹³Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Edited and translated by Mary Gregor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); the reference to the circle appears

Kant refers to the "paradox of method" but he never explicitly says that the feeling of respect is a paradox.¹⁴

But in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the section entitled "The Application of the Categories to Objects of the Senses in General," Kant refers to the paradox of self-affection.¹⁵ Respect can justifiably be designated a paradox because it is a feeling that is not received from outside influences but one that is self-generated, that is, self-affected. And self-affection, Kant suggests, is paradoxical. But more importantly, the fugitive movement of respect itself is a stronger indicator of its paradoxical status. Respect is neither completely sensible nor completely intelligible but both and neither at the same time. It is a transient that eludes both poles of the binary opposition reason/feeling that inaugurates Western metaphysics.

C. Respect

Kant's views on human feelings are ambiguous and provocative. Even though the role and significance of feelings including the feeling of the beautiful, sublime, and respect, changes throughout his political and philosophical writings, his interest in human feeling

on 55, the paradox on 49.

¹⁴*Critique of Practical Reason*, 54.

¹⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 165. Fennes has an insightful discussion of Kant's elaboration of the paradox of self-affection; 222. In addition, Howard Caygill states: "The discussion of affection in the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' and 'Deduction'...has features which Kant himself describes as paradoxical;" 58. Caygill continues: "Kant himself seems to have chosen not to solve the problem, but rather to leave it open as an ineluctable but fertile philosophical difficulty or 'aporia,'" in *A Kant Dictionary*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 59.

persists throughout his entire intellectual career. As early as 1764 Kant investigates the possibility of finer feelings in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*.¹⁶ Later, he dedicates an immense amount of attention to the relationship between feeling and morality, and the ways in which the former threatens the possibility of the latter. But Kant does not accord all feelings the same worth; for the ultimate success of his practical philosophy hinges on his capacity to make qualitative distinctions between specific feelings.¹⁷ And the qualitative feeling *par excellence* is respect. As we shall see, the human's moral transformation materializes as a mode self-affection Kant calls respect.¹⁸

¹⁶Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, translated by John T. Goldthwait, (Berkeley: Regents of the University of California, 1960).

¹⁷Kant distinguishes respect from awe, reverence, contempt, admiration, fear, hope, and amazement. For a discussion of many of these feelings see my "Politics and Anxiety in Hobbes's *Leviathan*," *Theory & Event*, 5:1 For a discussion of the difference between emotion and passion, refer to the *Anthropology*, 157.

¹⁸In addition to the scholarship already discussed, there have been numerous studies of respect. For a clear and helpful discussion of respect, in addition to other difficulties in Kant's writings, see H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); Mary Gregor discusses the relationship between love and respect in *Laws of Freedom: A Study of Kant's Method of Applying the Categorical Imperative in the Metaphysik der Sitten*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 186; Richard McCarty in "Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect" makes a helpful distinction between the intellectualistic and affectivistic views of Kantian moral motivation and also claims that "some mystery...shrouds the peculiar feeling of respect" in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31:3 July 1993, 434; Alexander Broadie and Elisabeth M. Pybus in "Kant's Concept of 'Respect'" distinguish between the Socratic (reason) and Sentimental (feeling) moral positions and they claim that Kant has effected a compromise between them in *Kant-Studien*, vol. 66, 1975, 63; Robert Paul Wolff claims that "the introduction of the emotion of reverence is contradictory to the entire thrust of Kant's argument" in *The Autonomy of Reason: A Commentary on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973), 83; for a study of the

One of Kant's earliest sustained references to respect appears in a footnote in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. It is the first thorough, albeit preliminary, articulation of this feeling and its interrelationship to the network of fundamental moral concepts in Kant's practical philosophy. This footnote appears early on in the first section titled "Transition from common rational to philosophic moral cognition." That respect is discussed in a footnote is not insignificant. Even though Kant discusses respect in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of Judgment*, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and *Metaphysics of Morals*, his discussion of it in the *Groundwork* demonstrates his own uncertainty about his appeal to a specifically moral feeling in a text that severs feeling from the field of moral practice.¹⁹

It is clear from the first line of this note, from its subjunctive grammatical construction to the anticipation of an objection, that Kant believed his appeal to respect will be criticized. He tries to refute the charge that he seeks refuge behind an obscure moral feeling. Perhaps more importantly, Kant is here concerned with the mere possibility of the feeling of respect. For this reason, he must distinguish it both from the inclinations as

relationship between respect and the inclinations see Andrews Reath's "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility: Respect for the Moral Law and the Influence of Inclination" in *Kant-Studien*, vol. 80, 1989; A. Murray MacBeath in "Kant and Moral Feeling" has a helpful discussion of the relationship between the sublime and the feeling of respect but, for reasons that are obvious, I cannot support his claim that we must "ignore all Kant's contradictions of what I take to be his official theory of the proper objects of respect..." in *Kant-Studien*, vol. 64, 1973, 302.

¹⁹Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1987); *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Edited by Allen Wood et. al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Metaphysics of Morals*, Edited and translated by Mary Gregor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

well as from the sphere of cognition. This is not an easy task and Kant knows it.

Respect, it seems, will occupy a non-space somewhere between the phenomenal and noumenal realms. After introducing the famous proposition "*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for law*," Kant appends the following note:²⁰

It could be objected that I only seek refuge, behind the word *respect*, in an obscure feeling, instead of distinctly resolving the question by means of a concept of reason. though respect is a feeling, it is not one received by means of influence; it is, instead, a feeling *self-wrought* by means of a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the first kind, which can be reduced to inclination or fear. What I recognize immediately as a law for me I cognize with respect, which signifies merely consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences on my sense. Immediate determination of the will by means of a law and consciousness of this is called *respect*, so that this is regarded as the *effect* of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law. Respect is properly the representation of a worth that infringes upon my self-love. Hence there is something that is regarded as an object neither of inclination nor of fear, though it has something analogous to both. The *object* of respect is therefore simply the *law*, and indeed the law that we impose upon *ourselves* and yet as necessary in itself. As a law we are subject to it without consulting self-love; as imposed upon us by ourselves it is nevertheless a result of our will; and in the first respect it has an analogy with fear, in the second with inclination. Any respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of integrity and so forth) of which he gives us an example. Because we also regard enlarging our talents as a duty, we represent a person of talents also as, so to speak, an *example of the law* (to become like him in this by practice), and this is what constitutes our respect. All so-called moral *interest* consists simply in *respect for the law*.²¹

Kant's discussion of respect in this long footnote is striking. Respect (if there is such a thing) is a self-produced feeling as opposed to one received from external stimuli, and that is what makes it different from all other feelings. The unmediated recognition of the

²⁰*Groundwork*, 13.

²¹*Groundwork*, 14, italics in original.

validity of moral claims imposed upon humans generates respect. It is the "effect of the law on the subject" that results when we impose a law with no mediating influences upon ourselves. The immediacy of this law means respect is felt as immediacy itself, as pure force: "lawgiving reason...forces from me immediate respect."²² And this immediacy is precisely what distinguishes respect from other feelings. In the words of Kant, respect is more "powerful than all...feelings together."²³

Respect is neither fear nor inclination but is "analogous" to both. It is not surprising that Kant invokes an analogical mode of presentation here as an indirect way to elucidate respect. Analogical relationships are not relations of identity and, more importantly, are not completely rational but metaphorical.²⁴ They establish a relation of similitude through the reflective transfer of the features of different objects placed in a spatial relationship. This moment of analogical spatialization in Kant simultaneously interconnects and separates respect from its siblings fear and inclination. All three are similar since they are feelings; for they all appear on the radar of corporeality. But they are not the same. Kant doubts the extent to which fear could engender moral conduct since it signals the absence of freedom; respect, in contrast, names the leap out of the causal mechanism. And, action driven by fear would "destroy the whole moral worth of

²²*Groundwork*, 16.

²³Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 209.

²⁴Derrida maintains that "Analogy is metaphor par excellence," *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 242.

actions" because it receives its ground for conduct completely from sensibility.²⁵

Something else is striking about this subtextual qualification. Kant maintains that "Respect is a feeling." The inclinations will not and could not be eradicated because, as Kant states, the human "can never be altogether free from desires and inclinations..."²⁶ The total purification of sensibility is an impossibility.²⁷ Kant goes even further when he claims in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* that "*considered in themselves* natural inclinations are *good*..."²⁸ But the inclinations must nonetheless be circumscribed so that the human can be morally elevated. And the humiliation or circumscription of human sensibility is proportionate to his moral elevation.²⁹

If respect receives a preliminary and subtextual elucidation, this is not surprising since the *Groundwork* prepares the way for another text that takes up similar themes. But the feeling of respect is not dropped as an elusive object of inquiry; Kant develops it in greater detail three years later in the *Critique of Practical Reason* where it takes center stage as the incentive for moral conduct.³⁰ Kant's discussion of it does not occur beneath

²⁵*Critique of Practical Reason*, 108.

²⁶*Critique of Practical Reason*, 71.

²⁷The purity Connolly sees in Kantian morality, in my view, is incompatible with Kant's own words on the sensible basis of it. Kant wanted to purify morality from a certain mode of sensible contamination but one feeling remains (respect), and it is the unstable nexus between the human and the law.

²⁸*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 78, italics in original.

²⁹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 67.

³⁰In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant now distinguishes between *Triebfeder*

the text but in one of the longest sections in the middle of this book. From a painstaking footnote in the *Groundwork*, respect reemerges to occupy a central place in Chapter 3 of the analytic of practical reason titled "On the incentives of pure practical reason."

Respect, we learn, is the sole motive to moral conduct.

Whereas in the *Groundwork* Kant claimed that basing morality on incentives destroys its sublimity, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* this is no longer the case.³¹ A specific incentive is now distinguished from contingent ones, and the former will undergird the sublimity of moral practice. Any doubt Kant had about the possibility of respect accomplishing this in the *Groundwork* is gone: "respect for the moral law is...the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive."³² But how is respect an incentive?

Kant defines an incentive as "the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law..."³³ But

and *Bewegungsgrund*, a distinction that was not made in the *Groundwork*. Gregor makes this point in a footnote to her edited volume of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, 32.

³¹*Groundwork*, 48. Coles underexamines the interconnection between sublimity and moral categories in Kant's philosophy. This connection would probably frustrate the line he seeks to draw between the first two critiques and the third. Coles privileges the *Critique of Judgment* while adopting a somewhat dismissive stance toward the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Coles finds the consequences of Kant's narrative of subjective sovereignty in the *Critique of Pure Reason* problematic. Kant's views on lying and revolution, according to Coles, are short-sighted. As this essay seeks to demonstrate, the radical resources Coles unearths in the *Critique of Judgment* that can productively disfigure dominant interpretations of Kant in the name of an ethic of receptive generosity can also be found in Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy as well, although the specific ethical consequences would not, of course, necessarily be the same.

³²*Critique of Practical Reason*, 67.

³³*Critique of Practical Reason*, 62.

at the outset of the *Critique of Practical Reason* dedicated to clarifying the *Triebfeder*, Kant acknowledges the difficulty of even conceiving of one: "How a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will is for human reason an *insoluble problem*..."³⁴ Kant will avoid the problem and redefine his task. The task becomes one of showing "not the ground from which the moral law in itself supplies an incentive but rather what it effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it is an incentive."³⁵ The effect will be elucidated, not the ground itself from which the moral law serves as a source of motivation.

As we have learned, Kant thinks that the human is never totally free from inclinations and desires. Even though humans can never step outside of sensibility, the challenge is whether something other than sensibility can motivate action in order to give it justifiable moral worth:

sensible feeling...is indeed the condition of that feeling we call respect, but the cause determining it lies in pure practical reason; and so this feeling, on account of its origin, cannot be called pathologically effected but must be called *practically effected*, and is effected as follows: the representation of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence and self-conceit of its illusion, and thereby the hindrance to pure practical reason is lessened and the representation of the superiority of its objective law to the impulses of sensibility, and with it the relative weightiness of the law...is produced in the judgment of reason through the removal of the counterweight...³⁶

Respect is an effect on feeling but it is not pleasure; nor can it be compared to any

³⁴*Critique of Practical Reason*, 62, italics added.

³⁵*Critique of Practical Reason*, 62-63.

³⁶*Critique of Practical Reason*, 65, italics in original.

pathological feeling because it is not, Kant claims, "pathologically effected." And yet, it presupposes the sensibility and finitude that is its condition of possibility: "Sensible feeling...is indeed the condition of that feeling we call respect..."³⁷ Yet, respect is nonetheless produced solely by reason, by an "intellectual ground."³⁸ This opens the arduous path to genuine moral practice that requires getting rid of sensibility, "the counterweight." This is not an excavation that the human subject welcomes: "So *little* is respect a feeling of *pleasure* that we give way to it only reluctantly...We try to discover something that could lighten the burden of it for us..."³⁹ Again: "*Respect* is a *tribute* that we cannot refuse to pay merit, whether we want to or not; we may indeed withhold it outwardly but we still cannot help feeling it inwardly."⁴⁰ Respect exceeds the intentions of the subject. But it also does more. It exposes the world of appearances to inherent meaninglessness since something other, something essentially negative, provides the ground for genuine moral conduct.

A peculiar negativity that can be cognized *a priori* will provide determination for the liberated will. But this liberation is not entirely pleasant:

What is essential in every determination of the will by the moral law is that, as free will...it is determined solely by the law. So far, then, the effect of the moral law as incentive is only negative, and as such this incentive can be cognized *a priori*. For, all inclination and every sensible impulse is based on feeling, and the

³⁷*Critique of Practical Reason*, 65.

³⁸*Critique of Practical Reason*, 64.

³⁹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 66, italics in original.

⁴⁰*Critique of Practical Reason*, 66, italics in original.

negative effect on feeling...is itself a feeling. Hence we can see a priori that the moral law, as the determining ground of the will, must by thwarting all our inclinations produce a feeling that can be called *pain*...⁴¹

"The negative effect on feeling is itself a feeling." On the one hand, feeling is crossed out, but on the other, a feelingless feeling is itself felt as a feeling. Respect seems to live off the very feelings that seek to deny respect's own possibility. Feeling the absence of feeling -- "pain" -- corresponds to the negation of the inclinations of the self; this signals the beginning of one's infinitely tested membership in an intelligible world. The devastation of self-love is a prerequisite; self-conceit, in addition, must also be struck down and this involves humiliation.⁴² Kant acknowledges that "respect...shows us our unworthiness with... severity."⁴³

If pain marks respect at the outset of its appearance, the second moment of respect is also a negative feeling but one closer to the feeling of pleasure. And it is here that a striking resemblance between the complicated network of sensations that constitute respect and Kant's discussion of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgement* appears. The movement of attraction and repulsion in both the feeling of the sublime and respect results in a negative pleasure.⁴⁴ But in the case of respect, the law is not only a source of

⁴¹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 63, emphasis added.

⁴²*Critique of Practical Reason*, 64.

⁴³*Critique of Practical Reason*, 67.

⁴⁴In reference to the feeling of the sublime, the full quote from the *Critique of Judgement* reads: "the mind is not just attracted by the object but is alternatively always repelled as well, the liking for the sublime contains not so much a positive pleasure as rather

pain but also the ground of a "positive feeling."⁴⁵ Although respect is not pleasure, one is "elevated" and this corresponds to the awareness of needing nothing, the sign of which is an "inner tranquility."⁴⁶ This is not so much a pathological reward as it is a peculiar comfort Kant names "consolation" that is the result of viewing the majesty of the moral law in its absolute holiness.⁴⁷

As we have seen, a discussion of the relationship between duty and respect in the *Groundwork* initiated Kant's investigation of the latter. He provisionally concludes his discussion of respect by returning to the concept of duty in the *Triebfeder* section of the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

Duty! Sublime and mighty name that embraces nothing charming or insinuating but requires submission, and yet does not seek to move the will by threatening anything that would arouse natural aversion or terror in the mind but only holds forth a law that of itself finds entry into the mind and yet gains reluctant reverence, a law before which all inclinations are dumb, even though they secretly work against it; what origin is there worthy of you, and where is to be found the root of your noble descent which proudly rejects all kinship with the inclinations, descent from which is the indispensable condition of that worth which human beings alone can give themselves?⁴⁸

admiration and respect, and so should be called a negative pleasure;" 98. Respect, in contrast to the feeling of the sublime, has an *a priori* status. For a helpful discussion of the sublime see Fenves's "Taking Stock of the Kantian Sublime," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1994.

⁴⁵*Critique of Practical Reason*, 63.

⁴⁶*Critique of Practical Reason*, 67, 75.

⁴⁷*Critique of Practical Reason*, 75.

⁴⁸*Critique of Practical Reason*, 73, italics in original.

The interconnection between our moral duty and the law silences the inclinations. The critical philosopher even raises the possibility of duty's immaculate conception. This mystery does not jeopardize the human's moral worth but is the fundamental condition of it. This worth is not granted by a politician but is self-given, that is, taken. In order to be a citizen, one must place a law above oneself which in turn "elevates a human being above himself" and the endlessness of this self-overcoming constitutes our proper self.⁴⁹ Finally, we discover "the sublimity of our own supersensible existence..."⁵⁰ But why does Kant evade the question of the origin of duty? If there is an origin worthy of duty, what would it be?

D. Ground

The word ground has particular significance for Kant since respect is unfathomable or "unerguendlich" for speculative reason and because he sought to provide a critical ground for practice.⁵¹ The centrality of the concept of ground is apparent in the first and one of the most significant texts in the development of his critical practical philosophy: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.⁵² This text is ambitious because it seeks out

⁴⁹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 74.

⁵⁰*Critique of Practical Reason*, 75.

⁵¹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 68. Gregor translates "unerguendlich" as "impenetrable" which erases the force of the literal connection to the ground contained in this word. Unfathomable is better.

⁵²For an antifoundationalist account of the Kantian critical project see Onora O'Neill. O'Neill's discussion of the first critique as a "reflexive and political task" is provocative. See *Construction of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8-10.

and establishes the supreme principle of morality, the categorical imperative.⁵³ This is a necessary and justifiable project since all previous texts on moral philosophy have failed to locate and elucidate this principle. But to get there one must traverse "the highest limit of all moral inquiry."⁵⁴

Despite its monumental goal, the *Groundwork* has an astonishing conclusion. The ultimate foundation for morality, the groundlaying, remains a question and is fundamentally inaccessible to cognition.⁵⁵ A massive gap separates the body of the text from the character of the inquiry promised by the title. Although the word *Groundwork* suggests that this text will provide a groundlaying, groundwork, grounding, or foundation for morals, such a foundation is precisely what the text fails to supply. In fact, the "Concluding Remark" of this text contains the following paradox:

And thus we do not indeed comprehend the practical unconditioned necessity of the moral imperative, but we nevertheless comprehend its *incomprehensibility*; and this is all that can fairly be required of a philosophy that strives in its principles to reach the very boundary of human reason.⁵⁶

After a transition from "Ordinary Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical" and one from "Popular Moral Philosophy to a Metaphysics of Morals," the text culminates in a paradox that signals the fundamental inaccessibility of the foundation

⁵³*Groundwork*, 5.

⁵⁴*Groundwork*, 65.

⁵⁵Groundlaying is the literal translation of the German word *Grundlegung*.

⁵⁶*Groundwork*, 66, italics in original.

for practice. Even though grounding only names a preliminary project, one that will be worked out three years later in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant does not even provide a preliminary grounding. Instead, we get something like an absolute ungrounding signaled in the invitation to embrace negativity or "comprehend incomprehensibility."

The negativity of Kantian morality has proved to be a significant point of contention among readers of Kant leading many to dismiss his ethical principles. But during Kant's discussion of the sublimity of the Jewish law prohibiting images of the divine in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant reverses the relation between sensibility and morality and insists that it is indeed the negativity of morality that is precisely what invigorates the moral imagination -- gives it force -- and checks the practices of governments who seek pliable subjects:

It is indeed a mistake to worry that depriving this presentation of whatever could commend it to the senses will result in its carrying with it no more than a cold and lifeless approval without any moving force or emotion. It is exactly the other way round. For once the senses no longer see anything before them, while yet the unmistakable and indelible idea of morality remains, one would sooner need to temper the momentum of an unbounded imagination so as to keep it from rising to the level of enthusiasm, than to seek to support these ideas with images and childish devices for fear that they would otherwise be powerless. That is also why governments have gladly permitted religion to be amply furnished with such accessories: they were trying to relieve every subject of the trouble, yet also of the ability, to expand his soul's forces beyond the barriers that one can choose to set for him so as to reduce him to mere passivity and so make him more pliable...this pure, elevating, and merely negative exhibition of morality involves no danger of *fanaticism*, which is the *delusion of wanting to SEE something beyond all bounds of sensibility*...The exhibition avoids fanaticism precisely because it is merely negative. For *the idea of freedom is inscrutable* and thereby precludes all positive exhibition whatever...⁵⁷

⁵⁷*Critique of Judgment*, 135, italics in original.

The negativity of morality is not "cold and lifeless" but produces imaginative momentum and is simultaneously a check on fanaticism; the inverse instantaneously deadens the soul and is a tool of governments that engineer moral passivity. Governments fear that moral claims will have no force unless they are supplemented with "childish devices." Kant does not have this fear. For him, moral practice grounded on freedom ultimately lacks a ground; freedom is essentially negative. And it is indeed this negativity that engenders the moral citizen's empowerment.

But the negative character of moral demands and the human's inability to conceive the possibility of an action done out of duty does not mean that morality is a mere "phantom" or that the law fails to effect us.⁵⁸ We are summoned by the law that we cannot completely grasp even though we can nonetheless hear its command. The "voice of reason" is one that is "so distinct, so irrepressible, and so audible."⁵⁹ It "makes even the boldest evildoer tremble."⁶⁰ More terrifyingly, "even the dead are not always safe from this critical examination."⁶¹ We are in doubt, though, whether the voice of reason "comes from man, from the perfected power of his own reason, or whether it comes from an *other*, whose essence is unknown to us..."⁶² The ground for morality cannot be rationally

⁵⁸*Groundwork*, 51.

⁵⁹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 32.

⁶⁰*Critique of Practical Reason*, 68.

⁶¹*Critique of Practical Reason*, 66.

⁶²Kant, "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy," in *Raising the Tone of*

elucidated or grasped because it is freedom; that alone, nothing else, transfers the human into an other order.⁶³

E. Freedom

When Kant designates God, freedom, and immortality in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as the "unavoidable problems set by pure reason" this does not name three separate undertakings but only one.⁶⁴ It is the announcement of the problem of freedom as the most important metaphysical investigation. For both the idea of an eternal divinity and immortality involve the possibility of something that is entirely unconditioned, that is, free. In the case of God, independence from an origin or ground other than one that is self-given, or, in the case of immortality, something outside of temporal determination altogether. And the possibility of both the former and the latter point to the problem of freedom.

Perhaps more so than any other philosopher, Kant dedicates himself to the problem of freedom with unprecedented rigor. And even though it occupies a central place in Kant's writings, freedom never ceases to be an unproblematic concept. Consider, for example, how Kant speaks of freedom in three different texts. In the *Groundwork* freedom is

Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida, Edited by Peter Fenves, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 71, emphasis added.

⁶³*Groundwork*, 59.

⁶⁴*Critique of Pure Reason*, 46.

"presupposed."⁶⁵ In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, freedom is a "fact of reason."⁶⁶ In the *Anthropology*, freedom appears as something primordial: "The child who has just come from its mother's womb, unlike all other animals, seems to enter the world with a loud shriek just because it considers the inability to make use of its limbs a restraint; consequently, it announces this claim to freedom (which no other animal knows)."⁶⁷

But over and above these strained formulations and anthropological speculation about the primal cry, there is something paradoxical about Kant's meditation on freedom. In the thought of freedom, reason must do what it is ultimately unable to do, that is, think the unconditioned. A gap separates the conditioning activity of reason and the unconditioned essence of freedom; for the thought of the unconditioned is incompatible with the ground giving character of reason. It seems that every thought of freedom is destined to miss its target. In order to think freedom, then, we have to think the unconditioned. Thought must think the unthinkable. An unsatisfying predicament indeed: "By constant inquiry after the condition, the satisfaction of reason is only further and further postponed."⁶⁸ The deferral of cognitive gratification means that freedom always exceeds our faculties: "We shall never be able to comprehend how freedom is possible."⁶⁹ But we should be satisfied

⁶⁵*Groundwork*, 53.

⁶⁶*Critique of Practical Reason*, 28.

⁶⁷*Anthropology*, 176.

⁶⁸*Groundwork*, 66.

⁶⁹*Groundwork*, 60.

"if only we can be sufficiently assured that there is no proof of its impossibility..."⁷⁰ This is a surprising claim if we accept Henry E. Allison's assertion that freedom inhabits the most important place in Kant's practical philosophy.⁷¹

The theoretical impossibility of conceiving freedom corresponds to the practical difficulty of it as well. On the one hand, freedom is the condition of possibility for ethical practice, but, on the other, freedom is not a stable foundation but designates the complete removal of all determinate grounds. Freedom will never be a particular place or standpoint. Kant's famous "footpath of freedom," the path "on which it is possible to make use of our reason in our conduct..." turns out to be not so much a trail of security but something else, something that is at best undecidable.⁷² The undecidable character of freedom is, in the words of Kant, "a terrible thing," not only because it is the condition of both good and evil but because it also annihilates the stability of the fundamental ground for practice.⁷³ The result: the human comes face to face with the radical indeterminacy of all action. Kant: "The law cannot specify precisely in what way one is to act..."⁷⁴

⁷⁰*Critique of Practical Reason*, 79.

⁷¹Allison, 1.

⁷²*Groundwork*, 60.

⁷³Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, translated by Louis Infield, (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1996), 17.

⁷⁴*Metaphysics of Morals*, 194. This does not threaten Kantian morality with pointlessness. It preserves the sublimity of freedom and prevents the denigration of the law to a tool. For a critique of the potential pointlessness of Kantian morality see J. B. Schneewind's "Autonomy, obligation and virtue: An overview of Kant's moral philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer, (New York: Cambridge

But, and this is Kant's genius, the instability of freedom does not authorize ethical license. The fundamental undecidability of freedom promises to generate modes of action that do not negate the freedom that initially permitted these acts to be possible at all. There is thus a certain lawfulness that corresponds to the instability of freedom: "A free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same."⁷⁵ But the "reciprocal relationship" between lawfulness and freedom does not efface the fundamental riddle of freedom. At the bottom of it all, freedom is the law, and the law can only ever be freedom.

Kant maintains in the *Groundwork* that contemplating the possibility of the law as an imperative of freedom leads one to the "extreme boundary of all practical philosophy."⁷⁶ Conducting oneself in accordance with it goes further. For Kant believed that it would lead to nothing less than a total cosmic inversion of the fundamental laws of the universe; the force of the laws of nature in determining conduct are replaced with the force of freedom. We must "conduct ourselves in accordance with maxims of freedom as if they

University Press, 1992). For a valorization of the non-technical foundation for ethics and politics see *The Other Heading* by Jacques Derrida, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Nass, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). Derrida states, "when a responsibility is exercised in the order of the possible, it simply follows a direction and elaborates a program. It makes of action the applied consequence, the simple application of a knowledge or know-how. It makes of ethics and politics a technology. No longer of the order of *practical reason* or decision, it begins to be irresponsible;" 45, emphasis added. Although Derrida is critical of Kant, there is a striking similarity between Kant's conception of practical reason and the Derridean decision.

⁷⁵*Groundwork*, 53. See Velkley for a discussion of the impact of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conception of law on Kant.

⁷⁶*Groundwork*, 59.

were laws of nature."⁷⁷ Freedom, a new ground in the outer reaches of cognition, changes place with the laws of nature and becomes the condition of possibility for an elevated and redeemed planet. The initial sign of this possibility is the feeling of one's own radical independence from nature.

But the possibility of even a partial independence from nature depends on human receptivity. One must receive what is absolutely other and intrinsically opposed to the innermost composition of the human. This is especially difficult to bear since the moral law recognizes no limits. The logical result of the limitlessness of moral commands is permanent moral failure; these commands can never be fulfilled.⁷⁸ But the unfulfillability and impossibility of moral commands does not mean that they are opaque, even though they may produce *thauma* in the resident of Koenigsberg himself: "The simplicity of this law...must seem astonishing..."⁷⁹ This is the law: "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law."⁸⁰ In the categorical imperative, the human is commanded to do the impossible and this is the

⁷⁷*Groundwork*, 66.

⁷⁸For an intriguing discussion of the non-fulfillable character of the moral law refer to Hamacher's *Premises*, 81-108. During his discussion of the relationship between the moral law and happiness, Coles claims that "the moral law would involve reason in the contradiction of commanding that it determine and will itself according to something which is fundamentally impossible;" 45. By appealing to the principle of non-contradiction, it is not Kant but Coles who privileges the sovereignty of reason. I find Hamacher's discussion of structural impossibility in Kant more persuasive.

⁷⁹*Metaphysics of Morals*, 51.

⁸⁰*Critique of Practical Reason*, 28.

essence, not of Kant's moral reform, but of his moral revolution. Kant's famous criticism of revolution in the *Metaphysics of Morals* should be viewed strictly within the domain of legality. Kant never ruled out the possibility of a moral revolution: "That a human being should become not merely *legally* good, but *morally* good...cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in the disposition of the human being."⁸¹

The name for the moral revolution in the disposition of the human is *Achtung*. Respect names the complete annihilation of political projects grounded on pathological subjectivity. It also signals the impossibility of human moral perfection but without abandoning the aspiration for it. A distinctly human feeling of moral failure, respect reminds us that there is no secure position on which moral conduct can be based. But as a sign of the human's moral finitude, respect nonetheless names the possible elevation of the human out of the causal mechanism and into a "kingdom of ends." Although he is morally elevated, he is also embodied.⁸² He is free but he cannot completely step outside of sensibility. Ascending as he falls and descending as he rises, the Kantian moral agent

⁸¹*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 67-8, italics in original.

⁸²For the theme of embodiment in Kant's writings see Susan Meld Shell, *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also *The Rights of Reason: A Study of Kant's Philosophy and Politics*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). In the latter, Shell states, "By thus heightening the importance of intellectual and economic rights, Kant lessens the significance of the distinction he draws between active and passive citizenship. An empirically republican government is less urgently needful than the formal right to develop fully one's own powers;" 173. I am made uneasy by the distinction Shell draws between active and passive citizenship. Given Kant's own insistence on the importance of autonomy and, more generally, Kant's egalitarian hopefulness, passive citizenship is oxymoronic.

is occupied by divergent forces that never entirely supply a standpoint that exceeds the poles of this motile opposition. But the regime of sensibility does not stop him from attempting to elevate himself above the tyrannical voice of pathology because the Kantian moral agent also hears the "voice of reason."⁸³

F. Ethical Paradox

Readers of Kant from a wide variety of priesthoods have had a difficult time coming to terms with the feeling of respect. It is, in the words of Sarah Kofman, an "economy of panic;" for Jean-Francois Lyotard it is "a blank feeling;" for Adorno, respect is even "repressive."⁸⁴ But for the purposes of this study I examine Connolly's recent critique of Kant. In his important *Why I am Not a Secularist*, he theorizes the "visceral register," a name designating gut feelings and embodied trauma, and in the Chapter entitled "A Critique of Pure Politics," he launches a critique of Kantian purity.⁸⁵ And it is here that Connolly smells an unconscious dogmatism and imperialism in Kant; he is nervous about the Kantian devaluation of sensibility; he wonders, finally, whether Kant places his command morality outside a zone of legitimate contestation.⁸⁶ I understand and share

⁸³*Critique of Practical Reason*, 32.

⁸⁴See Sarah Kofman, "The Economy of Respect: Kant and Respect for Women," translated by Nicola Fisher, in *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, Edited by Robin May Schott, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, translated by Elizabeth Rottenberg, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 118; Adorno, 232.

⁸⁵Connolly, 1999, 163.

⁸⁶See also Connolly's "Speed, Concentric Cultures, and Cosmopolitanism" in *Political Theory*, vol. 28, no. 5, 2000.

Connolly's hesitations but, as I have shown, there is another way to approach Kant.⁸⁷

Connolly sees a dangerous drive to purity in Kant, but as I have demonstrated that there is also a structural contamination at work. He sees command morality in Kant; so do I, but it is a paradoxical one. In contrast to Connolly, my reading seeks to unhinge the conservative appropriation of Kant at its root in the name of a Kantian ethic of paradox. Such an ethic does not involve the either/or choice of embracing law or affirming essential contingency (an opposition that I believe contemporary ethical reflection needs to question to a greater extent than it has) but doing both at the same time.⁸⁸ And this is precisely what can deepen and expand contemporary conceptualizations of the foundations for ethico-political practice. Although I can only sketch the outlines of this ethic here, it is my alternative to Connolly's ethic of "agonistic respect" that he develops in opposition to Kant.

A Kantian ethic of paradox affirms the value of the moral force contained in categorical lawful pronouncements and is also attentive to the inescapable aporetic dimensions, the conditions of possibility that are simultaneously conditions of impossibility, of these commands.⁸⁹ Secondly, a Kantian ethic of paradox aspires to

⁸⁷Although I cannot develop this theme here, I believe that Connolly has prematurely accepted a domesticated rendering of Kant.

⁸⁸Habermas is probably the clearest example of an advocate of rationality and universality.

⁸⁹As the reader may realize, I am borrowing this paradoxical formulation from the work of Jacques Derrida. For his discussion of conditions of possibility that are simultaneously conditions of impossibility see his essay in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, Edited by Chantal Mouffe, entitled "Remarks on Deconstruction and

value universality and singularity at the same time. It thus seeks a middle position between advocates of abstract universalism, on the one hand, and particularity, on the other. At its worst, an overemphasis on universality results in imperialism, homogenization, and universal domination; affirming the particular, taken to the extreme, produces nationalism, relativism, and subjectivism. So we need to know the dangers of both the affirmation of universality and particularity, but also the value of both.

Derrida's recent work on cosmopolitanism and hospitality has gone further than any other contemporary thinker in this regard. He articulates the necessity, value, and indispensability of a "double contradictory imperative" or "double duty."⁹⁰ Universality is limited by valuing particularity; and particularity is stretched outside its idiom by the universal. The one is always inscribed into the other. So it is not a choice between universality or particularity but creating and enacting modes of thinking and practices that value both at the same time. In Derrida's words: "the difficulty is to gesture in opposite directions at the same time."⁹¹ This "double duty" simultaneously enables ethical conduct

Pragmatism," translated by Simon Critchley, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 82.

⁹⁰One of the practical forms that this "double duty" takes is "welcoming foreigners in order not only to integrate them but to recognize and accept their alterity: two concepts of hospitality that today divide our European and national consciousness." And: "The *same duty* dictates respecting differences, idioms, minorities, singularities, but also the universality of formal law, the desire for translation, agreement and univocity, the law of the majority, opposition to racism, nationalism, and xenophobia;" Derrida, *The Other Heading*, 1992, 77, 78, emphasis in original.

⁹¹See Richard Kearney's interview with Derrida in *Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 120.

but disables it too. It makes ethics difficult. But without ethical difficulty there is no reason to work at being ethical.

But let us return to Kant. Have I forced Kantian respect into a paradoxical structure that undermines the logical consistency of Kant's practical philosophy? The answer is no. All commentators on respect acknowledge respect's mysterious status. And I refuse to ignore or homogenize the textual tensions that constitute respect. Indeed, I affirm its paradoxical movement. Finally, I have shown that there is a structural instability to ground and freedom in Kant's practical philosophy as well. But what is the value of the paradox of respect and what are the implications of this paradox on Kant's practical philosophy as a whole?

First, the paradox of respect can help us appreciate the essentially ambiguous status of fundamental elements of Kant's practical philosophy in order to attune us to the actual complexity of moral problems in the real world. I believe that the paradox, the one that reason and the will to meaning seek to annul, can open a space for reflection. Second, generating a paradox in a relatively new place may provide an impetus to read other crisis points in Kant's writings. While I think that he is too dismissive of Kant's practical philosophy, I applaud Coles's affirmative re-reading of the sublime, genius, and aesthetic ideas in the *Critique of Judgment* that he develops to articulate an ethic of receptive generosity.⁹²

Third, the paradox of respect can create a space from which one can contest ethical

⁹²Coles, 1997.

programs that destroy space for the singularity of the other, especially when the other is a hybrid or paradox. Kant's own valuation of the paradox is consistent with the founding gesture of the critical project: restraining cognitive *hubris*. Affirming paradox suspends the will to cognitive domination. But sometimes letting a paradox persist may signal, as Kant put it earlier, "logical obstinacy." But not always. It may be a generous response to constitutive ethical ambiguity. Finally, even though the paradox may suspend the sovereignty of reason and push it to its limit, it is valuable because it can irritate it out of self-assurance or thoughtlessness, and perhaps it can even "awaken the mind."⁹³ As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it: "Thinking is always thinking on the limit. The limit of comprehending defines thinking. Thus thinking is always thinking about the incomprehensible..."⁹⁴

G. Beyond Kant

The themes taken up in this chapter depart radically from most of the literature on Kant in the field of political theory. As was the case in my chapter on Hobbes, my chapter on Kant contains important lessons in reading and also illustrates how Kant can be mobilized for the purposes of radicalizing contemporary political thought. Whether or not the Kantian subject articulated in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is at odds with the paradoxical dimensions that I have highlighted in respect is a question that goes beyond the confines of this study.

⁹³*Anthropology*, 12.

⁹⁴Nancy, 54.

CHAPTER 4

NIETZSCHE'S ETHIC OF SINGULARITY

A. Back to Nietzsche

The word, event, enigma, paradox, or madman known as Nietzsche has not stopped exerting a peculiar anxiety in academic settings. One of the signs of this anxiety is the speed Nietzsche is summoned for various political agendas rendering a democratic, anti-democratic, egalitarian, unegalitarian, radical, conservative, moralist, and anti-moralist Nietzsche.¹ But, could it be that Nietzsche is significant as an ethical and political thinker

¹It is impossible to account for all the work that has recently appeared on Nietzsche. I refer to the scholarship here that I believe has been the most widely received and comment on other major secondary writings throughout this essay. David W. Conway's *Nietzsche and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1997) examines Nietzsche's political significance in a sustained way. More is said about this text later. In *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, Mark Warren explores the role Nietzsche plays in the transition from modern to postmodern thinking (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988). See Abbey and Appel's response to Warren in "Domesticating Nietzsche: A Response to Mark Warren" (*Political Theory*, Vol. 27 No. 1, 1999 121-125). In *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Sarah Kofman not only examines the role of metaphor in Nietzsche but discusses the ways in which Nietzsche cannot be categorized; translated by Large (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). In *Allegories of Reading*, Paul de Man investigates the rhetorical dimensions in Nietzsche. De Man accuses Nietzsche not of a "performative contradiction," but a rhetorical one; Nietzsche cannot escape the rhetorical language he condemns; *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). In the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin distances himself from Nietzsche and accuses him of aestheticism (103). And yet, Benjamin seeks to go beyond knowledge secured by subjectivity in the judging word and criticizes the concept. Both gestures resonate as dominant themes in Nietzsche's work. *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, translated by Osborne (London: Verso, 1977). In the last sentences of his essay "History and Mimesis" in *Looking After Nietzsche*, Lacoue-Labarthes links both Nietzsche and Heidegger to "determinate politics." Although Lacoue-Labarthes's analysis of history and mimesis is provocative, he risks obscuring important differences between the complicated political alliances that both Nietzsche and Heidegger made. Nietzsche's support of the new

to the extent that he defies designations and forces us to endlessly reevaluate fundamental ethical and political categories? The radical disparities in the interpretation of his work suggests that this may be the case. If Nietzsche is too quickly appropriated on the one hand, he is often too quickly criticized or even dismissed for the possible problems that result from his philosophy, on the other. A new reading of some of the major works by Nietzsche can expand our sense of political and ethical possibilities.²

Nietzsche's significance as an ethical thinker is disputed or dismissed. He might share

German state is not even analogous to Heidegger's alliance with National Socialism. *Looking After Nietzsche*, edited by Rickels (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990). Derrida has written extensively on Nietzsche in path-breaking ways. In *Spurs*, he examines the question of women in Nietzsche; *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, translated by Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida examines Nietzsche as the "philosopher of the perhaps." Derrida's work opens productive avenues for further research and he is careful not to close questions before they are adequately opened. (London: Verso, 1997). William Connolly has a provocative discussion of Nietzsche in *Ethos of Pluralization* and in *Why I am Not a Secularist*. In the former, he discusses Nietzsche's "nontheistic gratitude for being" (31). Since Nietzsche relentlessly criticized being I wonder whether Connolly's reading smuggles in precisely what Nietzsche has excommunicated. Connolly's conception of "little deviant acts" (68) is also provocative although it risks diminutizing Nietzsche's importance. In *Rethinking Generosity*, Romand Coles shows how Nietzsche can be mobilized for an ethic of generosity. Coles redirects needed attention to *Zarathustra*, one of Nietzsche's most neglected and difficult books. In *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, Bonnie Honig shows how Nietzsche could enrich our understanding of responsibility.

²Nietzsche was preoccupied by specific historical, political, economic, ethical, and cultural phenomenon including the Franco-Prussian War, the founding of the new German state, the question of German and European identity, and the complicated implications of Richard Wagner in Bayreuth. To restrict his significance to the private realm, as Richard Rorty does in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* diminishes Nietzsche's significance and may even encourage one to overlook how he engaged these specific problems and how he may be able to help us think about our own political, cultural, and ethical dilemmas. See *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 197.

some of the blame for this since his unconventional writing style and the challenges posed by his experimentation makes it difficult to translate his ideas into simple ethical maxims. Various scholarly agendas have also blurred the ethical dimensions of his work. Martin Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche from the 1930s focus disproportionately on the will giving an incomplete and potentially problematic rendering of the ethical meaning of "the last metaphysician."³ Peter Berkowitz, Alexander Nehemas, Juergen Habermas, and Ronald Dworkin have even contended that Nietzsche rejects morality.⁴ In contrast to these interpretive trends, a growing body of research has shown that Nietzsche expands our ethical horizons.

The work of William Connolly is a perfect example of this tendency.⁵ Motivated by

³Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Zweite Band*, (Verlag Guenther Neske, Pfullingen 1961). *Nietzsche*, translated by David Farrell Krell, (Harper & Row Publishers, 1979). More is said about Heidegger's impressive study later in this essay.

⁴Berkowitz, Peter, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). Berkowitz asserts that Nietzsche "generates impossibly high and inevitably destructive standards for ethics and politics"; 20. See also Nehemas, Alexander, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985): "Nietzsche is clearly much more concerned with the question of how one's actions are to fit together into a coherent, self-sustaining, well-motivated whole than he is with the quality of those actions themselves"; 166. Juergen Habermas, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987) states: "Nietzsche appeals to experiences that are displaced back into the archaic realm -- experiences of self-disclosure of a decentered subjectivity, liberated from all constraints of cognition and purposive activity, all imperatives of utility and morality"; 94. Similarly, Ronald Dworkin, during a talk at Amherst College (October 25, 1999), claimed that Nietzsche thinks that it is bad when the law stops a kidnapper.

⁵In his essay, "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault," *Political Theory*, Vol. 21 No. 3, August 1993, Connolly discusses Nietzsche at length. Another example of the counter-trend is David W. Conway's *Nietzsche and the Political*. Conway claims that "the over-arching goal of his politics is to preserve the diminished

the possibility of creating a non-foundationalist ethic, Connolly examines the significance of the "body" and the role of feelings, or "contingent installations" in Nietzsche's writings.⁶ From this, he develops an ethos of generosity and claims that this is the locus of Nietzsche's ethical meaning. Although my essay is inspired by Connolly's insightful work, it also challenges it. In contrast to Connolly, who pays scrupulous attention to the "body," but downplays the significance of law in Nietzsche, I examine *ressentiment* and the pathos of distance and their relationship to law in Nietzsche's most significant texts on morality. My readings of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* and *Jenseits von Gut und Boese* demonstrate that Nietzsche's conception of ethical citizenship hinges on the relationship between human feelings and law.⁷ In these texts, Nietzsche connects feelings to specific moral and practical problems and this gives a future to thinking about both ethics and politics.

Nietzsche opens ethical and political foundations to critique. He solicits a crisis in purposive subjectivity whose ultimate assassination is the condition of possibility for a new ethical sensibility. He wants to provoke a crisis in the meaning of ethics in order to

pathos of distance that ensures the possibility of ethical life and moral development in late modernity"; 47.

⁶Heidegger claims that subjectivity becomes the body in *Nietzsche* (Vol. 4, 133).

⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Boese und Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift*. (Muenchen: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988). I will also use Kaufmann's and Hollingdale's English translation *On the Genealogy of Morals*, edited by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). I also use Kaufmann's version of *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

keep ethical reflection alive.⁸ That means it may no longer be possible to cling to convictions.⁹ As we shall see, it is indeed the fixed character of ethics that is the privileged target of Nietzsche's thinking: "everything fixed killeth."¹⁰ For him, there are no rules to follow that would give ethics any security. This does not lower the burden of responsibility but intensifies it. Ethics becomes a challenge without a position of comfort. This is the result of Nietzsche's thoughts on the connection between ethics and feeling. Through feelings, Nietzsche stares at nihilism without blinking.

Not all feelings are the same, nor are they all essentially passive and/or reactive. Situated in a space between relativism and absolutism, Nietzsche's ethics demands the cultivation of an ethical sensitivity that does not insist on the necessity of a stable foundation for ethical conduct but is nonetheless grounded on a law.¹¹ In Nietzsche, the word "law" is emptied of its traditional metaphysical content -- abstract universality --

⁸Heidegger's words in *Being and Time* on science also apply to ethics: "The real movement of the sciences takes place when their basic concepts undergo a more or less radical revision which is not transparent to itself. The level which a science has reached is determined by how far it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts"; 29.

⁹Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, "Convictions are prisons"; 184.

¹⁰*Antichrist*, 156.

¹¹In "Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault," Connolly makes a distinction between the moral and the ethical. Morality involves a firm anchor, law, equivalence, teleology, commands; the ethical requires the cultivation of "possibilities of being," "agonopluralism," and "tactics applied by the self to the self"; *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3 August 1993, 370-372. Although the distinction Connolly makes is heuristic, I believe that Nietzsche frustrates his dichotomy. As we shall see, Nietzsche does not completely abandon the Kantian imperative ethical tradition that Connolly criticizes. In addition, Connolly's ontological dimension is relentlessly put into question in Nietzsche's writings.

and becomes a principle of *formal contingency* that grounds ethical conduct. Even though feelings are essential for his ethics, they do not take a completely aesthetic form.¹²

The key to understanding Nietzsche's new ethical position that affirms the loss of metaphysical foundations, the pointlessness of suffering, and the ultimate meaninglessness of human existence, can only be found in the interrelationship between feelings, foundations, and practice that he articulates in his writings. This mixture is inextricably connected to the possibility of autonomy and the self-relation of the will.¹³ The specific challenge confronting Nietzsche, and the one that is important for this essay, is how some feelings are not incompatible with autonomy. Only those feelings that meet this requirement can justifiably ground practice.¹⁴

The first result of this new grounding is an ethic of sensitivity, or as I have called it in the title of this essay, an ethic of singularity. Sensitivity is the ground for the emergence

¹²For an intriguing study of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics see Jane Bennett's "'How is it, then, that we still remain barbarians?': Foucault, Schiller, and the Aestheticization of Ethics." *Political Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 4, November 1996, 653-672.

¹³Explicitly ethical considerations ground the distinction between nobles and slaves in the *Genealogie*. This should be understood within an explicitly Kantian problematic. Nietzsche also develops a Kantian conception of autonomy. Giving oneself a law -- the law of life -- is not only central to ethical nobility but it can be sharply contrasted to the passive, reactive, and pathological morality of *ressentiment*. Jean-Luc Nancy has explored the relationship between Nietzsche and Kant in "Our Probity," in *Looking After Nietzsche*. He claims that reading Kant in Nietzsche is "indispensable"; 80. Another helpful discussion of the connection between Kant and Nietzsche appears in Mark Warren's *Nietzsche and Political Thought*.

¹⁴Conway (1997) has emphasized Nietzsche's interest in the ultimate justification, or foundation, of ethics and politics. According to him, Nietzsche seeks to subordinate politics to ethics. This is an important corrective to readings that ignore Nietzsche's ethical dimensions altogether.

of singularity -- the birth of the individual.¹⁵ The second result is an ethic of the Antichrist. It links the force of an imperative of aporia, impossibility, and negativity -- *formal contingency* -- with the necessity of permanent experimentation. It foregrounds the risk and danger of ethical practice but also the joy, hope, and possibility that accompanies every risk. Because he links his new ethical position to human feeling, Nietzsche's ethics emerge not as a formula, technique, knowledge, or program that is mechanically implemented, but rather as a contingent experience of ethical peril where the meaninglessness of human existence is constantly affirmed through perpetual self-overcoming through submission to the fundamental law of practice: the law of life. This law does not demand ethical homogeneity or the sacrifice of the senses in an ascetic slaughterhouse but generates sensitivity. Paradoxically, one may have to be evil, at least from the standpoint of the herd, in order to be sensitive.

B. Feeling

Feeling marks a knot of political and ethical problems in Nietzsche and is linked first and foremost to his thinking on morality. In *Daybreak*, he states "behind feelings there stand judgments and evaluations which we inherit in the form of feeling."¹⁶ That Nietzsche made the link between morality and feeling paramount does not make understanding his thoughts on this connection any easier. The first reason is that there are a plurality of words to refer to feeling in Nietzsche including *Stimmung*, *Affekt*, and

¹⁵For the best discussion of individuality in Nietzsche see Hamacher's essay "'Disgregation of the Will': Nietzsche on the Individual and Individuality" in *Premises*.

¹⁶*Daybreak*, 25.

Gefuehl. Separating one from the other and determining the precise shades of difference between them would not yield results because Nietzsche is not consistent in the usage of these words. But whatever the diverse etymological origins of these words may be, all of them nevertheless have something important in common: they mark the limit of cognition.

Unlike Descartes, Hobbes, and Kant, where a certain Scholastic precision is evident in their effort to think about feelings, Nietzsche does not give a clear definition of feeling. That is the second reason why examining feeling in Nietzsche is difficult. Additionally, the fact that every person feels does not make it any easier to think about feeling. As that which is closest to us, and perhaps the easiest to examine, it is the most obvious of all and hence overlooked. But Nietzsche does not even claim that we have access to our own body: "Our body is something outside of us."¹⁷ Later, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche maintains that "our body is but a social structure composed of many souls."¹⁸ It is not certain what a body is or whether we even have one.

Thinking the nonconceptual marks the difficulty of examining feeling in Nietzsche. If he will remain true to the crisis that he demands, Nietzsche must simultaneously create and subvert the vocabulary that marks feeling. Only that could prevent feeling from becoming a concept. As we shall see, Nietzsche says strange, experimental, and even sometimes incompatible things about feeling and this is what makes examining feeling

¹⁷*Unpublished Writings*, 179.

¹⁸*Beyond Good and Evil*, 26.

worthwhile in his writings. Even if we will never have access to feelings as such, the attempt to think about feeling highlights cognitive limits that are important for understanding Nietzsche's ethical importance.

C. *Toward a Genealogy of Morals*

The *Genealogy* tells a chilling story of the origin of moral categories in violence.¹⁹ Nietzsche does not philosophize with a hammer but with his nose: "My genius is in my nostrils."²⁰ He smells blood and cruelty lurking behind the moral world. The reader is addressed directly and is advised to learn how to read, that is, "to practice reading as an art" (Preface; 8). Perhaps the reader will understand nothing in this polemical text: "If this book is incomprehensible to anyone...the fault...is not necessarily mine" (Ibid). The author talks of types who are atypical, of the will not to will, the meaninglessness of the will to meaning, and the foundations of subjectivity in self-negation. Although it is mainly a critical text, Nietzsche proposes a complicated ethical alternative to the Christian moral universe. He seeks to open a space for reflection about ethical alternatives foreclosed by Christianity through a devastating act of historical de-sedimentation in order to "traverse with quite novel questions, and as though with new eyes, the enormous, distant, and so well hidden land of morality..."(Preface; 7). From a

¹⁹Does exposing the history of morality destroy its ability to assume an imperative form? If moral categories emerge under specific historical conditions, does the revelation of this fact destroy the basis for morality altogether? This is precisely what Leo Strauss accepted as a fact but sought to cover with "noble rhetoric." As I shall demonstrate, the answer is no.

²⁰*Ecce Homo*, 326.

standpoint without epistemological security, this text criticizes totality in all its forms: ontological, scientific, and Christian.²¹

The *Genealogy* occupies a decisive place in Nietzsche's *oeuvre*. Looking back over the textual landscape that constitutes his philosophical life, Nietzsche remarks: "The questions concerning the origin of moral values is for me a question of the very first rank because it is crucial for the future of humanity."²² Questioning morality is the theme that gives force to the *Genealogy*. The force of this line of questioning takes shape as a demand: "we need a critique of moral values, the value of these values themselves must first be called into question..." (Preface; 6). To this end, Nietzsche is preoccupied with the moral significance of specific human feelings including pity, nausea, fear, self-disgust, weariness, *ressentiment*, and the pathos of distance, all in order to answer one simple question: what is the value of morality?²³

That feelings occupy a central and unifying place is clear early on in this text. In the Preface Nietzsche claims that the impulse to publish his book was given by Paul Ree's 1877 text *The Origin of the Moral Feeling* (Preface; 4), but his history with this matter goes back further. As a boy of thirteen, Nietzsche explains, he confronted the problem of

²¹According to Nietzsche, science and Christianity are allies. Both are modes of myth insofar as they attempt to account for the origin. "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3) is no different from the "big bang." The latter could even be the secularized version of immaculate conception, i.e, scientific theology.

²²Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 291.

²³Deleuze claims that Nietzsche poses "the problem of critique in terms of values" *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, translated by Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 1. Deleuze's book has had a large impact on the reception of Nietzsche in France.

the origin of evil (Preface; 3) and this marked the beginning of his analysis of the conditions, especially the feelings, grounding the emergence of moral valuation. Nietzsche's interest in this problem is also apparent in every text that preceded the publication of the *Genealogie*.²⁴

Not feelings as such, but specific moral feelings, concerned Nietzsche because he suspected that they were the conditions for moral valuation: "moralities are merely a sign language of the affects [Zeichensprache der Affekte]."²⁵ The inner composition of the structure of human subjectivity emerges as the privileged level of analysis. Once he locates the dominant moral feelings, he evaluates these feelings so that the values they produce can be determined. The moods, emotions, and feelings, that is, the markers of the historical, particular, and contingent essence of the subject, are the signs that Nietzsche will decipher.

Moral feelings are also important because they are connected with the possibility of

²⁴ Although it is only in the *Genealogie* where the relation between feeling and morality receives its clearest formulation, two earlier texts paved the way for the *Genealogie* in crucial ways: *The Birth of Tragedy* and "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense." *The Birth of Tragedy* discusses the cathartic effect of tragic drama and, more importantly, the birth of individuation in the suspension of the Dionysian feelings that threaten to disintegrate it. (New York: Vintage Books, 1967). In "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," Nietzsche shows how the concept world is built on the graveyard of feelings. Only through using concepts against concepts can feelings burst through these ghostly abstractions. The free intellect "smashes this [conceptual] framework to pieces, throws it into confusion, and puts it back together in an ironic fashion, pairing the most alien things and separating the closest, it is demonstrating that it has no need of these makeshifts of indigence and that it will now be guided by intuitions rather than by concepts"; 90.

²⁵ *Beyond Good and Evil*, 100.

intersubjectivity and moral autonomy. They are also essential for understanding the self-relation of the will, a relation that has culminated in self-laceration as a result of the anti-sensualist ascetic ideals of Christianity. The most important feelings that Nietzsche explores in the *Genealogie* in this regard are *ressentiment* and the pathos of distance.²⁶ These feelings are not only the site where the essence of Nietzsche's ethical significance can be found but also where a fictional battle is staged between being and becoming, represented by the figures of the slaves and nobles.²⁷

D. *Ressentiment*

Ressentiment is one of the dominant feelings that Nietzsche analyzes and it is linked to a network of concepts in the *Genealogie* including suffering, guilt, bad conscience, pity, sympathy, debt, the will, and groundlessness.²⁸ It is a problem that goes back at least to the *Untimely Meditations* where, in the essay on history, Nietzsche claims that people can

²⁶The latter corresponds to the affirmation of the loss of metaphysical foundations, letting go, justice, an obligation to the future, and giving oneself laws; the former, to the spiteful denial of absence and groundlessness, the will to self-maltreatment, the hatred of difference, a politics of revenge, and the will to nothingness.

²⁷In *Allegories of Reading*, de Man claims that there are demagogic value oppositions in Nietzsche (119). It may be useful to chart the history of these alleged oppositions. De Man, moreover, claims that Nietzsche is unable to escape from the rhetorical deceit he denounces (115). As with some of the formulaic versions of deconstruction, the results of de Man's reading of Nietzsche are predictable.

²⁸For an interpretation of *ressentiment* refer to Max Scheler's *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing*, translated by Bershady, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 116-143. For a variety of readings of *ressentiment* see *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals*, Edited by Schacht, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For a discussion of the relationship between *ressentiment* and politics refer to Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

"bleed to death from a single experience, a single pain, particularly even from a single mild injustice."²⁹ Even if Nietzsche's appeal to youth at the end of this essay is undeveloped, the history essay nevertheless marks an important moment in his investigation into the interrelationship between experience, pain, forgetting, action, life, and history. But Nietzsche goes further in tracing the implications of the interconnection between pain and the possibility of liberation in the *Genealogie*.

With *ressentiment* in the *Genealogie*, Nietzsche explores its complex conditions of possibility and its relation to the birth of a specific set of moral categories. In the history essay, Nietzsche avoided the question of subjects who want to bleed on others, or display their wounds. In the *Genealogie* this is precisely the problem that he investigates. He examines the relation between *ressentiment* and the modes of intersubjectivity (the herd form) it demands. *Ressentiment* emerges as a peculiar rage at mediation signaled in the lack of access to the thing in itself that results in the construction of a fictional ideal realm that devalues sense and culminates in self-torture and in the desire to eradicate the other.

The *Genealogie* consists of a preface and three essays that address interrelated themes. The First Essay discusses how *ressentiment* gives birth to values; the Second shows how it is transformed into bad conscience; in the Third, Nietzsche demonstrates how ascetic priests manage and alter the direction of *ressentiment* and link it to the will to nothingness. Indebted to the French word "sentir"--"to feel, to smell, to be conscious of"- the experience of *ressentiment* is the metaphysicalization of feeling. This refers to a

²⁹"On the Use and Abuse of History for Life," 89.

process that crystallizes becoming into being. Although all sensations are linked to specific empirical events that take place at particular temporal moments, this is no longer the case with *ressentiment* because it breaks the link between feeling and time and clogs receptivity. The detemporalized residue of specific actions and events collect in the body and the feelings associated with these actions are felt over and over again as festering wounds.

The origin of *ressentiment* is contradictory. On the one hand it is a narcotic, but on the other, it negates the feeling that it gives. Nietzsche claims that "the actual physiological cause of *ressentiment*" is a "desire to deaden pain by means of affects" (Essay 3; 15). Unable to forget and sublimate pain into creative activities that discharge it, the one infected with this explosive feels all events as eternal insults and injuries: "One cannot get rid of anything, one cannot get over anything, one cannot repel anything -- everything hurts."³⁰ Seeking to deaden his pain, the man of *ressentiment* feels and constantly re-feels everything as an affront (Essay 3;15). He then seeks subterranean revenge for these imagined injuries. Although he lives, he is also dead; and he gives his death as a gift to anything that reminds him of his non-life.

Although *ressentiment* is a feeling, it is one that is unlike all others. If the word feeling designates the possibility of vulnerability, that is, the capacity to be wounded by the other, then *ressentiment* does not qualify as a feeling because it immediately reintegrates all sensations into categories oriented to ascribing guilt and blame. Out of this ascription

³⁰Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, translated by Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) 230.

and the "seduction of language" (Essay 1; 13) that posits "being" behind "doing," the defensive, reactive, and bordered subject is born. This birth marks an important historical moment -- a fictitious subject is created for the purposes of blame, guilt, torture, and punishment. In this way, *ressentiment* is inextricably linked to a valiative and moral standpoint that culminates in internally and externally tormented subjectivity.³¹

This is the first reference to *ressentiment* in the *Genealogie*: "The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge" (Essay 1;10). Living under the domination of the instinct for self-preservation, the man of *ressentiment* gives birth to moral values that arise out of his inability to act and his defensive and antagonistic relation to everything that exists. Since he cannot act, he plots. Nietzsche defines the man of *ressentiment* as one who "understands how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble" (Essay 1; 10). Prominent among anti-Semites (Essay 2; 11), men infected with *ressentiment* look outward and construct their enemies -- them -- in order to deceive themselves that they are happy (Essay 1; 10). All oppositional political groupings are rooted in *ressentiment*.³² Hence, it is fundamentally incompatible

³¹Perhaps the best example of tormented subjectivity would be the saintly Christian voluptuary, the master of pleasure and self-torment known as St. Augustine. See the *Confessions* (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1989).

³²In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche maintains that "one may doubt whether there are any opposites at all"; 10. For him, there are "only degrees and many subtleties of gradation"; 35. "The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is the faith in opposite values"; 10.

with autonomy because it always receives its ground for action from an externally imposed source, and then it creates moral categories that value this very reactivity and conformity. Whereas the noble reveres his enemies as a life tonic (Essay 1; 10), slave morality says no to what is different (Essay 1; 10). The man of *ressentiment* "has conceived 'the evil enemy,' 'the Evil One,' and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves..." (Essay 1; 10). Incapable of being the source of his own grounds for practice, unable to give himself laws, foreign impulses completely determine the action of the man of *ressentiment*. He is only capable of "re-action."

Nietzsche then moves to show how *ressentiment* is linked to both guilt and the bad conscience. Through an etymological analysis of moral categories, Nietzsche chips the distorting sediment off of values and a chilling world-historical tale emerges.³³ This painful story is merely an unanticipated consequence since Nietzsche's chisel shatters deceitful moralizing and replaces it with a critical-historical account of the origin of moral categories. Moral categories are not eternal, they have histories; hence they are capable of transformation. In a mode of analysis whose Marxist dimension is impossible to miss, Nietzsche traces the origin of guilt to the economic relationship between the creditor and the debtor. The primordial economic relationship gave birth to a moral world. For the first time, humans measured and compared themselves against others.³⁴

³³The *Genealogy* is probably the best example of the critical mode of history Nietzsche articulates in the *Untimely Meditations*.

³⁴In the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau claims that calculation and comparison destroy the human's natural peace (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1989).

During interactions in the sphere of exchange, the qualitative distinctions generated by economic measures produced moral categories: "It was in this sphere then, the sphere of legal obligations, that the moral conceptual world of 'guilt,' 'conscience,' 'duty,' had its origin...It was here, too, that the uncanny intertwining of the ideas 'guilt and suffering' was first effected..." (Essay 2; 6).³⁵ When the debtor is unable to pay back a debt, the creditor imposes suffering as punishment and this burns a conscience and memory into the offender.³⁶ In this way, suffering is interpreted into a system of equivalence and this gives it meaning.

In Essay 2, Nietzsche shows how *ressentiment* is transformed into bad conscience. Nietzsche even credits the man of *ressentiment* with the creation of bad conscience (Essay 2; 11). The result: "the earth was essentially altered" (Essay 2; 16). When the oppressive walls of society were constructed, human movement was impaired -- animal man was negated. This inhibits the discharge [auslassen] that life seeks.³⁷ Prevented from discharging itself outward, the instinct for freedom vents itself on itself; and out of this springs the bad conscience and the will to self-maltreatment. For Nietzsche, "All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward -- this is what I call the internalization of man..." (Essay 2; 16). The work of *Verinnerlichung* [internalization] culminates in the self's brutal assault on itself:

³⁵Nietzsche's contention that the moral world is historical is a crucial condition that culminates in his effort to rewrite moral categories, ones that will promote a noble culture.

³⁶Nietzsche calls this process *mnemotechnics* (Essay 2; 3).

³⁷*Beyond Good and Evil*, 21.

The man who, from lack of external enemies and resistances and forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness and punctiliousness of custom, impatiently lacerated, persecuted, gnawed at, assaulted, and maltreated himself; this animal that rubbed itself raw against the bars of its cage as one tried to 'tame' it; this deprived creature, racked with homesickness for the wild...this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of the bad conscience (Essay 2; 16).

The rush and freedom of nomadic living has been replaced by the militarization of all space and the human's forced confinement.³⁸ This devalues the instincts, creates the soul, and simultaneously turns it against itself. The cry of the wild is replaced by the bad conscience that transforms the human yearning for open space into a mute grimace of self-dissatisfaction. This inner turmoil, or self-imposed suffering, culminates in the suicide of the human's animality that the bad conscience constantly re-activates.

But *ressentiment* does more. It moralizes suffering by endowing it with meaning. In its early phase, it seeks an external agent that is to blame for its suffering. Throughout Essay 1, Nietzsche demonstrates that the nobles are hated and blamed by the slaves for exceeding norms and putting conformity into question; through the falsifying and "venomous eyes" (Essay 1; 11) of the slaves, nobles are designated evil; that is the only creative deed of the slaves.³⁹ In Essay 2, it is no longer the relationship with others but

³⁸Today the distinction between a prison and educational, economic, and social institutions no longer has any salience. In terms of so called educational institutions, I am thinking of routine searches, camera surveillance, chemically fertilized industrial food, the imperative of uniformity, the continued presence of the police, and the prohibition on thinking. In terms of the militarization of private life in the United States, the distinction between a tank and a car (SUV) is no longer meaningful. The home resembles a fortress and television programs (COPS) situate viewers as the eye of the state.

³⁹The noble is not immune from *ressentiment*. The crucial difference is that it

one's self-relation that leads to the sacrifice of the senses in bad conscience.

Bad conscience does not conclude Nietzsche's discussion of the economy of suffering. Not suffering as such but rather the meaninglessness and groundlessness of it was the curse hanging over human existence. Man was surrounded by a "monstrous void -- he suffered from the problem of his meaning" (Essay 3; 28). A question without an answer imposed itself on humans: "whereto man?" (Essay 3; 28). Stricken by this insoluble question, human existence and all of its suffering lacked an explanation, reason, or interpretation that could justify it. Nietzsche describes this as "Man, suffering from himself...like an animal shut up in a cage, uncertain why or wherefore, thirsting for reasons..." (Essay 3; 20). But the human's enslavement to meaning is artificial: "He is like a hen imprisoned by a chalk line" (Essay 3; 20). The human craves for a meaning for suffering and finds it in the eye of the divinity who can witness it.⁴⁰ And yet, it is the pathological yearning for a spectator for suffering that is the very thing that produces this artificial enslavement. The problem with suffering was not suffering itself but its meaninglessness. But endowing suffering with a meaning only holds the human under the curse of the quest for meaning.

Nietzsche's meditation on the impact of the senselessness of suffering and the human's

exhausts itself immediately. Nietzsche states, "*Ressentiment* itself, if it should appear in the noble man, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not poison..." (Essay 1; 10).

⁴⁰Although the word for sin is *Suende* in German, the word for sense is *Sinn* which has a close connection to the Christian word sin. To feel is to be fallen and guilty of divine transgression.

response to this plight plays a decisive role in his philosophical activity. The demand for a meaning of suffering has a catastrophic impact. According to Nietzsche, there is a need to "abolish hidden, undetected, unwitnessed suffering and honestly deny it, one was in the past virtually compelled to invent gods life tries to justify itself (Essay 2;7). Nietzsche wants to give us a new innocence by helping us to accept the truth that there is no ultimate justification for life or for suffering. Both have no transcendently secured meaning; suffering is doled out impersonally. The longing for a meaning to suffering is essentially the will to misunderstand suffering (Essay 3;20).⁴¹

E. Priests

It is precisely when the attempt to make sense out of the senselessness of suffering flounders and reaches its limit that ascetic priests enter the world-stage and re-endow it with a new meaning. According to Nietzsche, they do not point to the meaninglessness of suffering but rather assert their will to misunderstand it. They write and re-write the chalk line that traps humans within their own fictions. That is their "tremendous historical mission" (Essay 3; 15). This mission has "inscribed itself in a fearful and unforgettable way in the entire history of man" (Essay 3; 21). As we have seen, suffering was imposed as punishment on the failed debtor for the breach of contractual agreements,

⁴¹The need to create a witness, or a spectator, not only pertains to Nietzsche's reflections on the origin of the idealized moral world but also implicates politics grounded in the demand for recognition and various modes of identity politics in unflattering ways. See, for example, Charles Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Hannah Arendt's claim that there will always be a witness in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* could perhaps be interpreted in a Nietzschean light (New York: Penguin, 1963). The question Nietzsche asks is whether we can accept our absolute solitude without a pathological yearning for a spectator, recognition, group identity, or a

but under the wand of the ascetic priest, all suffering is now interpreted as "punishment" and "guilt" for life as such and this is pushed back into the bad conscience (Essay 2; 21). In these moments, the will is turned against itself; scars are re-opened and bleed (Essay 3; 15), old wounds are rubbed against the bars of a self-imposed cage.⁴²

Through ascetic priests, the sufferers themselves learn that they are responsible for their own suffering. Nietzsche paraphrases the discourse of the ascetic priests: "You alone are to blame for yourself!" (Essay 3; 15). The fact that no one is to blame cannot be accepted by these masters of meaning. The mad search for someone to blame may give short term relief to those who suffer because it saves the will and "Man would rather will nothingness than not will" (Essay 3; 28), but it nonetheless perpetuates the search for meaning that is the real problem. The priest is an alchemist but the relief from guilt and suffering that he gives is only temporary. Expect no lasting relief from his wand.

Nietzsche maintained that Christianity also raises the stakes of guilt and self-torment which ultimately forecloses the possibility of human liberation. It places its followers under an unsurpassable curse of guilt that can be traced back to *ressentiment*; Christianity satisfies its yearning for revenge by placing its followers under the burden of a debt that cannot be discharged (Essay 2; 21).⁴³ The human crawls under the weight of this debt.

denial of the abyss without venting our feeling of isolation and helplessness on others.

⁴²The ascetic life, according to Nietzsche, is the highest manifestation of *ressentiment* (Essay 3; 11) insofar as it seeks to master life as such.

⁴³For the origin of Christianity out of *ressentiment*: "The truth of the first inquiry is the birth of Christianity: the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of *ressentiment*, not, as

"The moralization of the concepts of guilt and duty, their being pushed back into the bad conscience," Nietzsche maintains, has as its aim "to make the glance recoil disconsolately from an iron impossibility" and to preclude the "prospect of a final discharge" (Essay 2; 21). Nietzsche pushes the logic of Christian self-torture to its limit:

In this mental cruelty there resides a madness of the will which is absolutely unexampled: the will of man to find himself guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be atoned for; his will to think himself punished without any possibility of the punishment becoming equivalent to the guilt... (Essay 2; 22).

The expiating possibility of equivalence is foreclosed by Christianity because it refuses to free the individual from the curse of guilt. The will is mad insofar as it searches for a meaning at all costs, even if the one it finds forces it to announce its own guilt and leads to its own self-annihilation.⁴⁴ The human stabs itself with the blunt instruments Christianity lovingly puts into its hands. In this way, *ressentiment* gives birth to a fanatical totalitarian moral system that is reactive, negates the future, poisons all life, and renders impossible any liberation from the Christian economy of guilt. Only an Antichrist can save us now.

people may believe, out of the 'spirit'-- a countermovement by its very nature, the great rebellion against the dominion of *noble* values." *Ecce Homo*, 312, italics in original.

⁴⁴The search for a meaning at all costs frequently takes the form in academic arenas as the tyranny of the principle of non-contradiction. Any attempt to formulate ethical demands more rigorous than ones grounded on this principle are accused of violating the protocols of reason and are dismissed. Derrida has shown how double contradictory imperatives maintain the connection between action and freedom in his writings on politics.

F. Pathos of Distance⁴⁵

The pathos of distance (if there is such a thing) is linked to many fundamental ideas in Nietzsche's work.⁴⁶ It is an aporetic formulation that appears infrequently in Nietzsche's writings. It is illogical, contradictory, nonsensical, and that is precisely why it is interesting and provocative. The expression evolves and is used in different ways. Nietzsche's appeal to pathos of distance cannot be separated from his attack on the concept because it names two incompatible aesthetic relations to the world. Nietzsche modifies distance with pathos and this combination fails to yield a determinate meaning. It is a forced figure of speech, *catagresis*. Both words cleave and tear at each other and never pull themselves above the tension maintained between them. Unlike *ressentiment*, the result of the denial of mediation, the pathos of distance is the result of the affirmation of mediation, the flux of appearances, illusion, and change. But why does Nietzsche

⁴⁵The pathos of distance is not liberal tolerance which retreats to the private realm when the possibility of agon appears and gives everyone the right to have his opinion. It is not Kantian respect even in its most paradoxical formulations. Distance is a check on enthusiasm, on identifying with anything too quickly, and prevents feeling from getting out of hand.

⁴⁶Distance has a prominent place in pivotal texts in Western political thought. Machiavelli, for example, linked distance to the possibility of political knowledge. Princes needed advisors to overcome their partial and limited perspective would dictate. The advisor could give him an additional perspective, one with adequate distance. See *The Prince* "Dedication" (New York: Penguin, 1961). Kant claimed that distance was central to the possibility of moral conduct and contrasted the feeling of love with respect precisely in terms of distance: "The principle of mutual love admonishes men constantly to come closer to one another; that of respect they owe one another, to keep themselves at a distance from one another..."; *Metaphysics of Morals*, 244. Carl Schmitt criticizes distance in *Political Romanticism*. He locates the yearning for the distant as one of the decadent features of romanticism and labels it self-absorbed apolitical occasionalism. *Political Romanticism*, translated by Oakes, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

invoke such a seemingly contradictory and artificial construction?

Although it is invoked at precise moments in Nietzsche's corpus, it is difficult to interpret.⁴⁷ As early as 1873 in "On Truth and Lie in a Extramoral Sense," Nietzsche struggled to articulate a pre-conceptual feeling as an alternative to the tyranny of the concept that would put the stability of the conceptual order permanently into question.⁴⁸ Although he invokes the word intuition [Anschauung], he recognized that the new feeling he was trying to articulate would have to remain unnamed: "There exists no word for these intuitions."⁴⁹ During this same period Nietzsche wrote an essay called "The Pathos

⁴⁷Oliver Connolly in "Pity, Tragedy and the Pathos of Distance" defines the pathos of distance as "the painful distance that necessarily lies between my suffering and that of others," 290. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 6:3, Blackwell Publishers. Although Oliver Connolly's discussion is instructive, the pathos of distance can be more precisely clarified. See also David H. Brown's "Dionysian and Apollonian Pathos of Distance: A New Image of World History," in *Dialogos*, 57, 1991, 77-88. Unfortunately, there is very little discussion of the pathos of distance in this essay. Conway (1997) has a very helpful, albeit brief, discussion of the pathos of distance: "The pathos of distance signifies an enhanced sensibility for, or attunement to, the order of rank that 'naturally' informs the rich plurality of human types," 40. The most provocative, albeit brief, interpretations of the pathos of distance can be found in the work of Sarah Kofman and Werner Hamacher. For the former, the metaphor of the abyss is a metaphor for the pathos of distance, 20. Hamacher goes further: "the will no longer one with itself, the pathos of distance" (121) and "individuality speaks from the undecidability between determination and indeterminacy, thus from a 'pathos of distance' (176). My interpretation of the pathos of distance owes much to Hamacher's formulations.

⁴⁸In this essay, Nietzsche advises us to throw concept against concept and throw metaphors into confusion; 90.

⁴⁹Ibid. In contrast to the rational man, intuitive man "reaps from his intuition a harvest of continually inflowing illumination, cheer, and redemption -- in addition to obtaining a defense against misfortune. To be sure, he suffers more intensely, when he suffers; he even suffers more frequently, since he does not understand how to learn from experience and keeps falling over and over again into the same ditch. He is just as irrational in sorrow as he is in happiness: he cries aloud and will not be consoled"; 91.

of Truth" but this feeling has little connection to what Nietzsche fifteen years later would call the pathos of distance.⁵⁰ The expression pathos of distance appears for the first time in *Beyond Good and Evil*.⁵¹

In the same chapter called "What is Noble" where the expression pathos of distance occurs, Nietzsche also advises the reader "not to remain stuck to one's own detachment, to that voluptuous remoteness and strangeness of the bird who flees ever higher to see ever more below him -- the danger of the flier."⁵² Nietzsche criticizes distance getting out of hand, of the possibility of getting stuck in distance.⁵³ But even if Nietzsche hesitated about the risks and meaning of the pathos of distance in *Beyond Good and Evil*, it appears with the greatest frequency and precision in the *Genealogie* where it emerges as a

⁵⁰Whether the pathos of truth means suffering for the sake of the search of truth or the urgency of the search for truth it is nonetheless distinct from the pathos of distance.

⁵¹This is the full quote: "Every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society -- and it will be so again and again -- a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without that pathos of distance which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata -- when the ruling cast constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance -- that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either -- the craving for an ever widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states -- in brief, simply the enhancement of the type "man," the continual "self-overcoming of man," to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense"; *Beyond Good and Evil*, 257. Although the meaning of distance within one soul is difficult to determine, it challenges Plato's conception of the harmony of the soul in the *Republic*, translated by Grube & Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Press, 1992).

⁵²*Beyond Good and Evil*, 52.

⁵³For Nietzsche, it is necessary to have "the most comprehensive responsibility -- conscience for the overall development of man"; *Beyond Good and Evil*, 72.

measure for critique; paradoxically, it is also the affirmative response to the absence of a common measure.⁵⁴

Nietzsche contrasts *ressentiment* with the pathos of distance. According to Nietzsche, the pathos of distance is a "feeling."⁵⁵ If it is hard to miss Nietzsche's use of a French word to describe the reactivity of the slaves, Nietzsche's use of a Greek word -- *pathos* -- to discuss noble morality is also striking. *Pathos*, meaning both emotion and suffering or something that one endures, is linked to distance. Although distance is not absence it is similar to it and how one can feel or undergo distance, or the absence of an object, is a riddle. The pathos of distance can be clarified by both contrasting it with *ressentiment* and through discussing its relationship to freedom, autonomy, and obligation.

In contrast to slave morality, the pathos of distance does not occur as a result of any particular object in the world but refers to the pure possibility of feeling. *Ressentiment* leads to a predictable cycle of revenge on others and/or self-laceration, the pathos of distance is a feeling that un-determines the subject because it does not produce determinate or predictable actions. According to Nietzsche, the pathos of distance is not a derivative but a self-produced feeling.⁵⁶ Filled with life and passion (Essay 1; 10), the

⁵⁴The pathos of distance is not the unification of the Apollinian and Dionysian, since distance differs from Dionysian excess and intoxication.

⁵⁵There are references to the pathos of distance in *Ecce Homo*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

⁵⁶Self-produced feelings, or the phenomena Kant calls "self-affection," are difficult to interpret and seem to be a distinctly modern phenomenon. But for Kant and Nietzsche the possibility of self-affection is inextricably related to moral elevation.

noble does not have to receive outward or external affirmation of himself, but actively affirms himself spontaneously.⁵⁷ He is distant and distance announces the possibility of human freedom: "For what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility. That one preserves the distance which divides us. That one has become more indifferent to hardship, toil, privation, even to life."⁵⁸ The preservation of the "distance which divides us" is not a formula for civil war but is the art of "separating without setting against one another."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Aristotle has a discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of the "great souled" that is related to Nietzsche's conception of nobility in essential ways: "When faced with necessary tasks or with minor problems, he is the last person to complain and to ask for assistance, because such behavior is characteristic of a person who takes these things seriously. And he is the kind of person whose possessions are noble but unprofitable, rather than profitable and useful, since this is more indicative of self-sufficiency. His movements are thought slow, his voice deep, and his speech measured: since only a few things matter to him, he is not likely to be rushed. And since he puts no great weight on anything, he is not vehement when he speaks; it is rushing and vehemence that make for hastiness and a high-pitched voice. Such a person, then, is the great-souled"; 71. *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated & edited by Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Nietzsche's critique of the pettiness of "scholars" in *Beyond Good and Evil* is a good point of contrast.

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, (New York: Penguin Books, 1968) 103.

⁵⁹ *Ecce Homo*, 254. In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida asks how a politics of separation be founded (55), one that would not give in to proximity or identification (65). Distance could threaten the possibility of community but it is also the negative condition of its possibility. A community without distance between members is a cult; one with too much distance disintegrates. Communion and fusion destroy community. A Nietzschean community can only exist as the tension between two incompatible imperatives to simultaneously congregate and separate without ever resting on either side. The possibility of a community of autonomous citizens has its roots in Kant and finds its contemporary expression in Derrida's new international, Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, and Blanchot's *Unavowable Community*. See *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*, translated by Kamuf, (New York: Routledge, 1994); *The Inoperative Community*, edited by Connor, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

The oppositional groupings that spring from value judgments grounded in *ressentiment* are replaced by non-oppositional relations; this announces the paradoxical possibility of relations grounded on distance. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche states: "It is not how one soul approaches another but in how it distances itself from it that I recognize their affinity and relatedness."⁶⁰ The art of distance, not proximity, marks the quality of affinity and relation; distance ruptures the drive for homogeneity, recognition, and identification. The pathos of distance does not involve opposition or antagonism, both which seek to colonize the other, but affirmative relations.⁶¹ And yet, these relations find their ground in separation. The pathos of distance is the "will to be oneself, to stand out."⁶²

Standing out suspends the quantitative imperative that reduces differences in the declaration of equality. Equality is a demand of the herd and renders equal that which is unequal in order to naturalize the mediocrity of the herd; this prevents the emergence of individuals who exceed common measures: "Equality, a certain actual rendering similar of which the theory of equal rights is only the expression, belongs essentially to decline:

Press, 1991); *The Unavowable Community*, translated by Joris, (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1988).

⁶⁰Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, translated by Hollingdale, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 275.

⁶¹For how distance could be the condition for a relation see Maurice Blanchot's *Friendship*, translated by Elizabeth Rottenberg, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). Our friends reserve "an infinite distance, the fundamental separation on the basis of which what separates becomes relation"; 291.

⁶²*Twilight of the Idols*, 102.

the chasm between man and man, class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out -- that which I call pathos of distance -- characterizes every strong age.⁶³ Nietzsche laments the absence of this feeling. "No one any longer possess today the courage to claim special privileges or the right to rule, the courage to feel of sense of reverence towards himself and towards his equals -- the courage for a pathos of distance...The aristocratic outlook has been undermined most deeply by the lie of equality of souls..."⁶⁴ Nietzsche does not reject equality so long as it is not secured by law.

The first reference to the pathos of distance in the *Genealogie* occurs in the second aphorism of the First Essay:

The *pathos of nobility and distance*...the protracted and domineering total fundamental feeling on the part of a higher ruling order in relation to a lower order, to a 'below' -- that is the origin of the antithesis 'good' and 'bad' (Essay 1; 2, emphasis added).⁶⁵

Whereas the good/evil value antithesis sprouts from *ressentiment*, Nietzsche traces the origin of the antithesis good/bad to the pathos of distance. Out of the feeling of distance - a designation for one's broken or severed relations -- the noble creates this value antithesis independently of all external grounds. It was not, Nietzsche claims, the slaves who spontaneously created values:

⁶³*Twilight of the Idols*, 102.

⁶⁴*Antichrist*, 168-9.

⁶⁵Nietzsche links greatness to nobility in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "the concept of greatness entails being noble, wanting to be by oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and having to live independently;" 139.

It was the good themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank...It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values... (Essay 1; 2, emphasis added).

We saw how *ressentiment* culminated in the will to misunderstand suffering, out of the rage against meaninglessness or, as Nietzsche puts it, "horror vacui" (Essay 3; 1). The result of the *pathos of distance* is an interpretation of suffering too, but, unlike *ressentiment*, the *pathos of distance* permits one to rise above suffering. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche views individuation as "the origin and primal cause of all suffering."⁶⁶ But these themes are taken further in the *Genealogie* and, unlike his discussion of suffering in the *Birth of Tragedy*, which has only an indirect relation to ethics, in the *Genealogie* it has an immediate moral relevance. How one interprets suffering becomes a marker of nobility. Only those capable of affirming the ultimate meaninglessness of their own suffering -- a possible answer to the question "What is Noble?" raised in 1886 in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* -- can affirm difference and can act spontaneously.⁶⁷ The total affirmation of the unknowability of existence, all of its suffering, and all of the riddles and mysteries it contains, becomes the only justifiable ethical position.

The *pathos of distance* names this positionless ethical position and it is linked to both

⁶⁶The first quote appears on 73. Nietzsche also claims in the *Birth of Tragedy* that suffering is the "sole ground" of the world; 45.

⁶⁷The German word *vornehm* is difficult to translate and is often rendered "noble." But noble misses the complex word chain that is signaled in *vornehm* that includes in front of, chosen, selected, and perhaps even avant-garde.

dignity and obligation; it is the condition of possibility of a newly conceived community of ends. The absolute dignity of this new "inoperative community," to borrow a phrase coined by Jean-Luc Nancy, must first be established so that the duty to the future that the nobles embody will be preserved.⁶⁸ This dignity, in accordance with the explicit Kantian overtones of this word, requires the abolition of instrumental relationships.⁶⁹

The higher ought not to degrade itself to the status of an instrument of the lower, the *pathos of distance* ought to keep their tasks eternally separate!...the nobles alone are the guarantors of the future, they alone are obligated [verpflichtet] for the future of humanity (Essay 3; 14).⁷⁰

Whereas *ressentiment* demands absolute proximity, immediate recognition, sameness, and homogeneity, those who feel a pathos of distance affirm what opposes them, are just and objective even toward what injures them, and never act as the result of external stimuli but always out of self-given laws, the plenitude of joy, and cheerfulness. They always have a "readiness for great responsibilities."⁷¹ Although they may be attacked by an other, these oysters redeem, transform, and elevate the infiltrator. Distant, spaced apart, the noble has an obligation to the future. What grounds the action of the nobles if they do not react to external stimuli?

⁶⁸Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*.

⁶⁹Nietzsche claims in *Beyond Good and Evil* that "The objective man is an instrument"; 128. Nietzsche also criticized most university professors as tools, "mirrors" (126), as opposed to autonomous and unappropriable thinkers.

⁷⁰Walter Kaufmann translates *verpflichtet* as "liable." His translation misses the explicitly Kantian overtones of this word. Obligated is better.

⁷¹*Beyond Good and Evil*, 140.

G. Law of Life

The question of law/constraint is a significant part of Nietzsche's philosophy but one that has received insufficient analysis. Certain inherited prejudices about Nietzsche may even lead one to conclude that he rejects all law. That would be an error because Nietzsche develops a conception of law that is central to his thinking on ethics.⁷² But Nietzsche will not insist on the non-arbitrary character of his law. All laws are essentially arbitrary but we still need them: "Arbitrary law needed."⁷³ The fact that Nietzsche's new law departs from conventional conceptions that deny their groundless foundation may account for the oversight. For Nietzsche, justice must present its own arbitrariness in order to remain what it is; justice must say it is only a perspective. For this reason, the law of life, the imperative to change, comes as close as it is possible to come to be a non-arbitrary law but it remains nevertheless essentially arbitrary.

Even if it was named other things in earlier texts, the law of life appears throughout most of Nietzsche's writings. In Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks dating from the time of the *Untimely Meditations*, he claims that "perishing and coming into being are governed by laws."⁷⁴ In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche refers to the "law of becoming."⁷⁵ In the *Gay Science*, he claims "all ethical systems hitherto have

⁷²In *Daybreak*, he claims that we must "construct anew the laws of life and action"; 190.

⁷³*Human, All Too Human*, 167.

⁷⁴*Unpublished Writings*, 103.

⁷⁵*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, 68.

been anti-natural."⁷⁶ But it was not until the *Genealogie* that the relation between law and life was articulated with the greatest precision. The challenge is to create an ethical principle that affirms life. Even if it is possible to trace some continuity with this conception, the law of life is a formulation that is not easy to interpret. Both law and life have a tremendous amount of significance in Nietzsche's writings, but according to Heidegger, "Nietzsche's use of the word life is ambiguous."⁷⁷ The law of life is Nietzsche's effort to think of an alternative to purely rational foundations for ethics and he finds one not in the irrational but between reason and nonreason.⁷⁸

Nietzsche is a critic of some modes of law because they determine meaning and repress the instinct for freedom which produces life-denying pathologies. Although he praises law because it depersonalizes conflict between those prone to revenge, legal orders that prevent all struggle are "hostile to life" and "assassinate the future of man" (Essay 2; 11). As I pointed out earlier, the restriction on the outward expression of the instinct of life marked the emergence of self-torture in the bad conscience. But Nietzsche does not reject the bad conscience *tout court*; nor does he reject law as such.⁷⁹ The trick is whether

⁷⁶*Gay Science*, 75.

⁷⁷The first quote appears on 78. Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, uses life as another word for Being, Vol. 3, 194, *Nietzsche*. This is a big claim which is probably not possible to support given Nietzsche's critique of Being throughout his philosophical writings.

⁷⁸Abstraction is bad for the body.

⁷⁹Nietzsche claims that the bad conscience should not be eliminated. So, instead of whipping oneself in the face of ascetic ideals "wed the bad conscience to all the unnatural inclinations, all those aspirations to the beyond, to that which runs counter to sense, instinct,

law can contain within itself the limits of its own sovereignty; that is, whether a law can open spaces for freedom and autonomy, produce exceptions (the genius), as opposed to creating normalized, homogeneous, pacified, and self-surveilling subjects.

In the conclusion of the Third Essay of the *Genealogie*, Nietzsche articulates the highest principle for ethical conduct. Similar to Kant's categorical imperative, this law is not concerned with the result of action, or with subjective ends, but with the form, purity, and principle for ethical conduct. Hitherto, the will has grounded itself on ascetic ideals because it lacked a meaning and a purpose; the ascetic ideal gave the will a goal but it was one that devalued sense and enforces fear of happiness and beauty (Essay 3; 28).⁸⁰ It muted all sensitivity (Essay 3; 18). Although he seeks to cultivate ethical sensitivity, Nietzsche does not merely turn the world right side up and find new ground for the will in the realm of sensibility. Grounding practical ethics in this way would be, as he states in an untranslated 1868 fragment titled "Ueber Ethik," "like a doctor who is merely combatting symptoms..."⁸¹ An imperative ethics, in contrast to one grounded on aesthetics, "is one which...believes that it can remove the root of this disease."⁸² The new

nature, animal, in short all ideals hitherto, which are one and all hostile to life and ideals that slander the world" (Essay 2; 24).

⁸⁰According to Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, will is a unity only as a word; 26.

⁸¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gesammelte Werke*, (Munich: Musarion Ausgabe, 1922), 1:405. I would like to acknowledge the generous translation assistance of Cornelius I. Partsch. Ethics grounded on aesthetics would reconstitute nihilism since no distinctions could be made which would allow for a valuative determination.

⁸²*Ibid.*

ground for ethics, then, takes the form of a law. According to Nietzsche in *Human, All Too Human*, "to be ethical means to practice obedience towards a law..."⁸³ The foundation for ethics in the *Genealogie* is the "law of life." Nietzsche's ethics emerge as the highest mode of practice characterized by a decision to liberate the will through the affirmation of eternal and necessary self-overcoming.⁸⁴ This is the law of life:

All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming: thus the law of life will have it, the law of the necessity of 'self-overcoming' in the nature of life -- the lawgiver himself eventually receives the call: 'submit to the law you yourself proposed' (Essay 3; 27).

The law of life, a principle of a new mode of ethical universalization, or as I have named it earlier, *formal contingency*, facilitates the perpetual birth of singularity. Self-overcoming is the law. The law commands us to be other than we are. The law of life is the representation of the impossible as possible.⁸⁵ This law does not constitute the ahistorical self-identical subject but creates ones that are contingent, indeterminate, freed

⁸³*Human, All Too Human*, 51.

⁸⁴The concept of the decision has a prominent place in the work of Søren Kierkegaard, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida. The type of decision Nietzsche has in mind here is one that has the paradoxical goal of the total suspension of subjective purposiveness. Perhaps the sharpest contrast in terms of the decision could be drawn between Nietzsche and Schmitt. See Carl Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996). Christianity is the fault line that divides Nietzsche from Schmitt but investigating this relationship is beyond the scope of the present study.

⁸⁵In a section called "Books which teach one to dance" in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche states: "There are writers who, by representing the impossible as possible and speaking of morality and genius as though both were merely a matter of wanting them, a mere whim and caprice, evoke a feeling of high-spirited freedom, as though man were standing on tiptoe and compelled to dance for sheer joy"; 96.

from the past, opened to the future, undefined, and finite. Ones that are not racked with a bad conscience, guilt, or other poisonous feelings but generous, trusting, and free. In accordance with Kant's categorical imperative, those receptive to their constant liberation hear the call of the law; one joyfully submits to this law.⁸⁶ If one refuses to change one is guilty of violating the law of life. Nietzsche's law is not a law as long as law is understood as an abstraction that conceals its arbitrary foundation and then violently imposes itself on the subjects it creates who violate its standards. Nietzsche's law is a future lawgiving based, as he states in *Daybreak*, on the belief that "I submit only to the law which I myself have given..."⁸⁷

The consequences of the law of life are impossible to know in advance. It is the perpetual negation of Being and carries with it the "terribleness and majesty of infinite demands, infinite meanings."⁸⁸ As such, the law of life is pure negativity and, according

⁸⁶Benjamin's "Zur Kritik der Gewalt" is instructive here. According to Benjamin, "the great criminal confronts the law with the threat of declaring a new law...The State fears this violence simply for its lawmaking character"; 241. When the law exercises violence over life and death, "the law reaffirms itself"; 242. As for the relationship between the call [Ruf] and the moral law, Kant states: "The veiled goddess before whom we of both parties bend our knees is the moral law in us, in its inviolable majesty. We do indeed perceive her voice and also understand very well her command. But when we are listening, we are in doubt whether it comes from man, from the perfected power of his own reason, or whether it comes from an other, whose essence is unknown to us and speaks to man through this, his own reason." "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy," translated by Peter Fenves in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, Edited by Peter Fenves, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 71.

⁸⁷*Daybreak*, 110.

⁸⁸This quote appears in *Beyond Good and Evil* in reference to Jewish morality (185) but can also be applied to the law of life.

to Nietzsche in an 1872 series of aphorisms called "The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge," "a negative morality is the kind with the most grandeur because it is wonderfully impossible."⁸⁹ And, "Mankind propagates itself through impossibilities; these are its *virtues*."⁹⁰ Finally, as Nietzsche states in an 1873 fragment, "Element of impossibility inherent in all virtues that make the human being great."⁹¹

Submission to this law instantaneously and repeatedly annihilates all grounds for conduct that are constituted on the basis of a life denying ideal; and this places the lawgiver in a realm free from the need to torture oneself or others, both of which result from the construction of an abstract world.⁹² Acting under the law of life, the will wills its necessary transformation and disintegration.⁹³ The necessary and eternal submission to the sovereignty of this law, nothing else according to Nietzsche, guarantees that there will be a future. And the future is nothing less than a realm of pure indetermination. The law of life is a law that is based not on an eternal ahistorical truth, nor one completely

⁸⁹*Philosophy and Truth*, 46.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 45.

⁹¹*Unpublished Writings*, 188.

⁹²According to Kofman, morality and the concept are allies: "morality uses the generality of the concept to guarantee its universality; the concept uses morality to impose itself as a norm of truth"; 58.

⁹³According to Werner Hamacher, "the will is its release from itself." *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, translated by Fenves, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) 140.

grounded in aestheticism, but one that discloses itself in a new and distinct way of feeling, a pathos of distance. This feeling is a sign of autonomy; the result of giving oneself a law signaled in "breaking away" [aus einander] (Essay 3; 18) and standing apart in a newly conceived Nietzschean "kingdom of ends."

H. Letting Go

Letting go is a paradoxical expression that appears infrequently in Nietzsche's writings. How could one have the goal of having no goal? Of willing not to will? In order to bring it into clarity, I focus on the place where it appears in the *Genealogie*, and bring other near formulations of this idea into a relationship with it, in order to challenge not only Heidegger's overemphasis on the will as the culmination of Cartesian subjectivity in Nietzsche, as opposed to its displacement, but also to open a dimension of Nietzsche's thought that has been insufficiently examined but that nonetheless has a decisive impact on the multi-dimensionality of Nietzsche's ethical significance.⁹⁴ Nietzsche's critique of *ressentiment*, his affirmation of the pathos of distance and the law of life is interconnected with the idea of letting go. As we shall see, letting go is not giving up. Rather, it is the condition of possibility of experience and experience is the very thing that living according to concepts destroys.

In the section called "What the Germans Lack" in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims that "learning to see, not to will, defer decision, in an attitude of hostile calm

⁹⁴Heidegger states: "Nietzsche ineluctably stands...under Descartes's metaphysics"; Vol. 4, 103 *Nietzsche*.

[feindseliger Ruhe] one will allow the strange, the novel...to approach."⁹⁵ The condition for something new to approach is the suspension of the decision, of giving up on the will, of waiting not in a state of passivity but in a "hostile calm."⁹⁶ A hostile calm is intentionless activity, anticipation, and receptivity to the new, the strange, and to what destroys the subject's image of itself in the joy of liberation and passion for life. A noble culture does not react immediately to what is new, it is strong enough to wait:

One has to learn to see, one has to learn to think, one has to learn to speak and write: the end in all three is a noble culture. -- Learning to see -- habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgment, to investigate and comprehend the individual case in all its aspects. This is the first preliminary schooling in spirituality: not to react immediately to a stimulus, but to have to have the restraining, stock-taking instincts in one's control. Learning to see, as I understand it, is almost what is called in unphilosophical language 'strong will-power': the essence of it is precisely not to 'will', the ability to defer decision. All unspirituality, all vulgarity, is due to the incapacity to resist a stimulus -- one has to react, one obeys every impulse.⁹⁷

Nietzsche makes a striking contrast in this quote between reactivity and undecidability and connects the former to vulgarity and the latter to a "preliminary schooling in spirituality."⁹⁸ The suspension of the will transforms the subject in ways that make it receptive to that which is individual and unique. Paradoxically, strong will power is

⁹⁵*Twilight of the Idols*, 76.

⁹⁶Hostile calm is probably the closest approximation to the pathos of distance.

⁹⁷*Twilight of the Idols*, 76.

⁹⁸Derrida and Benjamin have theorized undecidability in provocative and original ways. But Derrida has taken it further and explored the ways in which it disfigures dominant political and philosophical texts in order to open new avenues for thinking about ethics and politics.

precisely the capacity not to will. One must be strong enough to let things come, to defer judgment, to allow the force of individuality to be experienced without prior conceptual projections. One does not obey every impulse but is free. Nietzsche claims that "immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is unintentional in it."⁹⁹ Practical reason cannot be programmed.

Similar ideas are also articulated in a decisive place in the *Genealogie*. We saw earlier how ordinary humans are caged by guilt and bad conscience, that is, by artifice; and how ascetic ideals and Christianity sanctify this enslavement. Nietzsche shows us how to break these chains. The way out involves "letting go": "How accommodating, how friendly all the world is toward us as soon as we act as all the world does and 'let go' like all the world!" (Essay 2; 24).¹⁰⁰ Letting go signals the break with phenomenality as the determining ground of practice since nothing empirical can now determine how one will act. Letting go is the exit and names the total liberation of the will from positing and from its desperate search for empirical grounds for conduct; it erases the chalk line or artificial cage constructed by the resentful and reinforced by ascetic priests. It releases the will from self-maltreatment and redeems us from the curse that the reigning ideal has imposed upon human existence.

Let us exit the current epoch that is poisoned by the curse of *ressentiment* and enter a redeemed and cheerful era that celebrates a new goal; the goal of "letting go." It is an

⁹⁹*Beyond Good and Evil*, 44.

¹⁰⁰Nietzsche's "gehen lassen" [letting go] should be distinguished from Martin Heidegger's "lassen sein" [letting be] insofar as the former has no trace of ontology.

imperative to free oneself from the will to nothingness by simply ceasing to will.¹⁰¹ It is an ethical strike.¹⁰² The absolute nothingness and worthlessness of the empirical world is thus announced because one is not motivated by anything sensible. The loss of sensibility as a ground for conduct is replaced with the increasing sense of one's distance, or freedom, from it. But this distance is not divorced from feeling; one feels the feeling of liberation from the domination of the determining power of sensibility.

I. Ethical Singularity

For Nietzsche, human feelings are essential to understanding the difference between the moral and the ethical: "Autonomy and morality are mutually exclusive" (Essay 2; 2). For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* produces a quantitative morality; a pathos of distance gives birth to a qualitative ethic. Morality is characterized by the feeling of *ressentiment*, ascetic ideals, bad conscience, guilt, the will to nothingness, revenge, a will to self-maltreatment, hatred of difference, the total devaluation of life, and the inability to give oneself laws. *Ressentiment* devalues life, the pathos of distance elevates it. The former

¹⁰¹The will to meaning is essentially nihilism because it is based on the fear of meaninglessness. Affirming meaninglessness is the antidote to nihilism because it gives birth to undetermined values and meanings that are not grounded on the reactive denial of ruptured foundations.

¹⁰²For a discussion of the strike see Jacques Derrida's "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" translated by Quaintance, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, (New York: Cardozo Law Review, 1990); Walter Benjamin's *Zur kritik der Gewalt*; Werner Hamacher's "Affirmative, Strike: Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence,'" in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, edited by Andrew Benjamin and Osborne, (New York & London: Routledge, 1994).

demands absolute proximity; the latter fractures relations rooted in fusion.¹⁰³ Nietzsche destroys the conventional moral categories that spring from *ressentiment* and his ethical alternative to *ressentiment* is an ethic of singularity.

Ethical singularity is characterized by a pathos of distance, letting go, non-oppositional relations, spontaneous action, autonomy, and an imperative ethics contained in the law of life. To be an ethical citizen, one must affirm the loss of absolute foundations.¹⁰⁴ This is not a formula for license, but rather a project of autonomy. Generated by the non-sensual but yet non-ascetic law of life, the pathos of distance permanently destabilizes the self. The result is perpetual self-overcoming; this creates fissures and gaps in one's identity that make an affirmative relation to otherness, the future, and change possible. Seen in this light, the ethical in Nietzsche is a perpetual test that can be summarized in two simple, but polemical, questions: Can you affirm groundlessness, perpetually change, and act without *ressentiment*? Can you be upright without a point of support, without a transcendently secured foundation, without an absolute ground?

Nietzsche's ethic raises the stakes of post-Kantian autonomy but it is not the categorical

¹⁰³Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic and Hegelian "fusion of horizons" should be contrasted with Nietzsche's affirmation of distance. See *Truth and Method*, translated by Weinsheimer & Marshall, (New York: Continuum, 1993).

¹⁰⁴Liberalism makes ethical citizenship impossible by positing foundations that are placed outside of the acceptable realm of contestation. Institutions and bureaucracy, although probably indispensable for certain functions in advanced societies, are nonetheless signs of the fear of democracy. Citizens are prevented from being active lawgivers and are reduced to passive petitioners. Perhaps Carl Schmitt has a point when he claims that there is always an undemocratic moment in every democratic order. That is to say, a certain level of dictatorship is unsurpassable in all regimes that are founded. See Schmitt's *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, translated by Kennedy, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

imperative but the law of life that enforces distance that counteracts rage against finitude. Rising above rancor prevents one from venting their own inability to accept the meaninglessness of suffering on others (a politics of blame) or on themselves (a politics of self-torture). The alternative to both of these is self-legislation that gives birth to singularity. An awareness of the attraction of a politics of blame in late modernity can help us be on guard against it and criticize it when it appears.¹⁰⁵ Following Kant, Nietzsche insists on the absolute priority of the ethical -- in this case, an ethics without ethics, an ethics strong enough to constantly cross itself out -- and that, according to Nietzsche, is the only justifiable foundation for all future political projects. The result of Nietzsche's critique of philosophical foundations is not, as Peter Fenves suggests, "irrationalism,"¹⁰⁶ nor the often misunderstood term called nihilism, but rather the law of life and a lawful feeling -- the pathos of distance -- and an obligation to the indeterminability of the future.

J. Justice, not Convictions

An ethic of singularity is not an ethic of conviction. Nietzsche defines convictions as the belief that on some particular point of knowledge one is in possession of the unqualified truth. To have convictions is, according to the *Antichrist*, "not to see many

¹⁰⁵Politics in the United States of America seems to have reached a new symbolic dimension. Multiple life sentences and multiple death penalties for the same person are one of the signs of this. Law seeks to not only to deprive offenders of movement or life but to symbolically over-annihilate them.

¹⁰⁶Peter Fenves, "Foreword: From Empiricism to the Experience of Freedom," in Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Experience of Freedom*, translated by McDonald, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) xxii.

things, conviction is mendaciousness on principle."¹⁰⁷ To live without grounds, reasons, and convictions and nonetheless seek to be ethical is the highest demand of justice. Nietzsche classifies the genius of justice as an "opponent of convictions for it wants to give each his own."¹⁰⁸ In an uncharacteristic moment of humility, Nietzsche asserts: "Let us...kneel down before justice as the only goddess we recognize over us."¹⁰⁹ In contrast to justice, an ethic of conviction sacrifices what is singular on the alter of its generality; when it is a matter of justice there are no rules but only an art of nuances. The scales of justice annihilate particularity in comparisons between things that are essentially incommensurable. The scales rise up and down, then they freeze, then judgment is passed. If an ethic of conviction is an ethic of abstraction, Truth, rules, and the Christian God, an ethic of singularity is an ethic of the Antichrist that carries the new ethical doctrine of singularity down to the victims of Christianity in order to announce their liberation. Nietzsche wants to cure those who have been made lame by Christianity: "I can write in letters which make even the blind see."¹¹⁰ The ethic of the Antichrist announces the death of God, the death of fixed convictions, even the death of death (at least the Christian conception of death).

The writings of Nietzsche can further the project of critique in the domain of morality

¹⁰⁷ *Antichrist*, 186.

¹⁰⁸ *Human, All Too Human*, 202.

¹⁰⁹ *Human, All Too Human*, 203.

¹¹⁰ *Antichrist*, 99.

and help us make distinctions between positions that smuggle in the transeendental ground that is the origin of *ressentiment*, bad conscience, guilt, and the war against everything that is free and creative. We will remain disoriented but, as Nietzsche suggests, we can look into the abyss without venting our rage on others. But we may get a strange glance back: "when you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you."¹¹¹ Justice as an art of nuances and an ethic of singularity is the new ethical epoch whose faint glow Nietzsche sees breaking through the Christian/moral horizon that has denied its possibility. Through his critique of the alliance between morality and Christianity, Nietzsche lays the groundwork for the emergence of the genius of justice who will activate an ethic of singularity.

K. Beyond Nietzsche

In the earlier chapters, I read both Hobbes and Kant against the grain. In this one, I demonstrated how Nietzsche attempts to think his way out of the crisis called modernity that has culminated in nihilism. Nietzsche enacts his own imperative of radical autonomy and singularity in his writing style and in his call for a perpetual crisis in conceptuality that will permit a rebirth of feeling, ones that do not suffer from the stamp of words.¹¹² It would be a rebirth that would allow life to begin anew; one capable of opening itself to a secular redemption freed from idols, symbols, and concepts.

¹¹¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, 89.

¹¹² "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life," 162.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHALLENGE OF CITIZENSHIP

A. The Necessity and Difficulty of Ethics

This project started with claims about the difficulty of ethics, a difficulty that is the result of the current theoretical context. How are we to justify our deepest moral commitments without forsaking the critique of foundationalism?¹ This not only involves two necessary and competing projects whose reconciliation is difficult to imagine but can only be an ongoing project. Inspired by post-structuralism, I have attempted to find a way to develop a new framework for thinking about the interconnection between ethics and politics that undermines foundationalist assumptions about self, other, and world. One that also overcomes the preoccupation with merely subverting or deconstructing oppositions ("anti"-ism) and takes an affirmative form. Apocalyptic pronouncements about the "end of philosophy" are part of the problem. The exhaustion thesis is itself exhausted.² The real challenge today is how reflect on the relationship between ethics

¹Although his work on the contingency of all fundamental assumptions is provocative, I detect an unhelpful moment of resignation in the work of Richard Rorty. His thinking seems to be stuck within the opposition between foundationalism and subjectivism. He forecloses in advance the exploration of possibilities for politics that complicate this paralyzing binary.

²Derrida is a good example of a thinker who faces the exhaustion of philosophy without giving up on the promise of emancipation. In the *Other Heading*, he states: "the very old subject of cultural identity in general...the very old subject of European identity indeed has the venerable air of an old, exhausted theme. But perhaps this "subject" retains a virgin body"; 5. He then proceeds in this remarkable text to articulate new modes of identity capable of putting an end to the pointless violence inherent to the quest for self-identity.

and politics in ways that, in the words of Stephen White, "sustain affirmation."³ We need to find a balance between critique and affirmation.⁴

A critical ethic pushes for a displacement of the traditional field of ethics in the direction of ethical indeterminacy, the cultivation of aesthetic-affective dimensions of existence, the suspension of the self, responsiveness to the other, self-overcoming, double contradictory imperatives, and acknowledging one's limits involved in the justification of one ethico-political possibility over another. Non-purposive freedom activated in imperatives of indetermination was the antidote for sovereign subjectivity. In contrast to commentators who claim that the philosophical tradition is exhausted, the resources for overcoming the excessive pretensions of Enlightenment philosophy can be found in the Enlightenment itself. Breaking the relationship between knowledge/reason and responsibility and putting specific feelings their instead was the first step to building an affirmative normative vision of the connection between ethics and politics and renewing ethico-political reflection in an age of disenchantment. A difficult but necessary undertaking.

³Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁴Consider the following passage by Stephen White in *Sustaining Affirmation*: "In relation to postmodernism or poststructuralism, the core issue I have raised is how one challenges various fundamentals of modernity without that critique becoming an imperative disconnected from affirmative moral and political formulations. I have argued that to be persuasive in a sustained sense, such formulations *must* draw explicitly upon ontological sources"; 151, emphasis added. The word "must" is a bit too strong here. As Derrida's recent work on politics demonstrates, the critique of ontology can have ethical and political implications.

A critical ethic attempts to overcome some of the shortcomings of liberalism, communitarianism, discourse ethics, and radical/plural democracy. These models of citizenship fail to adequately conceptualize the relationship between self and other. In contrast to communitarian "fusion," a critical ethic allows for distance between members of a collectivity and the refashioning of individual and collective identity in indeterminate ways. In contrast to liberalism, a critical ethic welcomes dialogue in the public sphere about difficult philosophical dilemmas and competing conceptions of the good but without officially establishing any one version or abandoning a skeptical attitude toward them. In contrast to radical plural democracy, a critical ethic always views difference as an opportunity, not as something that should be subordinated to the "movement." In contrast to discourse ethics, a critical ethic holds reason in check through the affirmation of ambiguity and paradox; it also views the quest for transparency with suspicion.

The running hypothesis of this study has been that what and how we feel -- our aesthetic-affective response to existence -- preconditions our capacity to act in ways that are ethical. Although the cultivation of anxiety, respect, and distance interrupt self-identity they also increase the likelihood of inventing context sensitive strategies of engagement fused with a receptivity to the other. Certain feelings do not constitute the subject but allow it to be put into question in ways that render an affirmative relation with otherness possible. The precondition for this is an experience of the indetermination of the borders of the self. Although it cannot be absolutely guaranteed, specific aesthetic-affective experiences produce receptive, open, generous, and critical "subjects" capable of

affirming the other without having a ground of absolute support. The experience of the tensions involved in the formation of the self, one's that are likely to be marginalized or denied through the emphasis on the "narrative self," are important for ethics.⁵ My hope is that a different self is possible (one that does not need to completely secure its identity) and that anxiety, respect, and the pathos of distance will release new moral sources in our lives.⁶

B. Birth of the Subject; Death of the Citizen

Modern political thought grounds itself on new privileges granted to the subject. The invention of the subject is a modern event. Descartes secured the certainty of the subject

⁵The narrative self appears in Benhabib's *Situating the Self* and Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). I take issue with both of their normative visions of the self. For Benhabib, "the identity of the self is constituted by a narrative unity, which integrates what 'I' can do, have done and will accomplish with what you expect of 'me,' interpret my acts and intentions to mean, wish for me in the future, etc" (5). For Taylor, we want our lives to have meaning and "grasp our lives in a narrative" (47). Taylor again: "We understand ourselves inescapably in narrative" (51). In my view, narratives lend an illusory coherence to the self. Contingency, paradox, and incoherence seem to be more probable characteristics of the self. Both Benhabib and Taylor seem to be reacting to the problem of meaning. The need for the narrative unity of the self could be viewed as one of the possible responses to its lack and the anxiety that produces. The absence of a coherent narrative of the self seems to be precisely what allowed the non-Jewish King of Denmark to where the Jewish star when the Nazis came to deport the Jews. See *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (New York: Penguin, 1963). Coherent narratives of the self, especially if there fictionality is forgotten, may stand in the way of a just response to the other. It is impossible to know whether he would he have responded similarly if he had a strong sense of his identity.

⁶Anxiety, respect, and the pathos of distance are non-projective emotions. Fear, despair, hope, desire would be projective ones and are incompatible with a critical ethic. The ethico-political potential of the interpersonal emotions of friendship and love would be worthy objects of future inquiry.

and established it as its own ground. This philosophical moment set the stage for major currents in modern philosophy and leaked into the realm of politics in ways that are still in force today. Modern political thought sought to design institutions capable of defending the individual subject from state interference. The realm of politics was not conceived in its classical manner as face to face relations between citizens in the public sphere or as public argumentation about competing conceptions of the good life. Rather, politics became the search for neutral rules and institutions that would mediate the interactions between subjects. Concomitant with institutions conceived for self-preservation, the distinction between public and private created a space where the subject could retreat when his life choices were questioned or challenged.

Social contract theory (Hobbes in particular) attempted to neutralize all conflict by breaking the connection between the political order and any one conception of the *summum bonum* or good life. But the prioritization of the search for neutrality in the realm of politics was disastrous for the cultivation of citizenship. The citizen was increasingly displaced; the belief in the human as a political animal seemed to be a relic of bygone age. Although he became a subject empowered with choice, he was also dependent on the state. In the political sphere, he became a passive petitioner, a supplicant, forced to bend his knee to the state, prevented or disabled from enacting the promise of his own autonomy. Lacking any goal higher than itself, the modern state manipulated the movements of subjects through pain and pleasure for the purposes of its and their self-preservation; it had no higher aim other than mere survival. Any goal

higher than mere life would risk infringing upon subjective autonomy. The possibility of a conception of citizenship as the experience of freedom, indetermination, receptive negotiation, public argumentation, and conflict was increasingly displaced by the political preoccupation with subjective sovereignty and the de-politicizing institutions designed to protect it.

C. Death of the Subject; Birth of the Citizen

I have sought to revitalize the moral citizen through the intensification of the "death" of the subject. Modern political thought announces the birth of subjectivity and it paradoxically also marks the progressive intensification of its decline. The decline of subjectivity can be found not at the end of the modern age but at its birth, precisely at the moment when its political stabilization is most urgent. I did not go to Descartes to chart the interruption of the subject but to three authors who are reputed to elevate it politically: Hobbes (self-preservation as *summon bonum*), Kant (sovereign subjectivity), and Nietzsche ("will to power"). As I have demonstrated, these interpretations overlook the various earthquakes already shaking the self-identical subject: Hobbesian anxiety, Kantian respect, and Nietzschean pathos of distance. These earthquakes in the subject also displace the traditional way morality has been conceived in ways that can infuse a new Left with an alternative conceptualization the relation between ethics and politics.⁷

⁷One could also look elsewhere for the destabilization of the subject. One could look to the Copernican de-centering of the earth, the Kantian inaccessibility of the thing-in-itself, the death of the Christian God (Nietzsche), the unconscious tumor haunting the self-identical subject (Freud), and the death of the subject in writing (Derrida). These deep convulsions in the ground of the subject and the subject as ground have undermined its confidence and self-certainty. As Stephen White suggests, "one of the entities most thrown

As opposed to trying to rescue the subject, this study furthered its indictment in the name of ethico-political citizenship conceived as an experience of ethical indetermination. The "subject" that is the result of this study must work against everything that attempts to deny its indeterminacy, oppose everything that tries to deny its rightful claim to anxiety, and reject everything that tries to deny its singularity through the imposition of a recognizable identity. Both the indetermination of identity and ethico-political undecidability raise the stakes of ethico-political practice because they expand the terrain within which we must act, and more importantly, cultivate a critical reflexiveness out of the concern for responsiveness to the other.

In my defense of the ethico-political potential of anxiety, respect, and ethical feelings in Nietzsche, my study has pointed to some alternative possibilities for subjectivity. I put into question the assumption that feelings are always bound to an object of representation. The future (Hobbes), the moral law as a law of freedom (Kant), and the experience of suffering (Nietzsche) dislodge the necessary connection between the stable subject and its construction of objects of knowledge that it can master. Putting this assumption into question threatens the classical pillars of subjectivity: self-consciousness, representation, and will.

Feeling, then, does not depend on the mental acts that secure subjectivity but only occurs when the order of representation breaks down. This seems to me precisely what

into question has been our conception of the human subject"; "Weak Ontology and Liberal Political Reflection," *Political Theory*, Vol. 25 No. 4 1997, 503. The paradox was that the subject was simultaneously constituted and undermined at the same moment.

the feeling of anxiety, the philosophical feeling *par excellence*, marks.⁸ It would be the feeling of the "otherwise," the feeling of the indeterminate force of possibility. The substantiality of materiality vanishes and the weight of indeterminacy interrupts the grounding requirements of subjectivity. The self is unable to secure itself through projections that link the will to objects of representation.

Feeling is not about mastery but receptivity and vulnerability, precisely what is foreclosed in instrumental relations that cement the subject/object opposition into the consciousness of subjects as the only possible form human interaction can take. As Adorno put it in *Minima Moralia*, "tenderness between humans is nothing other than the consciousness of the possibility of non-instrumental relationships..."⁹ Humans incapable of transcending instrumental ones, for Adorno, suffered from the "sickness of contact."¹⁰ The experience of friendship, or what Derrida calls *aimance*, excludes all violence; it is the non-instrumental relation to the other.¹¹

Anxiety, respect, and the pathos of distance are not formulas but are groundless feelings that keep spaces open in both the structure of subjectivity and in how she

⁸According to Nietzsche in a section of "The Struggle Between Science and Wisdom" where he paraphrases Socrates: "anxiety concerning oneself becomes the soul of philosophy." *Philosophy and Truth*, edited and translated by Breazeale, (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1979), 135.

⁹Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem Beschädigten Leben*, (Berlin u. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1951), 61, my translation.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," 83.

responds to the riddles of existence. These feelings potentially uproot the presuppositions that fuel fundamentalist aggression. The proper mix of anxiety, respect, and the pathos of distance allow us to appreciate the unknown, may prevent us from thinking ethical dilemmas have unambiguous solutions, permit us to affirm things that may threaten the stability of our identity, and may be the closest thing to an experience of justice. The cultivation of aesthetic-affective dimensions of existence is my way to expand responsibility, promote active citizenship, and affirm pluralization.

D. Shifting Ground

My reformulation of the ground for ethical conduct has sought to alter how ethics can be justified and also seeks to heighten the experience of responsibility. In the sphere of practice, there are no formulas, no clear paths, and no programs to follow. Following single codes for practice reduces ethico-political practice to a tool, annihilates freedom, and denies moral groundlessness. We will never have a ground for ethico-political practice that relieves us from the burden of critically reworking their inter-relationship over and over again.

Ethics is not about the positivity of rules. Ethico-political reflection can only take a negative form; it should never lend any certainty to action. As Derrida puts it, as soon as the negative form for ethics is converted into a positive certainty "one can be sure that one is beginning to be deceived..."¹² The loss of the positivity of foundations does not necessarily lead to license but makes the challenge of inventing practices responsive to

¹²Derrida, *The Other Heading*, 81.

the other an ongoing project. The critical negativity of imperatives of indetermination and radical freedom become the only justifiable moral commands in a disenchanted age. The challenge is to act and affirm the other in ways that do not violate groundlessness. A responsible decision is more likely to occur if it is taken on a perpetually shifting ground.

It would be a mistake, however, to reject the use of all rules in all situations. While a critical ethic favors the cultivation of aesthetic-affective dimensions of the self, it does not reject juridical codes for conduct as such. It would be a dogmatic to do so. Although I think Habermas is prone to go too far in this direction, he is correct to suggest that

Law is better understood as a functional complement to morality. As a positively valid, legitimately enacted, and actionable, law can relieve the morally judging and acting person of the considerable cognitive, motivational, and organizational demands of a morality based entirely on individual conscience. Law can compensate for the weaknesses of a highly demanding morality that -- if we judge from its empirical results -- provides only cognitively indeterminate and motivationally unreliable results.¹³

Habermas may be right. But the danger here is that the relief law gives reduces, or even paralyzes, thought. To suggest that the empirical results of law are necessarily more reliable than morality overlooks the great deal of contingency (i.e. interpretation of the meaning of the law and legal discretion) often involved in the implementation of law. As long as the approach to rules is non-formulaic, compatible with freedom, and does not destroy the necessity of cultivating the moral feelings that I valorize, I would be willing to support Habermas's position.

¹³Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 257.

E. Critical Ethic as Risk

A critical ethic opens foundations to perpetual interrogation. That can be risky or even dangerous. We may feel apathetic if we can no longer justify our ethical positions with the appeal to something absolute. We may feel an increasing sense of meaninglessness, paralysis or resignation overtaking our lives. We may feel rage, anger, and despair. But this loss can also be an opportunity to rethink the ways we try to justify our actions and our lives. As my chapter on Nietzsche illustrated, it could mean leaving behind both the violence to self and to other that marked the era of belief in meaning, a standpoint outside of a particular perspective, God, and absolute foundations. The real danger is a politics of revenge and blame that tends to result from the insistence of foundations at all costs; a politics grounded on the rage against finitude.

As opposed to heightening despair, affirming groundlessness can produce a longing for a better political life. For those who may be homesick for absolute ground, this may be experienced as a permanent crisis. But a crisis can be good and healthy insofar as it serves as a check on *hubris*. Perhaps this is what Nietzsche had in mind when he stated that "a real crisis, and especially a great universal crisis, tends to make human beings better and more warm hearted."¹⁴ A critical ethic affirms the impossibility of finding rules for ethics but keeps the Enlightenment project of the quest for universality and the emancipatory ideal alive in imperatives of indetermination and in double contradictory imperatives. The person who can think and act in such a way is simultaneously affirming

¹⁴Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," translated by Grey, *Unfashionable Observations*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 200.

a critical ethic and he or she is a "free spirit" or a philosophical Californian with a sympathy for earthquakes who can "maintain himself on insubstantial ropes and dance even near abysses."¹⁵ Dancing is not formless raving but requires some rules and form; but they have to be ones that are compatible with human freedom; ones compatible with the *art of nuances* that ethico-political reflection and action always involves.

¹⁵Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 289-290.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, Theodor. 1973. *Negative Dialectics*. Trans. E. B. Ashton. New York: Continuum Press.
- Allison, Henry E. 1990. *Kant's Theory of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1977. "What is Freedom?" In *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. New York: Penguin.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1989. "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy." Trans. Mark Ritter. In *Benjamin: Philosophy, History, Aesthetics*, ed. Gary Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Broadie, Alexander and Pybus, Elizabeth M. 1975. "Kant's Concept of 'Respect.'" *Kant-Studien* 66:58-64.
- Caygill, Howard. 1995. *A Kant Dictionary*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Coles, Romand. 1997. *Rethinking Generosity: Critical Theory and the Politics of Caritas*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Connolly, William E. 1995. *Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Connolly, William E. 1999. *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Connolly, William E. 2000. "Speed, Concentric Cultures, and Cosmopolitanism." *Political Theory* 28:596-618.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1982. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." In *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1984. "Deconstruction and the Other." In *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*, ed. Richard Kearney. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1992. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Nass. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1996. "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism." Trans. Simon Critchley. In *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe. London: Routledge.

Fenves, Peter D. 1991. *A Peculiar Fate: Metaphysics and World-History in Kant*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Gregor, Mary. 1963. *Laws of Freedom: A Study of Kant's Method of Applying the Categorical Imperative in the Metaphysik der Sitten*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Habermas, Juergen. 1993. "Morality and Ethical Life: Does Hegel's Critique of Kant Apply to Discourse Ethics?" Trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen. In *Kant & Political Philosophy: The Contemporary Legacy*, ed. Ronald Beiner and William James Booth. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hamacher, Werner. 1996. *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*. Trans. Peter Fenves. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Honig, Bonnie. 1993. *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1960. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. Trans. John T. Goldthwait. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1963. *Lectures on Ethics*. Trans. Louis Infield. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Kant, Immanuel. 1965. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1978. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1987. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Kant, Immanuel. 1991. *Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Kant, Immanuel. 1993. "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy." Trans. Peter Fenves. In *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essay by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Fenves. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1997. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1997. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Trans. Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kofman, Sarah. 1997. "The Economy of Respect: Kant and Respect for Women." Trans. Nicola Fisher. In *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Robin May Schott. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1994. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- MacBeath, A. Murray. 1973. "Kant on Moral Feeling." *Kant-Studien* 64:283-314.
- McCarty, Richard. 1993. "Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31:421-435.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1993. *The Experience of Freedom*. Trans. Bridget McDonald. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- O'Neill, Onora. 1989. *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paton, H. J. 1971. *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, John. 1980. "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory." *The Journal of Philosophy*. 77:515-572.
- Reath, Andrews. 1989. "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility." *Kant-Studien* 80:284-302.
- Schneewind, J. B. 1992. "Autonomy, Obligation, and Virtue: An Overview of Kant's

Moral Philosophy." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shell, Susan Meld. 1980. *The Rights of Reason: A Study of Kant's Philosophy and Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Shell, Susan Meld. 1996. *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Teuber, Andreas. 1983. "Kant's Respect for Persons." *Political Theory* 11:369-392.

Velkley, Richard L. 1989. *Freedom and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant's Critical Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wolff, Robert Paul. 1973. *The Autonomy of Reason: A Commentary on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

