





RIGHTING Wrongs¹

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The primary nominative sense of *rights* cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is “justifiable claim, on legal or moral grounds, to have or obtain something, or to act in a certain way.” There is no parallel usage of *wrongs*, connected to an agent in the possessive case—“my wrongs”—or given to it as an object of the verb to have—“she has wrongs.”

Rights entail an individual or collective. *Wrongs*, however, cannot be used as a noun, except insofar as an other, as agent of injustice, is involved. The verb *to wrong* is more common than the noun, and indeed the noun probably gets its enclitic meaning by back-formation from the verb.

The word *rights* in “Human Rights, Human Wrongs,” the title of the 2001 Oxford Amnesty Lectures series in which this essay was first presented, acquires verbal meaning by its contiguity with the word *wrongs*.³ The verb *to right* cannot be used intransitively on this level of abstraction. It can only be used with the unusual noun *wrong*: “to right a wrong,” or “to right wrongs.” Thus “Human Rights” is not only about having or claiming a right or a set of rights; it is also about righting wrongs, about being the dispenser of these rights. The idea of human rights, in other words, may carry within itself the agenda of a kind of

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social Darwinism—the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit—and the possibility of an alibi.⁴ Only a “kind of” Social Darwinism, of course. Just as “the white man’s burden,” undertaking to civilize and develop, was only “a kind of” oppression. It would be silly to footnote the scholarship that has been written to show that the latter may have been an alibi for economic, military, and political intervention. It is on that model that I am using the concept-metaphor of the alibi in these introductory paragraphs.

Having arrived here, the usual thing is to complain about the Eurocentrism of human rights. I have no such intention. I am of course troubled by the use of human rights as an alibi for interventions of various sorts. But its so-called European provenance is for me in the same category as the “enabling violation” of the production of the colonial subject.⁵ One cannot write off the righting of wrongs. The enablement must be used even as the violation is renegotiated.

⁴ George Shelton incidentally provides a gloss on the native English-speaker’s take on the word *wrong* in *Morality and Sovereignty in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1992), 128–29. See also D. D. Raphael, “Hobbes on Justice,” in G. A. J. Rodgers and Alan Ryan, eds., *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 164–65. Alex Callinicos gives other examples of social Darwinism in *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

⁵ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 217n 33. This is a much-revised version of earlier work. The initial thinking and writing of the piece took place in 1982–83. In other words, I have been thinking of the access to the European Enlightenment through colonization as an enablement for twenty-odd years. I am so often stereotyped as a rejecter of the Enlightenment that I feel obliged to make this clear at the outset. But I thought of this particular method of access to the Enlightenment as a violation as well. In 1992, I presented “Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Post-Coloniality” in Cape Town, where I laid out the idea of abusing the Enlightenment, in ways similar to but not identical with the present argument. (That essay is being reprinted in Jane Huber, *Political Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming). The editor describes it as “prescient” about South Africa, because it was presented as early as 1992. She describes the piece as the “sting in the tail of her collection,” because Spivak, contrary to her stereotype, recommends using the Enlightenment from below.) This, then, was a decade ago. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why I hang in with Derrida, because here is one critic of ethnocentrism (*Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976], 3) who continues, as I remarked in “Responsibility,” to indicate the danger and bad faith in a wholesale rejection of the Enlightenment (Spivak, “Responsibility,” boundary 2 31.3

Colonialism was committed to the education of a certain class. It was interested in the seemingly permanent operation of an altered normality. Paradoxically, human rights and “development” work today cannot claim this self-empowerment that high colonialism could. Yet, some of the best products of high colonialism, descendants of the colonial middle class, become human rights advocates in the countries of the South. I will explain through an analogy.

Doctors without Frontiers—I find this translation more accurate than the received Doctors without Borders—dispense healing all over the world, traveling to solve health problems as they arise. They cannot be involved in the repetitive work of primary health care, which requires changes in the habit of what seems normal living: permanent operation of an altered normality. This group cannot learn all the local languages, dialects, and idioms of the places where they provide help. They use local interpreters. It is as if, in the field of class formation through education, colonialism, and the attendant territorial imperialism had combined these two imperatives—clinic and primary health care—by training the interpreters themselves into imperfect yet creative imitations of the doctors. The class thus formed—both (pseudo) doctor and interpreter, as it were—was the colonial subject.

The end of the Second World War inaugurated the postcolonial dispensation.

It was the U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization . . . that in 1965 asked the Commission [on Human Rights, created in 1946] to process the petitions that the Committee was receiving about human rights violations in southern Africa. . . . [Until the mid-1960s,] particularly for the new African and Asian members, the priority was [white] racism and [, against it] self-determination from colonial rule [, in other words, decolonization]. Later, their enthusiasm for the new procedures waned as the protection of civil and political [human] rights [in the new nation] emerged as the priority consideration and many of them became the targets [since they, as the new masters, were the guilty party] for the Commission’s new mandate.⁶

[Fall 1994]: 38–46). My double-edged attitude to the European Enlightenment is thus not a sudden change of heart.

⁶ Mel James, “Country Mechanisms of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights,” in Yael Danieli, Elsa Stamatopoulou, and Clarence J. Dias, eds., *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Fifty Years and Beyond* (Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing, 1999), 76–77.

For the eighteenth-century Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen by the National Assembly of France the “nation is essentially the source of sovereignty; nor can any individual, or any body of men, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it.”⁷ A hundred and fifty years later, for better or for worse, the human rights aspect of post-coloniality has turned out to be the breaking of the new nations, in the name of their breaking-in into the international community of nations.⁸ This is the narrative of international maneuvering. Thomas Risse, Stephen Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink’s book, *The Power of Human Rights*, takes the narrative further. In addition to the dominant states, they argue, since 1993 it is the transnational agencies, plus nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), that subdue the state.⁹

Nevertheless, it is still disingenuous to call human rights Eurocentric, not only because, in the global South, the domestic human rights workers are, by and large, the descendants of the colonial subject, often culturally positioned against Eurocentrism, but also because, internationally, the role of the new diasporic is strong, and the diasporic in the metropolis stands for “diversity,” “against Eurocentrism.” Thus the work of righting wrongs is shared above a class line that to some extent and unevenly cuts across race and the North-South divide.¹⁰ I say “to some extent and unevenly” because, to be located in the Euro-U.S. still makes a difference. In the UN itself, “the main human rights monitoring function [has been] allocated to the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe].”¹¹ The presuppositions of Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink’s book also make

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⁷ Cited in Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 79.

⁸ The identity of the nation and the state is generally associated with the Peace of Westphalia (1648), often thought of as one of the inaugurations of the Enlightenment. See, for example, R. Paul Churchill, “Hobbes and the Assumption of Power,” in Peter Caws, ed., *The Causes of Quarrel: Essays on Peace, War, and Thomas Hobbes* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 17

⁹ Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ I have written about this class in Spivak, *A Critique*, 392. They are not only involved in righting wrongs, of course. The head of the Space Vehicle Directorate’s innovative concepts group, behind George W. Bush’s new space war initiative, is a model minority diasporic; hardly righting wrongs!

¹¹ I am not tendentious in being critical of this. Ian Martin, secretary-general of Amnesty International from 1986 to 1992, is similarly critical. See Ian Martin, “Closer to the Victim: United

this clear. The subtitle—“International Norms and Domestic Change”—is telling. The authors’ idea of the motor of human rights is “pressure” on the state “from above”—international—and “from below”—domestic. (It is useful for this locationist privilege that most NGOs of the global South survive on Northern aid.) Here is a typical example, as it happens about the Philippines: “Human rights” have gained prescriptive status independent of political interests. . . . [We] doubt that habitualization or institutionalization at the state level have proceeded sufficiently to render pressure from societal actors futile.”¹²

This is pressure “from below,” of course. Behind these “societal actors” and the state is “international normative pressure.” I will go on to suggest that, unless “education” is thought differently from “consciousness-raising” about “the human rights norm” and “rising literacy expand[ing] the individual’s media exposure,” “sufficient habitualization or institutionalization” will never arrive, and this will continue to provide justification for international control.¹³

Thinking about education and the diaspora, Edward Said has recently written that “the American University generally [is] for its academic staff and many of its students the last remaining utopia.”¹⁴ The philosopher Richard Rorty as well as Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore—who supported “detention without trial . . . [as] Confucianist”—share Professor Said’s view of the utopianism of the Euro-U.S. university. I quote Rorty, but I invite you to read Premier Lee’s *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965–2000* to savor their accord: “Producing generations of nice, tolerant, well-off, secure, otherrespecting students of [the American] sort in all parts of the world is just what is needed—indeed all that is needed—to achieve an Enlightenment

Nations Human Rights Field Operations,” in Danieli, Stamatopoulou, and Dias, *Universal Declaration*, 92.

¹² Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, *Power*, 170.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), xi. It is interesting that Mary Shelley calls imperial Rome the “capital of the world, the crown of man’s achievements” (*The Last Man* [London: Pickering, 1996], 356). I am grateful to Lecia Rosenthal for this reference.

utopia. The more youngsters like that we can raise, the stronger and more global our human rights culture will become.”¹⁵

If one wishes to make this restricted utopianism, which extends to great universities everywhere, available for global social justice, one must unmoor it from its elite safe harbors, supported by the power of the dominant nation’s civil polity, and be interested in a kind of education for the largest sector of the future electorate in the global South—the children of the rural poor—that would go beyond literacy and numeracy and find a home in an expanded definition of a “Humanities to come.”

Education in the Humanities attempts to be an *uncoercive* rearrangement of desires.¹⁶ If you are not persuaded by this simple description, nothing I say about the Humanities will move you. This is the burden of the second section of this essay. This simple but difficult practice is outlined there. It is only when we interest ourselves in this new kind of education for the children of the rural poor in the global South that the inevitability of unremitting pressure as the *primum mobile* of human rights will be questioned.

If one engages in such empowerment at the lowest level, it is in the hope that the need for international/domestic-elite pressure on the state will not remain primary forever. We cannot necessarily expect the old colonial subject transformed into the new domestic middle-class urban radical, defined as “below” by Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink and by metropolitan human rights in general, to

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¹⁵ Rorty, “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality,” in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley, eds., *On Human Rights* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 127; see also, Kuan Yew Lee, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965–2000* (New York: Harper, 2000); the sentiment about detention is to be found on page 488. Meanwhile, general pieces like Asbjørn Eide, “Historical Significance of the Universal Declaration,” *International Social Science Journal* 50.4 (December 1998): 475–96, share neither Rorty’s wit nor the realism of the rest.

¹⁶ I think there is something like a relationship between these and the “tutored preferences” discussed in Philip Kitcher, *Science, Truth, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 118–19. Professor Kitcher is speaking of an ideal community of tax-paying citizens and he is concerned about “well-ordered science,” whereas I will be speaking of students in general, including the rural poor in the global South. Even with these differences, I would argue that “transmitting information” (118) would not necessarily lead to a tutoring of preferences. This is part of a more general interrogation of “consciousness raising” as a basis for social change.

engage in the attempt I will go on to describe. Although physically based in the South, and therefore presumably far from the utopian university, this class is generally also out of touch with the mindset—a combination of episteme and ethical discourse—of the rural poor below the NGO level. To be able to present a project that will draw aid from the North, for example, to understand and state a problem intelligibly and persuasively for the taste of the North, is itself proof of a sort of epistemic discontinuity with the ill-educated rural poor.¹⁷ (And the sort of education we are thinking of is not to make the rural poor capable of drafting NGO grant proposals!) This discontinuity, not skin color or national identity crudely understood, undergirds the question of who always rights and who is perennially wronged.¹⁸

¹⁷ I had not read Dewey when I began my work with the children of the rural poor. In order to write this piece I took a quick look, too quick, I fear. I am certainly with Dewey in his emphasis on intelligent habit formation and his contempt for rote learning. It must be said, however, that Dewey's work operates on the assumption that the educator is of the same "culture" and society/class as the person to be educated; my idea of cultural suturing, to be developed later in the essay, does not reside within those assumptions. Dewey has a holistic and unitary view of the inside of the child that I find difficult to accept. I am grateful to Benjamin Conisbee Baer for research assistance in my quick preliminary foray into Dewey.

¹⁸ I am so often asked to distinguish my position from Martha Nussbaum's that I feel compelled to write this note, somewhat unwillingly. In spite of her valiant efforts, Martha Nussbaum's work seems to me to remain on the metropolitan side of the undergirding discontinuity of which I speak in my text. Her informants, even when seemingly subaltern, are mediated for her by the domestic "below," the descendants of the colonial subject, the morally outraged top-drawer activist. Although she certainly wants to understand the situation of poor women, her real project is to advance the best possible theory for that undertaking, on the way to public interest intervention, by the international "above," who is represented by the "us" in the following typical sentence: "Understood at its best, the paternalism argument is not an argument against cross-cultural universals. For it is all about respect for the dignity of persons as choosers. This respect requires us to defend universally a wide range of liberties . . ." (Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: the Capabilities Approach* [WHD] [Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000], 59–60). It is not a coincidence that Nussbaum became aware of poor women by way of a stint at the educational wing of the UN (*Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* [PJ] [Boston: Beacon Press, 1995], xv–xvi and 123n 4). She went to India "to learn as much as [she] could about women's development projects" and worked through and cons of public interest litigation. (Her book ends with three legal case studies.) The "case"-s are exceptional subalterns prepared by SEWA—one of the most spectacular social experiments in the third world. I have mentioned elsewhere that this organization is the invariable example cited when microcredit

lenders are questioned about their lack of social involvement (Spivak, "Claiming Transformations: Travel Notes with Pictures," in S. Ahmed, J. Kilby, M. McNeil, and B. Skeggs, eds., *Transformations: Thinking through Feminism* [London: Routledge, 2000], 119–30). If Nussbaum's informants are urban radical leaders of the rural, her sources of inspiration— Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore— belong to national liberationist leadership from the progressive bourgeoisie. (She has an epigraph about women from Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (WHD 242), whose activist intervention in rural education I cite later in this essay. Vidyasagar's intervention on behalf of women engaged caste-Hindus, since widow remarriage was not unknown among the so-called tribals and lower castes. My great-great-grandfather Biharilal Bhaduri was an associate of Vidyasagar and arranged a second marriage for his daughter Barahini, widowed in childhood. The repercussions of this bold step have been felt in my family. The point I'm trying to make is that, whereas Vidyasagar's literacy activism, aware of the detail of rural education, applies to the subaltern classes even today, his feminist activism applied to the metropolitan middle class, to which I belong.) Nussbaum certainly believes in the "value" of "education" and "literacy," but these are contentless words for her. She also believes in the virtues of the literary imagination, but her idea of it is a sympathetic identification, a bringing of the other into the self (PJ 31, 34, 38), a guarantee that literature "makes us acknowledge the equal humanity of members of social classes other than our own." This is rather far from the dangerous self-renouncing "delusion," a risky othering of the self, that has to be toned down for the reader's benefit, which remains my Wordsworthian model (William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992], 751, 755). It is not without significance that her models are social-realist novels and Walt Whitman read as expository prose. Wordsworth's project was pedagogic—to change public taste (742–45). There is not a word about pedagogy in Nussbaum's text. Like many academic liberals she imagines that everyone feels the same complicated pleasures from a Dickens text. As a teacher of reading, my entire effort is to train students away from the sort of characterological plot summary approach that she uses. In the brief compass of a note I am obliged to refer the reader to my reading of Woolf in "Deconstruction and Cultural Studies: Arguments for a Deconstructive Cultural Studies," in Nicholas Royle, ed., *Deconstructions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 14–43, Jamaica Kincaid in "Thinking Cultural Questions in 'Pure' Literary Terms," in Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, Angela McRobbie, eds., *Without Guarantees: In Honor of Stuart Hall* (London: Verso, 2000), 335–57, and Maryse Condé in "The Staging of Time in Maryse Condé's Heremakhonon" (forthcoming in *Cultural Studies*) for accounts of such teaching. The only rhetorical reading Nussbaum performs is of Judge Posner's opinion on *Mary Carr v. GM* (PJ 104–11). (The piece in Royle will also give a sense of my activist reading of the *poiesis/istoria* argument in Aristotle.) I have remarked that, in the context of "Indian women," "education" is a contentless good for Nussbaum. In the context of her own world, the "moral education" offered by literature is simply there (PJ 84). For me the task of teaching in the two worlds is related but different; in each case interruptive, supplementary. In the disenfranchised world there is a call to suspend all the fine analytic machinery that gives Nussbaum the confidence to "claim that the standard of judgment constructed in [her] conception of 'poetic justice' passes . . . [the] tests" of Whitman's "general call for the poet-judge" (PJ 120) and so on. To attend to the

I have been suggesting, then, that “human rights culture” runs on unremitting Northern-ideological pressure, even when it is from the South; that there is a real epistemic discontinuity between the Southern human rights advocates and those whom they protect.¹⁹ As long as the claim to natural or

unleashing of the ethical gives no guarantee that it will produce a “good” result—just that it will bring in a relation, perhaps. As the literary Melville and the literary Faulkner knew, the relationship between the hunter and the prey steps into the relational domain we will call “ethical.” The dominant appropriation of the necessary and impossible aporia between the political and ethical into the convenience of a bridge named race-class-gender-sensitivity is what we must constantly keep at bay, even as we cross and recross. Although Nussbaum knows the limitations of behaviorism (WHD119–35), it is clear from her discussion of central capabilities and, especially, the value of religion—“something having to do with ideals and aspirations” (WHD 198)—that she knows *about* cultural difference but cannot imagine it. Her model of the human mind is wedded to the autonomous subject, a gift of the European Enlightenment broadly understood. The emotions are named. They are yoked to belief and thus led to reason. This trajectory produces Adam Smith’s idea of the “literary judge.” For better or for worse, my view of the mind is forever marked by the common sense plausibility of Freud’s “stricture” of repression—the mind feeling an unpleasure as pleasure to protect itself. Therefore my notion of political agency rests on a restricted and accountable model of the person that bears a discontinuous and fractured relationship with the subject. The most difficult part of the pedagogic effort outlined later in my essay may be precisely this: that in opening myself to be “othered” by the subaltern, it is this broader more mysterious arena of the subject that the self hopes to enter; and then, through the task of teaching, rehearse the aporia between subjectship and the more tractable field of agency. For us “politics” can never claim to “speak with a full and fully human voice” (PJ 72). Nussbaum’s work is thus premised on the asymmetry in your title. My modest efforts are a hands-on undertaking, with the subaltern, to undo this asymmetry, some day. Without this effortful task of “doing” in the mode of “to come,” rather than only “thinking” in the mode of “my way is the best,” there is indeed a scary superficial similarity (PJ 76, 86, 89–90) between the two of us, enough to mislead people. I admire her scholarship and her intelligence, but I can learn little from her. My teacher is the subaltern.

¹⁹ Anthony de Reuck comments on the discontinuity between subaltern and elite (using a “periphery/center” vocabulary) as “styles of perceptual incoherence . . . on the threshold of a cultural anthropology of philosophical controversy” and veers away from it: “That, as they say, is another story!” (de Reuck, “Culture in Conflict,” in Caws, *Causes of Quarrel*, 59–63). My essay lays out the practical politics of that other story, if you like. The superiority of Northern epistemes, however, remains an implicit presupposition. Jonathan Glover analyzes the possibility of the Nazi mindset in numbing detail and discusses Rwanda with no reference to a mental theater at all (Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink vary their definition of the domestic as “below” by considering freedom of expression only in the case of Eastern Europe and not in the cases of Kenya, Uganda, South

inalienable human rights—rights that all human beings possess because they are human by nature—was reactive to the historical alienation in “Europe” as such—the French ancient régime or the German Third Reich—the problem of relating “natural” to “civil” rights was on the agenda. In order to shift this layered discontinuity, however slightly, we must focus on the quality and end of education, at both ends; the Southern elite is often educated in Western or Western-style institutions. We must work at both ends—both in Said/ Rorty’s utopia and in the schools of the rural poor in the global South.

I will argue this by way of a historical and theoretical digression.

As long as the claim to natural or inalienable human rights—rights that all human beings possess because they are human by nature—was reactive to the historical alienation in “Europe” as such—the French ancient régime or the German Third Reich—the problem of relating “natural” to “civil” rights was on the agenda. Since its use by the Commission on Decolonization in the sixties, its thorough politicization in the nineties, when the nation-states of the South, and perhaps the nation-state form itself, needed to be broken in the face of the restructuring demands of globalization, and its final inclusion of the postcolonial subject in the form of the metropolitan diasporic, that particular problem—of relating “natural” to “civil” rights— was quietly forgotten. In other words, that the question of nature must be begged (assumed when it needs to be demonstrated), in order to use it historically, has been forgotten.²⁰

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Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, Philippines, Chile, and Guatemala. The luxury of an expressive or contaminable mind is implicitly not granted to the subaltern of the global South.

²⁰ This forgetfulness is the condition and effect of the simple value judgment that rights thinking is superior—“fitter.” Social psychology is now producing abundant retroactive “proof” that each separate “developing” culture is “collective” whereas “America” (synecdochically the United States) and “Europe” (synecdochically northwestern Europe and Scandinavia) is “individualistic.” This “collectivism” is a trivialization of the thinking of responsibility I shall discuss below. “Multiculturalism” (synecdochically “global” if we remember the important role of upward mobility among diasporics and the economically restructured New World) is now factored into this authoritative and scientific division, although all comparisons relating to actually “developing” countries is resolutely bilateral between one nation/state/culture and the Euro-U.S. The sampling techniques of such work is pathetic in their suggestive nudging of the informant groups to produce the required “evidence” (Susan M. Ervin-Tripp, John J.Gumperz, Dan I. Slobin, Jan Brukman, Keith Kernan, Claudia Mitchell, and Brian Stross, *A Field Manual for Cross-Cultural Study of the*

The urgency of the political calculus obliges Thomas Paine to reduce the shadow of this immense European debate—between justice and law, between natural and civil rights (*jura*), at least as old as classical antiquity—to a “difference.” The structural asymmetry of the difference—between mental theater and state structure—remains noticeable:

His natural rights are the foundation of all his civil rights. But in order to pursue this distinction with more precision, it will be necessary to mark the different qualities of natural and civil rights. ... Every civil right has for its foundation, some natural right

Acquisition of Communicative Competence, second draft—July 1967 [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967]; Geert H. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991]; Saburo Iwawaki, Yoshihisa Kashima, and Kwok Leung, eds., *Innovations in Cross-Cultural Psychology* [Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1992]; Gail McKoon and Roger Ratcliff, “The Minimalist Hypothesis: Directions for Research,” in Charles A. Weaver III, Suzanne Mannes, Charles Fletcher, eds., *Discourse Comprehension: Essays in Honor of Walter Kintsch* [Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1995], 97–116; Paul DiMaggio, “Culture and Cognition,” in *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 [1997]: 263–87; Huong Nguyen, Lawrence Messé, and Gary Stollak, “Toward a More Complex Understanding of Acculturation and Adjustment: Cultural Involvements and Psychosocial Functioning in Vietnamese Youth,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 30.1 [January 1999]: 5–31; Arie W. Kruglanski and Donna M. Webster, “Motivated Closing of the Mind: ‘Seizing’ and ‘Freezing,’” in E. Tory Higgins and Arie W. Kruglanski, eds., *Motivational Science: Social and Personality Perspectives* [Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2000], 354–75; Hong Ying-yi, Michael W. Morris, Chiu Chi-yue, and Veronica Benet-Martinez, “Multicultural Minds: A Dynamic Constructivist Approach to Culture and Cognition,” *American Psychologist* 55 [July 2000]: 709–20.) The sophistication of the vocabulary and the poverty of the conclusions rest on an uncritical idea of the human mind. We cannot ask social psychology to become qualitative cognitive psychology or philosophical ontology. Yet these sorts of academic subdisciplinary endeavor, especially when confidently offered up by female diasporics (my last terrifying encounter with this type of scholarship came from a young intelligent innocent confident power-dressed Hong Kong Chinese woman trained in California), directly or indirectly sustain the asymmetrical division between “Human Rights” and “Human Wrongs” that inform our title. The division that we are speaking of is a class division dissimulated as a cultural division in order to recode the unequal distribution of agency. In that context I am suggesting that the begging of the question of human nature/freedom, much discussed when the question of human rights was confined to Europe, has been withheld from a seemingly culturally divided terrain not only by dominant political theorizing and policymaking, but also by disciplinary tendencies. Alex Callinicos, whom no one would associate with deconstruction, places the nature/polity hesitation as the conflict at the very heart of the European Enlightenment, arguing its saliency for today on those grounds (Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 25, 26, 29, 31, 37, 67, 83, 178, 179).

pre-existing in the individual, but to the enjoyment of which his individual power is not, in all cases, sufficient.²¹

The context of the *second* Declaration brings us close to our present. To situate it historically within the thematic of the begged question at the origin, I refer the reader to Jacques Derrida's treatment of how Walter Benjamin attempts to contain this in his 1921 essay "Critique of Violence," dealing precisely with the relationship between natural and positive law and legitimate and illegitimate violence.²² Benjamin's consideration of the binary opposition between legitimate and illegitimate violence as it relates to the originary violence that establishes authority can be placed on the chain of displacements from Hobbes's consideration of the binary opposition between the state of nature and the law of nature, with the former split by what George Shelton sees as the difference between the fictive and its representation as the real.

I will mention Ernst Bloch's *Natural Law and Human Dignity* here to give a sense of a text at the other end of the Third Reich.²³ The sixties will witness the internationalization of Human Rights. The Benjamin/Bloch texts represent the European lineaments that brought forth the second Declaration.

²¹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man; Common Sense* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 38.

²² Derrida, "Force of Law," in David Gray Carlson, Drucilla Cornell, and Michel Rosenfeld, eds., *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–67. Benjamin's essay is included in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978), 277–300. Derrida shows how Benjamin attempts to solve the problem both on the "universal" register (the new state) and the "singular" register (his own signature). In terms of the text's relationship to the subsequent development of a full-fledged Nazism, Derrida offers an alternative reading. Most readings (including Derrida's) miss Benjamin's conviction that "the educative power" is a "form of appearance" (*Erscheinungsform*) of what Benjamin calls "divine power," because it breaks the crime/expiation chain that the law deals with. And yet the educative does not depend on miracles for its definition (Walter Benjamin, "The Critique of Violence," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), 297; I am reading *entsünden* as breaking with the unavoidable link between guilt and expiation—*Schuld* and *Sühne*—rather than as "expiate," as in the English text, a translation that renders Benjamin's argument absurd. I thank Andreas Huysen for corroborating my reading. The reader will see the connection between the guilt-and-shame of human rights enforcement, and our hope in the displacing power of education.

²³ Ernst Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, trans. Dennis J. Schmidt (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986); quotation from 263.

Bloch faces the problem of the “natural” by historicizing it. He gives an account of the ways in which the European tradition has finessed the begged question of nature. His heroes are the Stoics—especially Epicurus—and Marx. Marx contains the potential of setting free the question of nature as freedom: “A Marxism that was what it was supposed to be would be a radical penal theory, indeed the most radical and at the same time most amiable: It kills the social mother of injustice.” I cannot credit a “Marxism in its proper outlines.” But I can at least suggest that in these times, when an internationalized human rights has forgotten to acknowledge the begged question of nature, a nondisciplinary “philosopher” who has been taught the value of philosophy as an “art of living” in the Stoic style through the Nietzschean line of Foucault and Derrida, might want to point out that Zeno and Epicurus were, necessarily, what would today be called “colonial subjects,” and suggest that we may attempt to supplement a merely penal system by reinventing the social mother of injustice as worldwide class apartheid, and kill her, again and again, in the mode of “to come,” through the education of those who fell through colonial subject-formation.²⁴

I have not the expertise to summarize the long history of the European debate surrounding natural/civil rights. With some hesitation I would point at the separation/imbrication of nature and liberty in Machiavelli, at the necessary slippage in Hobbes between social contract as natural fiction and social contract

²⁴ Michel Foucault, “The Masked Philosopher,” in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977–1984*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Routledge, 1988), 323–30; Derrida, “My Chances/*Mes Chances*: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies,” in Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan, eds., *Taking Chances: Derrida, Psychoanalysis, and Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 1–32. For the Nietzschean moment, see Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997), 79–80. It is of course silly to call Zeno and Epicurus “colonial subjects,” or Aristotle—who never became an Athenian citizen—a “resident alien.” The point I am trying to make is that the removal of the Austro-Asiatic aboriginals from the Indo-European colonizing loop—the narrative behind Indian constitutional policy—was active when Epicurus the Athenian from Samos, hugging the coast of Turkey, whose parents emigrated from Athens as colonists, and Zeno the Phoenician from Syrian Cyprus—both places the object of constant imperial grab-shifts—came to Athens to be educated and subsequently to found their philosophies. As I will go on to elaborate, these Indian aboriginals are among the disenfranchised groups whose contemporary educational situation seems crucial to the general argument of this essay. I discuss the resultant process of atrophy and stagnation at greater length later in this essay.

as civil reality, at Hobbes's debate on liberty and necessity with Bishop Bramhill.²⁵ George Shelton distinguishes between a "hypothetical" and a "real" social contract in Hobbes, at a certain point calling the former a "useful fiction."²⁶ New interest in Hobbesian theology has disclosed a similar pattern in Hobbes's discussion of God as ground.²⁷ This is particularly interesting because Hobbes is so widely seen as the initiator of individualism. Hobbes himself places his discussions within debates in Roman law and I think we should respect this chain of displacements— rather than a linear intellectual history—that leads to the rupture of the first European Declaration of Human Rights.²⁸ I am arguing that

²⁵ Gregory Elliott puts together two distanced assertions by Louis Althusser to sharpen the latter's sense of Machiavelli's uncanny engagement with this problematic: "Machiavelli's 'endeavour to think the conditions of possibility of an impossible task, to think the unthinkable' induces 'a strange *vacillation* in the traditional philosophical status of [his] theoretical propositions: as if they were undermined by another instance than the one that produces them—the instance of political practice'" (Elliott, "Introduction," in Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliott [London: Verso, 1999], xviii). Althusser attempts to fix Machiavelli's place upon this chain of displacements (123–26). See also Adam D. Danel, *A Case for Freedom: Machiavellian Humanism* (New York: University Press of America, 1997). For the Hobbes-Bramhill debate, see Vere Chappell, ed., *Hobbes and Bramhill on Liberty and Necessity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). David Gauthier provides an interesting way of linking Hobbes and Paine (Gauthier, "Hobbes's Social Contract," in Rodgers and Ryan, *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, 126–27, 148).

²⁶ George Shelton, *Morality and Sovereignty*, 20, 86–87, 175. "Fiction" and "reality" are Shelton's words. By indicating the slippage Shelton makes room for a more radical position—that the fiction marks the begging of the question that produces the "real."

²⁷ Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes on Religion," in Tom Sorell, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 354–60; see also Arrigo Pacchi, "Hobbes and the Problem of God," in Rodgers and Ryan, *Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes*, 182–87. Balibar suggests a double Hobbes: one in whose writings the violence of original sin was always ready to burst forth; and another who saw law immanent in natural self-interest and competition (private communication); a version, perhaps, of the discontinuity about which I am speaking.

²⁸ In his reading of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* Derrida has indicated Rousseau's place on this chain (trans. Spivak [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976], 95–316). Locke's view of natural rights is another well-known concatenation on this chain (see John Locke, *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature*, trans. Diskin Clay [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990] for how Locke taught the issue; for a scholarly account, see A. John Simmons, *The Lockean Theory of Rights* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992]). Balibar suggests that, by "privatizing nature on the one hand [as] he is also socializing it," Locke is able to reconcile natural

such speculative lines are not allowed to flourish within today's global human rights activities where a crude notion of cultural difference is about as far as grounds talk will go.

Academic research may contest this trend by tracking rational critique and/or individualism within non-European high cultures.²⁹ This is valuable work. But the usually silent victims of pervasive rather than singular and spectacular human rights violations are generally the rural poor. These academic efforts do not touch their general cultures, unless it is through broad generalizations, positive and negative. Accessing those long-delegitimized epistemes requires a different engagement. The pedagogic effort that may bring about lasting epistemic change in the oppressed is never accurate, and must be forever renewed. Otherwise there does not seem much point in considering the Humanities worth teaching. And, as I have already signaled, the red thread of a defense of the Humanities as an attempt at uncoercive rearrangement of desires runs through this essay.

Attempts at such pedagogic change need not necessarily involve confronting the task of undoing the legacy of a specifically *colonial* education. Other political upheavals have also divided the postcolonial or global polity into an effective class apartheid. (I expand my argument beyond postcoloniality in the narrow sense because of what I hope is the beginning of a long-term involvement with grassroots rural education in China.) All that seems possible to surmise is that the

society and artificial community (“Possessive Individualism’ Reversed: From Locke to Derrida,” forthcoming in *Constellations*). For a contemporary discussion of the chain from at least Roman law, Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) remains indispensable. This is of course a layperson’s checklist, not a specialist bibliography.

²⁹ I have no expertise in this area and write this note to provoke those who do. I am thinking of Bimal Krishna Matilal’s attempts to connect with Oxford ordinary language philosophy when he was Spalding Professor there, his unpublished work on rational critique in the Indic tradition. I am thinking of Ayesha Jalal’s work in progress on Iqbal. When one invokes Kautilya or the *A’in-I-Akbari*, or yet engages in sinocentric World Systems theory—as in the current different-yet-related work of André Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Giovanni Arrighi—one is either in the area of comparative specialisms or identitarian cultural conservatisms. These are the risks run by Walter Mignolo and Agustin Lao-Montes as well as by Gordon Brotherston in Americas studies, Paul Gilroy and Martin Bernal in Africana. I compose this inexpert note so that my practical-political concerns are not silenced by mere erudition.

redressing work of Human Rights must be supplemented by an education that can continue to make unstable the presupposition that the reasonable righting of wrongs is inevitably the manifest destiny of groups—unevenly class-divided, embracing North and South—that remain poised to right them; and that, among the receiving groups, wrongs will inevitably proliferate with unsurprising regularity. Consequently, the groups that are the dispensers of human rights must realize that, just as the natural Rights of Man were contingent upon the historical French Revolution, and the Universal Declaration upon the historical events that led to the Second World War, so also is the current emergence, of the human rights model as the global dominant, contingent upon the turbulence in the wake of the dissolution of imperial formations and global economic restructuring. The task of making visible the begged question grounding the political manipulation of a civil society forged on globally defined natural rights is just as urgent; and not simply by way of *cultural* relativism.

In disciplinary philosophy, discussion of the begged question at the origin of natural rights is not altogether absent. Alan Gewirth chooses the Rational Golden Rule as his PGC (principle of generic consistency), starting his project in the following way: “The Golden Rule is the common moral denominator of all the world’s major religions.”³⁰ From a historical point of view, one is obliged to say that none of the great religions of the world can lead to an end to violence today.³¹ Where Gewirth, whom nobody would associate with deconstruction, is important for our argument, is in his awareness of the grounding of the justification for Human Rights in a begged question.³² He takes it as a “contradiction” to solve and finds in the transposition of “rational” for “moral” his solution.³³ “The traditional Golden Rule [Do unto others as you would have them do unto you] leaves open the question of why any person ought to act in accordance with it.”³⁴ This is the

³⁰ Alan Gewirth, *Human Rights: Essays on Justification and Applications* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 128.

³¹ I have argued this in *Imperatives to Reimagine the Planet* (Vienna: Passagen, 1999).

³² Gewirth, *Human Rights*, 45.

³³ *Ibid.*, 132–33, 141.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 140. What does the Golden Rule have to do with what I was saying in the preceding paragraph? For Gewirth, “Human rights are . . . moral rights which all persons equally have simply because they are human” (1). For him the Golden Rule is a “common moral denominator”

begging of the question, because the moral cannot not be normative. According to Gewirth, a commonsensical problem can be theoretically avoided because “it is not the contingent desires of agents but rather aspects of agency which cannot rationally be avoided or evaded by any agent that determine the content of the Rational Golden Rule [because it] ... focuses on what the agent necessarily wants or values insofar as he is rational.” It would seem to us that this begs the question of the reasonable nature of reason (accounting for the principle of reason by the principle of reason).³⁵ We would rather not construct the Best possible theory, but acknowledge that practice always splits open the theoretical justification. In fact, Gewirth knows this. Toward the end of the essay, this curious sentence is left hanging: “*Materially*, [the] *selfcontradiction* [that to deny or violate the Rational Golden Rule is to contradict oneself] is *inescapable* because...the Rational Golden Rule [is] derived from the necessities of purposive agency” (emphasis mine). If we acknowledge the part outside of reason in the human mind then we may see the limits of reason as “white mythology” and see the contradiction as the necessary relationship between two discontinuous begged questions as I have just suggested: proof that we are born free and proof that it is the other that calls us before will. Then the question: Why must we follow the Golden Rule (the basis of human rights) finds an answer: because the other calls us. But it is never a fitting answer, it is not continuous with the question. Let us then call this a relationship, a discontinuous supplementary relationship, not a solution. Instead, Gewirth is obliged to recode the white mythology of reason as an unavoidable last instance, as an “*inherent* capab[ility] of exercising [human rights].”³⁶ If one enters into a

(128).Hence it is a grounding question. In the preceding paragraph I was suggesting that European political theory has stopped considering the relationship between grounding “natural” questions and the establishment of civil polities. I am now suggesting that Gewirth is a philosopher who does worry about it, making the usual disciplinary arrangements. In my estimation, Rawls’s separation of political and philosophical liberalism is a way of getting around the necessity for confronting the problem.

³⁵ Derrida has discussed this with reference to Leibnitz in his “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils,” *Diacritics* 13.3 (Fall 1983): 7–10.

³⁶ Gewirth, *Human Rights*, 8; emphasis mine. Reason as “white mythology” is the informing argument of Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–271. Ronald Dworkin describes the undecidable moment: “the right to concern and respect is fundamental among rights in a different way, because it shows how the idea of a collective goal may itself be

sustained give-and-take with subordinate cultures attempting to address structural questions of power as well as textural questions of responsibility, one feels more and more that a Gewirth-style recoding may be something like a historical incapacity to grasp that to rationalize the question of ethics *fully* (please note that this does not mean banishing reason from ethics altogether, just giving it an honorable and instrumental place) is to transgress the intuition that ethics are a problem of relation before they are a task of knowledge. This does not gainsay the fact that, in the juridico-legal manipulation of the abstractions of contemporary politics by those who right wrongs, where a reasoned calculus is instrumentally necessary, nothing can be more welcome than Gewirth's rational justification. What we are describing is a simplified version of the aporia between ethics and politics. An aporia is disclosed only in its one-way crossing. This essay attempts to make the reader recognize that human rights is such an interested crossing, a containment of the aporia in binary oppositions.³⁷

A few words, then, about supplementing metropolitan education before I elaborate on the pedagogy of the subaltern. By *subaltern* I mean those removed from lines of social mobility.³⁸

derived from that fundamental right. If so, then concern and respect is a right so fundamental that it is not captured by the general characterization of rights as trumps over collective goals, except as a limiting case, because it is the source both of the general authority of collective goals and of the special limitations on their authority that justify more particular rights. That promise of unity in political theory is indistinct in these essays, however. It must be defended, if at all, elsewhere" (Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978], xv). I believe this indistinctness is generic and the "elsewhere, if at all," is an irreducible alibi. Later in the collection, Dworkin is able to dismiss the discontinuity between "natural rights" and the "best political program" because he is building an argument, not worrying about the justification for the foundation of states (176–77). To take his statement here as a final solution to the entire problem is to "confuse the force of his [argument] for its range," a confusion he attributes to Gertrude Himmelfarb's reading of John Stuart Mill's *Of Liberty* (261). Where I find Ronald Dworkin altogether inspiring is in his insistence on principle rather than policy in hard cases. The range of this insistence has an elasticity that can accommodate the force of my plea to the dominant.

³⁷ I use *aporia* to name a situation where there are two right ways that cancel each other and that we, by being agents, have already marked in one way, with a decision that makes us rather than we it. There are other, more philosophically complex ways of formalizing aporia.

³⁸ For a more extensive definition, see Spivak, *A Critique*, 269–74.

I will continue to insist that the problem with U.S. education is that it teaches (corporatist) benevolence while trivializing the teaching of the Humanities.³⁹ The result is, at best, cultural relativism as cultural absolutism (“American-style education will do the trick”). Its undoing is best produced by way of the training of reflexes that kick in at the time of urgency, of decision and policy. However unrealistic it may seem to you, I would not remain a teacher of the Humanities if I did not believe that at the New York end—standing metonymically for the dispensing end as such—the teacher can try to rearrange desires noncoercively—as I mentioned earlier—through an attempt to develop in the student a habit of literary reading, even just “reading,” suspending oneself into the text of the other—for which the first condition and effect is a suspension of the conviction that I am necessarily better, I am necessarily indispensable, I am necessarily the one to right wrongs, I am necessarily the end product for which history happened, and that New York is necessarily the capital of the world. It is not a loss of will, especially since it is supplemented in its turn by the political calculus, where, as Said’s, Rorty’s, and Premier Lee’s argument emphasizes, the possibility of being a “helper” abounds in today’s triumphalist U.S. society. A training in literary reading is a training to learn from the singular and the unverifiable. Although literature cannot speak, this species of patient reading, miming an effort to make the text respond, as it were, is a training not only in

³⁹ In the fifties, C. Wright Mills wrote his famous *Sociological Imagination* to suggest that Sociology was the discipline of disciplines for the times. He claimed imagination totally for reason. The sociological imagination was a “quality of mind that will help [us] to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves” (C. Wright Mills, *Sociological Imagination* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1959], 5). Within a hitherto humanistic culture, reason and imagination, analysis and synthesis, are ranked. That is how Shelley’s *Defence of Poetry* starts, giving to imagination the primary place. Mills is writing a defence of sociology, which he thinks will reconcile the inner life and external career of contemporary man. Nussbaum feminizes this model. For the Humanities, the relationship between the two had been a site of conflict, a source of grounding paradoxes. Mills cannot find any comfort in such pursuits, because, in the fifties, the quality of education in the Humanities had become too ingrown, too formalist, too scientific. It no longer nurtured the imagination, that inbuilt instrument of othering. Therefore Mills wrote, revealingly, “It does not matter whether [the most important] qualities [of mind] are to be found [in literature]; what matters is that men do not often find them there” (17), because, of course, they are no longer taught to read the world closely as they read closely.

poiesis, accessing the other so well that probable action can be prefigured, but teleo-poiesis, striving for a response from the distant other, without guarantees.

I have no moral position against grading, or writing recommendation letters. But if you are attempting to train in specifically literary reading, the results are not directly ascertainable by the teaching subject, and perhaps not the taught subject either. In my experience, the “proof” comes in unexpected ways, from the other side. But the absence of such proof does not necessarily “mean” nothing has been learned. This is why I say “no guarantees.”⁴⁰ And that is also why the work of an epistemic undoing of cultural relativism as cultural absolutism can only work as a supplement to the more institutional practice, filling a responsibility shaped gap but also adding something discontinuous. As far as human rights goes, this is the only prior and patient training that can leaven the quick-fix training institutes that prepare international civil society workers, including human rights advocates, with uncomplicated standards for success.⁴¹ This is not a suggestion that all

⁴⁰ “The ability to make fine-grained predictions indicates that the task is unlikely to be error tolerant” (Kitcher, *Science*, 23–24). The effort I am speaking of must be error-tolerant, in teacher, trainer, trained, and taught, since we are speaking of cultural shift, and thus a shift in the definition of error.

⁴¹ Think, for example, of the constructive undermining of triumphalist, “we must help because we are better” sentiments to the awareness at least that, to help undo the difference between “us helping” and “them being helped,” if the excellent teaching tool “The Rohde to Srebrenica: A Case Study of Human Rights Reporting,” which “documents U.S. reporter David Rohde’s journey through Bosnia” (www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/nelson/rohde) were supplemented in the following way: in the long run, a literary-level entry into the nuance differences between Muslim and Serb Bosnian, and their relationship to the subaltern language Romani (which can also be accessed with deep focus), in order to tease out the compromised and disenfranchised elements of the local cultures before the most recent disasters, in their “normality,” atrophied by waves of imperialisms. Suffice it to notice that the difference between the existing teaching tool and its imagined supplementation is the difference between urgent decisions and long-term commitment. I refer the reader to the difference between “doctors without frontiers” and primary healthcare workers with which I began. The analogy: short-term commitment to righting wrongs versus long-term involvement to learn from below the persistent undoing of the reproduction of class apartheid and its attendant evils.

The reason for avoiding this is its inconvenience, not a good reason when the goal is to establish the inalienable rights of all beings born human. For one case of the subalternization of the Romany, see Spivak, *A Critique*, 406–9.

human rights workers should have institutional Humanities training. As it stands, Humanities teaching in the United States is what I am describing only in the very rare instance. And the mode is “to come.”

It is in the interest of supplementing metropolitan Humanities pedagogy, rather than from the perspective of some fantasmatic cultural difference, that we can say that the “developed postcapitalist structure” of today’s world must “be filled with the more robust imperative to responsibility that capitalist social productivity was obliged to destroy. We must learn to redefine that lost imperative as defective for the emergence of capitalism, rather than necessarily precapitalist on an interested sequential evolutionary model.”⁴² In the simplest terms, being defined by the call of the other—which may be a defining feature of such societies—is not conducive to the extraction and appropriation of surplus. Making room for *otium* and living in the rhythm of the eco-biome does not lead to exploration and conquest of nature. And so on. The method of a specifically literary training, a slow mind-changing process, can be used to open the imagination to such mindsets.⁴³

One of the reasons international communism failed was because Marx, an organic intellectual of the industrial revolution, could only think the claiming of rights to freedom from exploitation by way of the public use of reason recommended by the European Enlightenment. The ethical part, to want to exercise the freedom to redistribute, after the revolution, comes by way of the sort

⁴² Spivak, *Imperatives*, 68. Marshall Sahlins lays out the general characteristics of these defects in his *Stone Age Economics* (New York: de Gruyter, 1972). Sahlins also points at the obvious absence of a “public sphere” in such social formations. I am grateful to Henry Staten for bringing this book to my attention.

⁴³ As I will mention later in connection with Anthony Giddens’s *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), I am not extolling the virtues of poverty, not even the Christian virtues of poverty, as does Sahlins by association (*Stone Age*, 32–33). I am only interested in bringing those virtues above, and concurrently instilling the principles of a public sphere below; teaching at both ends of the spectrum. For, from the point of view of the asymmetry of what I am calling class apartheid in the global South, a responsibility-based disenfranchised stagnating culture left to itself can only be described, in its current status within the modern nationstate, as “a reversal of ‘possessive individualism’,” the tragedy “of ‘negative’ individuality or individualism” (Etienne Balibar, “‘Possessive Individualism’ Revisited: [An Issue in Philosophical Individualism],” unpublished manuscript).

of education I am speaking of. This intuition was not historically unavailable to Marx: “Circumstances are changed by men and...the educator himself must be educated.”⁴⁴ In the event, the pedagogic impulse was confined to the lesson of capital, to change the victim into an agent. The intuition that the lesson was historically determined was of course not unavailable to Marx either.⁴⁵ My position is thus not against class struggle, but yet another attempt to broaden it, to include the “ground condition” (*Grundbedingung*) of the continued reproduction of class apartheid in ancient and/or disenfranchised societies in modernity. If the industrial proletariat of Victorian England were expanded to include the global subaltern, there is no hope that such an agent could ever “dictate” anything through the structures of parliamentary democracy—I admit I cannot give this up—if this persistent pedagogic effort is not sustained.

(I am more than ever convinced of the need to resuscitate the lost cultural imperative to responsibility after the initial trip, mentioned earlier in this essay, to the lowest-level rural schools in a mountain province in China, in the company of a wonderfully enthusiastic young English teacher at the University of Science and Technology in the provincial urban center. He had never visited such schools, never thought of the possibility of restoring a failed Communism with a persistent effort to teach oneself how to access older cultural habits in practice in order to suture in, in rural education, the ethical impulse that can make social justice flourish, forever in the mode of “to come,” because forever dependent upon the qualitative education of the young.⁴⁶ Yet he has already been used by the U.S.

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⁴⁴ Marx, “Concerning Feuerbach,” in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Vintage, 1975), 422; translation modified.

⁴⁵ Marx, “The Trinity Formula,” in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 3, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage, 1981), 953–70.

⁴⁶ I will be developing this concept-metaphor of suturing as a description of practice. To situate this within Marxist thought, see Callinicos’s gloss on Marx’s discussion of religion: “Religious illusions ... will survive any purely intellectual refutation so long as the social conditions which produced them continue to exist” (Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 83–84). I would not, of course, accept the illusion/truth binary and would therefore activate and undoreweave from within the imaginative resources of the earlier cultural formation—often called “religious”—in order for any from-above change in social condition to last. This undo-reweave is “suture,” the model of pedagogy “below.” What must be kept in mind is that the same applies to consciousness-raising style radical teaching “above.” The problem with “religious fundamentalism,” the politicizing of

industry in “China’s ethnic minority education” scholarship, as a “grass-roots native informant,” sent into “the field” with a questionnaire for ten days’ research! A perfect candidate for the domestic “below,” for whom the “evils” of communism seem to be open for correction only through the absolutist arrogance of U.S. utopianism, coded as an interest in cultural difference.)

A desire to redistribute is not the unproblematic consequence of a well-fed society. In order to get that desire moving by the cultural imperative of education, you have to fix the possibility of putting not just *wrong* over against *right*, with all the genealogical lines compressed within it, but also to suggest that another antonym of *right* is *responsibility*, and further, that the possibility of such responsibility is underived from rights.

I will now describe a small and humble experiment that I have tried over the last ten years nearly every day at the Columbia University gym and, unhappily, the rate of experimental verification is 100 percent.

There is an approximately six-foot-by-four-foot windowless anteroom as you enter the locker area. This useless space, presumably to protect female modesty, is brightly lit. There is a light switch by the door from the main gym into the anteroom, and another by the door leading into the lockers. In other words, it is possible to turn the light off as you exit this small, enclosed space. You can choose not to let it burn so brightly twenty-four hours for no one. Remember these are university folks, generally politically correct, interested in health, a special control group, who talk a good game about environmental responsibility. (I am drawing the example from within the cultural idiom of the group, as always.) I turn off the light in this windowless cube whenever I enter the locker and my sciatica keeps me going to the gym pretty regularly. In the last nine years, I have never reentered this little space and found the light off. Please draw your own conclusions.

The responsibility I speak of, then, is not necessarily the one that comes from the consciousness of superiority lodged in the self (today’s quote of the month at the gym is, characteristically, “The price of greatness is

elite religions, is not that they are religions, but that they are elite in leadership. See also Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 00.

responsibility”—Winston Churchill), but one that is, to begin with, sensed before sense as a call of the other.⁴⁷

Varieties of the Churchillian sense of “responsibility,” nearly synonymous with duty, have always also been used from within the Rights camp, of course. Machiavelli and Hobbes both wrote on duty. The 1793 version of the Declaration of the Rights of Man already contained a section on the duties of man and of the citizen. The UN issued a Declaration of Responsibilities— little more than a reinscription of the rights as duties for their establishment—in 1997. There is a scientists’ Declaration of Duties. And so on. This is the trajectory of the idea of “responsibility” as assumed, by choice, by the group that can right wrongs. I think Amnesty International is correct in saying that the UN Declaration of Responsibilities is “no complement to human rights,” and that “*to restate ... rights from the UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] as responsibilities* the draft declaration introduces vague and ill-defined notions which can only create confusion and uncertainty.”⁴⁸ Thus even a liberal vision is obliged to admit that there is no continuous line from rights to responsibilities. This notion of responsibility as the “duty of the fitter self” toward less fortunate others (rather than the predication of being-human as being called by the other, before will) is not my meaning, of course. I remain concerned, however, by one of its corollaries in global social movements. The leaders from the domestic “below”—for the subaltern an “above”—not realizing the historically established discontinuity between themselves and the subaltern, counsel self-help with great supervisory benevolence. This is important to remember because the subalterns’ obvious

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⁴⁷ Interestingly enough, this very passage was used in a speech entitled “Responsibility: The Price of Greatness” by Anthony F. Earley Jr., Detroit Edison Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, at a conference on Business Ethics, Integrity and Values: A Global Perspective, on March 23, 1999. Churchill’s own speech, made at Harvard on Monday September 6, 1943, was precisely about the United States as the savior of the world: “One cannot rise to be in many ways the leading community in the civilised world without being involved in its problems, without being convulsed by its agonies and inspired by its causes.” I am grateful to Lecia Rosenthal for bringing these connections to my attention. The point of my humble experiment is that the textual imperatives of such responsibility, acknowledged in the national political and corporate sphere, the internalized reflex “to save the environment,” for example, do not follow automatically.

⁴⁸ “Muddying the Waters,” available online at www.amnesty.it/ailib/aipub/1998/IOR/14000298.htm; emphasis mine.

inability to do so without sustained supervision is seen as proof of the need for continued intervention. It is necessary to be involved in the everyday working (the “textuality”) of global social movements to recognize that the seeming production of “declarations” from these supervised groups is written to dictation and no strike against class apartheid. “To claim rights is your duty” is the banal lesson that the above—whether Northern or Southern—then imparts to the below. The organization of international conferences with exceptionalist tokenization to represent collective subaltern will is a last-ditch solution, for both sides, if at all. And, sometimes, as in the case of my friend in Yunan, the unwitting native informant is rather far from the subaltern.

Within the rights camp, the history of something like responsibility-based cultural systems is generally given as part of the progress toward the development of a rights-based system in the type case of the European self.”⁴⁹

The Judaic articulation of responsibility, after the very war that produced the Universal Declaration, is set forth by Emmanuel Levinas.⁵⁰ Derrida has attempted to unmoor this from unquestioning support for the state of Israel by proposing a messianicity without messianism, although he acknowledges that he is caught in the traces of his own peculiar cultural production in stating responsibility just this way.⁵¹ This history and its institutional discussions remain confined to the elite academy. If there is no direct line from rights to responsibility, there is certainly no direct possibility of supplementing the below from this discussion.⁵²

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the contradiction between individualism (rights) and communality (obligations) when they are seen in a linear way, see Tuck, *Natural Rights*, 82.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969 [first French edition 1961]), 255–66.

⁵¹ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 70–72.

⁵² Indeed, that sentiment is implicit in the very last line of Spivak, *A Critique*: “The scholarship on Derrida’s ethical turn ..., when in the rare case it risks setting itself to work by breaking its frame, is still not identical with the setting to work of deconstruction outside the formalizing calculus specific to the academic institution” (431). It must, however, be said, that in European from-above discussions, it is the so-called poststructuralists who are insistent not only on questioning a blind faith in the rational abstractions of democracy, but also in recognizing that top-down human rights enforcement is not “democratic” even by these terms. See, for example, the strong objections

It can seem at first glance that if the Euro-U.S. mindset modifies itself by way of what used to be called, just yesterday, Third Way politics, providing a cover for social democracy's rightward swing, perhaps the dispensers of human rights would at least modify their arrogance. As George W. Bush claims Tony Blair as his chum on Bush's visit to Britain in July 2001, I believe it is still worth examining this impulse, however briefly, so that it is not offered as a panacea. Let us look at a few crucial suggestions from *Beyond Left and Right* by Anthony Giddens, the academic spokesperson of the Third Way.⁵³

Giddens mentions the virtues of third world poverty and therefore may seem at first glance to be recommending learning from the subaltern. Criticizing the welfare state, he quotes Charles Murray with approval: "Murray, whose work has been influenced by experiences in rural Thailand, asks the question, what's wrong with being poor (once people are above the level of subsistence poverty)? Why should there be such a general concern to combat poverty?" I hope it is clear that I have no interest in keeping the subaltern poor. To repeat, it is in view of Marx's hope to transform the subaltern—whom he understood only as the worker in his conjuncture—into an agent of the undoing of class apartheid rather than its victim that this effort at educating the educator is undertaken.

Here are some of Giddens's "practical" suggestions: "A post-scarcity system is...a system in which productivism no longer rules", a "new ethics of

raised by Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida after Claude Lefort's claim that "[a] politics of human rights and a democratic politics are thus two ways of responding to the same need" (Claude Lefort, "Politics of Human Rights," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, trans. Alan Sheridan [Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986], 272. The discussion is to be found in "La question de la démocratie," in Denis Kambouchner, ed., *Le Retrait du politique* [Paris: Galilée, 1983], 71–88). I have recently read Derrida, "Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German," where Derrida traces the genealogy of the Euro-U.S. subject who dispenses human rights, with uncanny clarity (in *Acts of Religion*, trans. Gil Anidjar [New York: Routledge, 2002], 135–88).

⁵³ Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*; quotations from 165, 247, 184, 185, 190, 194. "Third Way" was, I believe, coined in a Fabian Society pamphlet (Tony Blair, *New Politics for the New Century* [London: College Hill Press, 1998]) confined to policies of a European Britain. I am grateful to Susan M. Brook for getting me this pamphlet. It was used by Bill Clinton in a round-table discussion sponsored by the Democratic Leadership Council in Washington, D.C., on April 25, 1999.

individual and collective responsibility need to be formed,” “traditions should be understood in a nontraditional manner,” a “pact between the sexes [is]...to be achieved, within the industrialized societies and on a more global level”—that hesitation between the two levels is kin to the asymmetry I am discussing in this essay and the invasive gender work of the international civil society—and, best of all, “a new pact between the affluent and the poor” is now needed. How is Professor Giddens going to persuade global finance and world trade to jettison the culture of economic growth? The question applies to all the passages I have quoted and more. He is, of course, speaking of state policy in Europe, but his book tries to go beyond into other spaces: “The question remains whether a lifestyle pact as suggested here for the wealthy countries could also work when applied to the divisions between North and South. Empirically, one certainly could not answer this question positively with any degree of assurance. Analytically speaking, however, one could ask, what other possibility is there?”⁵⁴

However utopian it might seem, it now appears to me that the only way to make these sweeping changes—there is nothing inherently wrong with them, and, of course, I give Professor Giddens the benefit of the doubt—is for those who teach in the Humanities to take seriously the necessary but impossible task to construct a collectivity among the dispensers of bounty as well as the victims of oppression.⁵⁵ Learning from the subaltern is, paradoxically, through teaching. In practical terms, working across the class-culture difference (which tends to refract efforts), trying to learn from children, and from the behavior of class-“inferiors,” the teacher learns to recognize, not just a benevolently coerced assent, but also an unexpected response. For such an education speed, quantity of information, and number of students reached are not exclusive virtues. Those “virtues” are inefficient for education in the responsibilities in the Humanities, not so much a sense of being responsible *for*, but of being responsible *to*, before will.

⁵⁴ Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 197.

⁵⁵ I have discussed the role of teaching in the formation of collectivities in “Schmitt and Post Structuralism: A Response,” *Cardozo Law Review* 21.5–6 (May 2000): 1723–37. Necessary but impossible tasks—like taking care of health although it is impossible to be immortal; or continuing to listen, read, write, talk, and teach although it is impossible that everything be communicated—lead to renewed and persistent effort. I use this formula because this is the only justification for Humanities pedagogy. This is distinct from the “utopian mode,” which allows us to figure the impossible.

Institutionally, the Humanities, like all disciplines, must be subject to a calculus. It is how we earn our living. But where “living” has a larger meaning, the Humanities are without guarantees.

Speaking with reference to the Rights of Man and the Universal Declaration, I am insisting that in the European context, it used to be recognized that the question of nature as the ground of rights must be begged in order to use it historically. The assumption that it is natural to be angled toward the other, before will, the question of responsibility in subordinate cultures, is also a begged question. Neither can survive without the other, if it is a just world that we seem to be obliged to want. Indeed, any interest in human rights for others, in human rights and human wrongs, would do better if grounded in this second begged question, to redress historical balance, as it were, than in the apparent forgetting of the other one. In the beginning are two begged questions.

Surely the thought of two begged questions at the origin is no more abstract than John Rawls’ interminable suppositions which, when confronted with the necessity of doing something, comes up with such platitudes as

there will also be principles for forming and regulating federations (associations) of peoples, and standards of fairness for trade and other cooperative arrangements. There should be certain provisions for mutual assistance between peoples in times of famine and drought, and were it feasible, as it should be, provisions for ensuring that in all reasonably developed liberal societies people’s basic needs are met.⁵⁶

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In the “real world,” there is, in general, a tremendously uneven contradiction between those who beg the question of nature as rights for the self and those who beg the question of responsibility as being called by the other, before will.

If we mean to place the latter—perennial victims—on the way to the social productivity of capital—as an old-fashioned Marxist I distinguish between *capital* and *capitalism* and do not say these words ironically—we need to acknowledge

⁵⁶ John Rawls, “The Law of Peoples,” in Shute and Hurley, *On Human Rights*, 56. I have a pervasive objection to Rawls’s discipline-bound philosophical style of treating political problems but felt nervous about stating it. I feel some relief in George Shelton, *Morality and Sovereignty*, 171, where the author expresses similar objections. Callinicos describes such Rawlsian requirements as “wildly Utopian,” offers an excuse, and then goes on to say “nevertheless, some account is required of the relationship between abstract norms and the historical conditions of their realization” (*Social Theory*, 313–14).

the need for supplementation there as well, rather than transform them willy-nilly, consolidating already existing hierarchies, exporting gender struggle, by way of the greed for economic growth. (I have argued earlier in this essay that these cultures started stagnating because their cultural axiomatics were defective for capitalism. I have also argued that the socialist project can receive its ethical push not from within itself but by supplementation from such axiomatics. I have argued that in their current decrepitude the subaltern cultures need to be known in such a way that we can suture their reactivated cultural axiomatics into the principles of the Enlightenment. I have argued that socialism belongs to those axiomatics. That socialism turns capital formation into redistribution is a truism.⁵⁷ It is by this logic that supplementation into the Enlightenment is as much the possibility of being the agent of the social productivity of capital as it is of the subjectship of human rights.

The general culture of Euro-U.S. capitalism in globalization and economic restructuring has conspicuously destroyed the possibility of capital being redistributive and socially productive in a broad-based way. As I have mentioned here, “the burden of the fittest”—a reterritorializing of “the white man’s burden”—does also touch the economic sphere. I hope I will be forgiven a brief digression into that sphere as well. I have prepared for this by describing the nineties as a time “of the re-structuring demands of globalization.” The reader is urged to concentrate on the lack of intellectual connection between the people at work in the different spheres. I cannot be more than telegraphic here, but it would be a mistake to leave untouched the great economic circuits that often remotely determine the shots in the human rights sphere. I remain among the unabashed walking wounded generalist aspirants from the sixties. Elsewhere, I have called this “transnational literacy.”

As an introduction to this brief foray into the economic sphere, let us consider philosophers connecting Hobbes with global governance, an issue that bears on the administration of human rights in an economically restructured poststate world.⁵⁸ The question they have asked, if the “stronger nations might reasonably believe their prospects to be better if they remain in the international

⁵⁷ Marx, *Capital* 3:1015–16 puts it in a paragraph, in the mode of “to come.”

⁵⁸ I gave an account of this so-called poststate world in *A Critique*, 371–94.

state of nature, rather than accepting some international (but nonabsolute) equivalent of Hobbes's civil sovereign...despite the fact that in supporting it they run the risk, along with the weaker nations, of creating a monster that may well attempt to devour them," has no bearing on the institutive difference at the origin of the state of nature.⁵⁹

The quotation above is from the early eighties, when the floodgates of the current phase of globalization—the financialization of the globe with the decentered centralization of world trade attendant upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which in turn allowed a fuller flow for Information Technology—had not yet been opened. Yet the process had already begun, through the newly electrified stock exchanges combining with what was then called post-Fordism, enabled by computer technology and the fax machine. And Euro-U.S. thinkers, connecting Hobbes with human rights, were certainly ignoring the question of the relationship between “natural” and “civil.”

The relatively autonomous *economic* sphere of operations, worked by agents with competence restricted to this area, is explained for the *cultural* sector by other kinds of academic agents, restricted to the political sphere, in terms of a global governance story that started at the beginning of the postcolonial era at Bretton Woods. The culturalists then weigh in by endlessly pointing out that world markets are old hat. This then feeds back into the cultural difference story or the hip global public culture story.⁶⁰ Other disciplinary areas involved in this are Social Psychology and Management. The former gives us the multiculturalist cultural difference stereotypes that undergird human rights policy when it wishes to protect a “community without individualism” against a rogue state. Cultural Distance Studies in Management relate directly to the economic sphere and global finance, plotting the “joint ventures” opened up by neoliberal economic restructuring.⁶¹ There is a compendious literature on how such ventures

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⁵⁹ Daniel M. Farrell, “Hobbes and International Relations,” in Caws, *Causes of Quarrel*, 77.

⁶⁰ For an idea of the best in the Cultural Studies account of globalization, see Public Culture 12.1 (Winter 2000).

⁶¹ I cite below the Kogut and Singh Index for Cultural Distance (1988), an important tool for management. It will give a sense of the distance between those whose wrongs are righted and the agents of corporate philanthropy, closely linked to human rights expenditure: “We hypothesize that the more culturally distant the country of the investing firm from the United States, the more

undermine the state and move toward the poststate world, which becomes the object of global governance. The rogue state is disciplined by fear and pressure—the stick—with the promise of economic partnership—the carrot. My principal argument continues to be that a combination of fear and pressure, today supported by these powerful paradisciplinary formations proliferating crude theories of cultural difference, cannot bring about either lasting or real epistemic change although, accompanied by public interest litigation, they may be effective short-term weapons.

Meanwhile, the seriousness of training into the general culture is reflected by the fact that Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, Merrill Lynch, and other big investment companies are accessing preschoolers; children are training parents to manage portfolios. There is a growing library of books making it “fun” for kids to invest and giving them detailed instructions how to do so. The unquestioned assumption that to be rich is to be happy and good is developed by way of many “educational” excuses.

Children are never too young to start grasping the fundamentals of money management... Even toddlers understand the concept of “mine!” In fact, it’s the idea of owning something they like that sparks their interest in investing. Rest assured, you won’t turn your child into a little money-grubber by feeding that interest. Through investing you’re going to teach him more about responsibility, discipline, delayed gratification, and even ethics than you ever thought possible!⁶²

likely the choice to set up a joint venture. Using Hofstede’s indices, a composite index was formed based on the deviation along each of the four cultural dimensions (i.e., power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and individualism) of each country from the United States ranking. The deviations were corrected for differences in the variances of each dimension and then arithmetically averaged. Algebraically, we built the following index:

$$CD_j = \frac{4}{i=1} \{(I_{ij} - I_{iu})^2 / V_i\} / 4,$$

where I_{ij} stands for the index for the i th cultural dimension and j th country, V_i is the variance of the index of the i th dimension, u indicates the United States, and CD_j is cultural difference of the j th country from the United States” (Bruce Kogut and Harinder Singh, “The Effect of National Culture on the Choice of Entry Mode,” *Journal of International Business Studies* 19 [1988]: 422).

⁶² Pat Smith and Lynn Roney, *Wow the Dow! The Complete Guide to Teaching Your Kids How to Invest in the Stock Market* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 18. Some other books are

Such a training of children builds itself on the loss of the cultural habit of assuming the agency of responsibility in radical alterity. It is followed through by the relentless education into business culture in academic and on-the-job training, in management, consumer behavior, marketing, prepared for by the thousands and thousands of business schools all over the global South as well as the North, training undergraduates into business culture, making the supplementation of the responsibility-based subaltern layer by the ethics of class-culture difference altogether impossible, consolidating class apartheid.⁶³ The Declaration of the

Robert T. Kiyosaki with Sharon L. Lechter, *Rich Dad Poor Dad: What the Rich Teach Their Kids about Money—That the Poor and Middle Class Do Not!* (New York: Warner Books, 2000), Gail Karlitz and Debbie Honig, *Growing Money: A Complete Investing Guide for Kids* (New York: Price Stern Sloan, 1999), and Diane Mayr, *The Everything Kids' Money Book: From Saving to Spending to Investing—Learn All about Money!* (Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corp., 2000), Emmanuel Modu and Andrea Walker, *Teenvestor.com: The Practical Investment Guide for Teens and Their Parents* (Newark: Gateway, 2000); Willard S. and William S. Stawski, *Kids, Parents and Money: Teaching Personal Finance from Piggy Bank to Prom* (New York: John Wiley, 2000); Janet Bamford, *Street Wise: A Guide for Teen Investors* (New York: Bloomberg, 2000). This information is taken from my “Globalizing Globalization,” forthcoming in *Rethinking Marxism*.

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⁶³ Here are passages from one of many undergraduate textbooks (Henry Assael, *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Action* [Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing, 1995]). This is standard Cultural Studies stuff, but the reminder remains necessary. the banality of these excerpts reminds us not to be absurdly out of touch when a Giddens counsels “antiproductivism”: “In a study, Campbell’s Soup found that the men who are most likely to shop view themselves as liberated, considerate, achievement-oriented individuals. These are the types of males who do not feel the need to conform to a “macho” image. As a result, a second change has occurred in male purchasing roles: Males are beginning to buy products that at one time might have been dismissed as too feminine—jewelry, skin care products, moisturizers, and cosmetics. In marketing these products, advertisers have had to depict males in a way that is very different from the traditional strong, masculine image of the Marlboro Cowboy or in the typical beer commercial. A new concept of masculinity has emerged—the sensitive male who is as vulnerable in many ways as his female counterpart. As a result, a growing number of advertisers have begun telling males that being sensitive and caring does not conflict with masculinity” (386).

“Psychoanalytic theory stresses the unconscious nature of consumer motives as determined in childhood by the conflicting demands of the id and the superego. Marketers have applied psychoanalytic theory by using depth and focus group interviews and projective techniques to uncover deep-seated purchasing motives. These applications are known as motivation research” (404).

Right to Development is part of such acculturation into the movements of finance capital. Third Way talk floats on this base. Culturalist support is provided on the Internet—in book digests on “market Taoism” and “Aristotle for capitalism.”⁶⁴ It is provided in the sales presentations of countless telecommunication marketing conferences. It connects to the laughing and frequent exhortations to “follow the money” at women’s rights meetings at the UN. We should keep all this in mind when we give Professor Giddens the benefit of the doubt.

Ethics within the corporatist calculus is also inscribed within this cultural formation. I team-taught a course with Political Science in Fall 2000. Our greatest problem was negotiating the difference between ethics as imagined from within the self-driven political calculus as “doing the right thing” and ethics as openness toward the imagined agency of the other, responsibility for and to a tiny radical enclave here and, as I will argue, a compromised and delegitimized conformity there.

Such a training of children is also a legitimation by reversal of our own insistence on elementary pedagogy of the rural poor. Supplementation by the sort of education I am trying to describe becomes necessary here, so that the relationship between child investors and child laborers is not simply one of righting wrongs from above. How does such supplementation work? If in New York, to stem the tide of corporatist ethics, business culture, appropriative New

“The broadest environmental factor affecting consumer behavior is culture, as reflected by the values and norms society emphasizes. Products and services such as Levi jeans, Coca-Cola, and McDonald’s fast-food outlets have come to symbolize the individuality inherent in American values. This is one reason why East Germans quickly accepted Coke after the fall of the Berlin Wall” (451).

This is the dominant general global cultural formation, appropriating the emergent—feminism, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, now environmentalism—remember my humble experiment in the Columbia gym and take a look at Ruth La Ferla, “Fashionistas, Ecofriendly and All-Natural” (*The New York Times*, July 15, 2001). The Derrida-Levinas line, if it were understood as a cultural formation rather than an ethical phenomenology, is an altogether minor enclave compared to this and will show up transmogrified on the dominant register any day now.

⁶⁴ John P. Clark, *Going with the Cash Flow: Taoism and the New Managerial Wisdom*; available online at www.britannica.com (viewed May 2000), and Thomas V. Morris, *If Aristotle Ran General Motors: The New Soul of Business* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997). Examples can be multiplied.

Age radicalism, and politically correct multiculturalism, the subterranean task is to supplement the radical responsibility-shaped hole in the education of the dispenser of rights through literary reading, and making use of the Humanities, what about the education of those whose wrongs are righted?

Some assumptions must first be laid aside. The permeability of global culture must be seen as restricted. There is a lack of communication between and among the immense heterogeneity of the subaltern cultures of the world. Cultural borders are easily crossed from the superficial cultural relativism of metropolitan countries, whereas, going the other way, the so-called peripheral countries encounter bureaucratic and policed frontiers. The frontiers of subaltern cultures, which developed no generative public role, have no channels of interpenetration. Here, too, the problem is not solved in a lasting way by the inclusion of exceptional subalterns in South-based global movements with leadership drawn from the descendants of colonial subjects, even as these networks network. These figures are no longer representative of the subaltern stratum in general.

In 2000 I visited a so-called biodiversity festival where a rural and country town audience in a “leastdeveloped country” (LDC) roared its derision at biodiversity songs from two neighboring nation-states, applauding enthusiastically instead at embarrassing imitations of Bollywood (the trade name of the hugely international Bombay film industry) “adaptations” of moments from U.S. MTV, unrecognizable by the audience as such, of course. The embarrassment of the activist leaders, from a colonial subject’s class background, was compounded by their public exhortations, which were obeyed by the rural audience as a set of bewildering orders. The historical discontinuity leading to such events is one of the reasons why, although I generalize, my example remains singular. On the practical calculus, the problem of the singular and the universal is confronted by learning from the singularity of the singular, a way to the imagination of the public sphere, the rational representation of the universal.

We must question the assumption that, if the sense of doing for the other is not produced on call from a sense of the self as sovereign, packaged with the sense of being fittest, the alternative assumption, romantic or expedient, of an essence of subalternity as the source of such a sense, denies the deprivations of history. Paulo Freire, in his celebrated *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written during the era of guerilla warfare in Latin America, warns us against subalternist

essentialism, by reminding us that, “during the initial stages of the struggle, the oppressed...tend themselves to become oppressors.”⁶⁵

In addition, in the face of UN Human Rights policy-making, we must be on guard against subalternista essentialism, both positive and negative. If the self-permission for continuing to right wrongs is premised implicitly on the former—they will never be able to help themselves—the latter nourishes false hopes that will as surely be dashed and lead to the same result: an unwilling conclusion that they must always be propped up. Indeed, in the present state of the world, or perhaps always and everywhere, simply harnessing responsibility for accountability in the South, checking up on other directedness, as it were, without the persistent training, of “no guarantees,” we reproduce and consolidate what can only be called “feudalism,” where a benevolent despot like Lee Kuan Yew can claim collectivity rather than individualism when expedient. In the present state of the world, it also reproduces and consolidates gender oppression, thus lending plausibility to the instant rightspeak of the gender lobby of the international civil society and Bretton Woods.

Declarations like the Bangkok NGO Declaration, entitled “Our Voice,” and cataloging what “their right to self-determination” would be for “Indigenous People in general,”⁶⁶ may, like many UN Declarations, be an excellent tool for political maneuvering, but it will not touch the entire spectrum of Asian aboriginals, each group as culturally absolutist as the rural audience at the biodiversity festival. In order to make the political maneuverings open to the ethical, we must think the supplementation toward which we are now moving.

When the UN offers violence or the ballot as a choice it is unrealistic because based on another kind of related mistake—unexamined universalism—the assumption that this is a real choice in all situations. It will soon lead to military intervention in the name of righting wrong, in geopolitically specific places. For “democratization” is not just a code name, as it so often is in practice, for the political restructuring entailed by the transformation of (efficient through

⁶⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1981), 29–31.

⁶⁶ “Our Voice,” Bangkok NGO Declaration, available online at www.nativenet.uthsca.edu/archive/nl/9307.

inefficient to wild) state capitalisms and their colonies to tributary economies of rationalized global financialization. If it is to involve the largest sector of the electorate in the global South—the rural population below poverty level—it requires the undoing of centuries of oppression, with a suturing education in rural subaltern normality, supplementing the violent guilt and shame trips of disaster politics.

I offer here a small but representative example:

I was handing out sweets, two a head, to villagers in Shahabad, Birbhum. Some of the schools I describe later are located in this area. These villages have no caste-Hindu inhabitants. Sweets of this cooked traditional variety, that have to be bought from the Hindu villages, are beyond the villagers' means. There are no "candy stores" in either type of village. Distribution of sweets is a festive gesture, but it makes my Calcutta-bred intellectual-leftist soul slightly uneasy. I have learned such behavior in my decades-long apprenticeship in these areas.

A young man in his early thirties, generally considered a mover and a shaker among this particular ethnic group—the Dhekaros, straddling the aboriginal-untouchable divide—was opening the flimsy paper boxes that swam in syrup in flimsier polythene bags, as I kept dipping my hand.⁶⁷ Suddenly he murmured, Outsiders are coming in, one a piece now. I thought the problem was numbers and changed to one, a bit sad because there were now more children. Suddenly, the guy said in my ear, give her two, she's one of ours. Shocked, I quickly turned to him, and said, in rapid monotone Bengali, Don't say such things in front of

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⁶⁷ A word on the aboriginal-untouchable divide. I warn the reader, once again, that this is not the version of an academic historian or anthropologist, but a summary of the narrative on which Indian constitutional sanctions are based. This narrative assumes that there were *adivasi*-s or "original inhabitants" in what we now call "India," when, in the second millennium b.c., Indo-European speaking peoples began to "colonize" that space. These are the "aboriginals" or "tribals," and there are 67,758,380 of them by the 1991 census. The constitution distinguishes between them and the Hindu untouchables. The constitution designates them as SCSTs (Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes). I have referred implicitly to this narrative in note 18. Because this distinction between "colonizing Caucasians" (the Indo-European-speaking peoples) and the aboriginals pre-dates the colonial European models by so much, the latter cannot serve us as guides here. In the early days of the Indian case, there was bilingualism and other kinds of assimilation. Without venturing into contested academic territory, it can still be said that they are basically animist, and retain traces of their separate languages.

children; and then, If I should say you're not one of ours? Since I'm a caste-Hindu and technically one of his oppressors.⁶⁸ This is the seedbed of ethnic violence in its lowest-common unit.⁶⁹ You can fill in the historical narrative, raise or lower the degree of the heat of violence. Punishing Milosevic is good, human rights pressure and guilt and shame trips on rogue states should continue, I suppose, but it is on grounds such as this that violence festers. This man is quite aware of party politics; the CPM (Community Party Marxist) is strong here. He certainly casts his vote regularly, perhaps even rallies voters for the party. The two sentiments—first, of ethnic group competition within a corrupt quota system in the restructured state as resources dwindle; and, second, of the intuition of a multiparty parliamentary democracy as a species of generally homosocial competitive sport with the highest stakes available to players in the impoverished rural sector—violence and the ballot—can coexist in a volatile relationship, one ready to be mobilized over the other, or even in the other's interest. This is why the UN's choice—ballot box *or* “peace-keeping mission”—is unrealistic. I will consider an answer by way of a digression into suturing rights thinking into the torn cultural fabric of responsibility; or, to vary the concept-metaphor, activating a dormant ethical imperative.

⁶⁸ Between my talk in February 2001 and this revision, I have told this man, one of my chief allies in the education, land reclaim, and ecological agriculture projects in the area, that I had spoken of the incident abroad. He told me that he had thought very carefully about the incident and it had been a learning experience for him (as indeed for me). One might remember that I have earned their trust by behaving quite differently from either caste-Hindus or NGO visitors in a sustained way over a number of years and that they are as desperate to find a better future for their children, without repercussions, as are migrants.

⁶⁹ Because these small, disenfranchised responsibility-based cultures have not been allowed entry into the progressive legitimation of the colony, they have remained “economies organized by domestic groups and kinship relations” and yet been recoded as *voting* citizens of parliamentary democracies without imaginative access to a “public sphere.” For them, without the caring pedagogy that I will be outlining, the “distance between poles of reciprocity ... has remained [an anachronistic] social distance,” without imaginative access to the commonality of citizenship. The quoted phrases are from Sahlins, *Stone Age*, 41, 191. If this seems too fast, blame the postcolonial state and please remember that a) the model here is not Australia, Latin America, Africa; this is a “precolonial settler colony”; and b) that I am not there to study them but to learn from the children how to be their teacher. In the United States, too, I can talk about teaching but cannot write for American Studies.

Subordinate cultures of responsibility—a heuristic generalization as precarious as generalizations about the dominant culture—base the agency of responsibility in that outside of the self that is also in the self, half-archived and therefore not directly accessible. I use the word *subordinate* here because, as I have been arguing throughout this essay, they are the recipients of human rights bounty, which I see as “the burden of the fittest,” and which, as I insist from the first page on down, has the *ambivalent* structure of enabling violation that anyone of goodwill associates with the white man’s burden. I will rely on this argument for this second part of my essay, which concerns itself with the different way in to the damaged episteme.

From the anthropological point of view, groups such as the Sabars and the Dhekaros may be seen to have a “closely knit social texture.” But I have been urging a different point of view through my concept-metaphor of “suturing.” These groups are also in the historical present of state and civil society. (Human rights punishes the latter in the name of the Enlightenment.) I am asking readers to shift their perception from the anthropological to the historico-political and see the same knit text-ile as a torn cultural fabric in terms of its removal from the dominant loom in a historical moment. That is what it means to be a subaltern. My point so far has been that, for a long time now, these cultural scripts have not been allowed to work except as a delegitimized form forcibly out of touch with the dominant through a history that has taken capital and empire as telos. My generalization is therefore precarious, though demonstrable if the effort I go on to describe is shared. These concept-metaphors, of suturing a torn fabric, of recoding a delegitimized cultural formation, are crucial to the entire second half of my argument.

Subordinate cultures of responsibility, then, base the agency of responsibility in that outside of the self that is also in the self, half-archived and therefore not directly accessible. Such a sentence may seem opaque to (Christianized) secularists who imagine ethics as internalized imperatives; they may seem silly to the ordinary language tradition that must resolutely ignore the parts of the mind not accessible to reason in order to theorize.⁷⁰ It may be useful to

⁷⁰ I believe because Marshal Sahlins intuits this that he defends Marcel Mauss’s *Essay on the Gift* against disciplinary criticism of form and/or content, although he recognizes that it “is an idiosyncratic venture ... , unjustified moreover by any special study of the Maori or of the

think of the archived exteriority, in terms of your unmediated knowledge, of the inside of your body. The general premise of the Oxford Amnesty series the *Genetic Revolution and Human Rights*, for example, was that genes are digitalized words that are driving our bodies, our selves.⁷¹ Yet they are inaccessible to us as objects and instruments of knowledge, insofar as we are sentient beings. (A smart reader mistook this as alterity being thoroughly interiorized. My exhortation is to try to think otherwise—that there is an other space—or script, all analogies are “false” here—in the self, which drives us.) Think also of our creative invention in the languages that we know well. The languages have histories before us, and futures after us. They are outside us, in grammar books and dictionaries.⁷² Yet the languages that we know and make in are also us, and in us. These are analogies for agency that is out of us but in us—and, like all analogies, imperfect, but I hope they will suffice for now. In responsibility-based subordinate cultures the volatile space of responsibility can be grasped through these analogies, perhaps. Please note, I’m not suggesting that they are better, just that they are different, and this radically different pair—rights and responsibility—need to relate in the hobbled relationship of supplementation.

These are only analogies, to be found in an Oxford Amnesty series collection and in Saussure. They work in the following way: if we can grasp that all human beings are genetically written before will; and if we can grasp that all human children access a language that is “outside,” as mother-tongue; then, on these structural models, we might grasp the assumption that the human being is

philosophers . . . invoked along the way.” Sahlins is writing about the economic calculus, but in his comments on Mauss, he touches responsibility, only to transform it, via Mauss, into the principle of reason (Sahlins, *Stone Age*, 149, 168–69, 175). As for himself, he ends his book in the mode of a supplemented capitalism “to come”: “A primitive theory of exchange value is also necessary, and perhaps possible—without saying it yet exists” (314). This is consonant with my sense that the ethical push for socialism must come from cultural formations defective for capitalism.

⁷¹ Justine Burley, ed., *The Genetic Revolution and Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁷² I am no philosopher, but this is undoubtedly why the later Wittgenstein was interested in children’s acquisition of language (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1972 [1953]) paragraphs 1–32, 200, 208). To mention the part of the mind that dreams would be to muddy the waters with arguments for and against Freud.

human in answer to an “outside call.” We can grasp the structure of the role of alterity at work in subordinate cultures, by way of these analogies. The word *before* in “before the will” is here used to mean logical and chronological priority as well as “in front of.” The difference is historical, not essential. It is because I believe that right/responsibility can be shared by everyone in the persistent mode of “to come” that I keep insisting on supplemental pedagogy, on both sides.

In its structure, the definitive predication of being-human by alterity is not with reference to an empirical outside world. Just as I cannot play with my own genes or access the entire linguisticity of my mother tongue, so “is” the presumed alterity radical in the general sense. Of course it bleeds into the narrow sense of “accountability to the outside world,” but its anchor is in that imagined alterity that is inaccessible, often transcendentalized and formalized (as indeed is natural freedom in the rights camp.)

I need not be more specific here. The subordinate subaltern is as diversified as the recipients of Human Rights activity. I need not make too many distinctions. For they are tied by a Universal Declaration.

Anticipating objections to this stopping short of distinction and specificities, I should perhaps say once again that, if these people became my object of investigation for disciplinary information retrieval as such, I would not be able to remain focused on the children as my teachers. There is nothing vague about this activity. Since this is the central insight of my essay, the reader will, I fear, have to take it or leave it. This is the different way of epistemic access, this the teacher’s apprenticeship as suturer or invisible mender, this the secret of ongoing pedagogic supplementation. Writing this piece has almost convinced me that I was correct in thinking that this different way was too *in situ* to travel, that I should not make it part of my academic discourse. And yet there is no other news that I can bring to Amnesty International under the auspices of Human Rights.

Rewriting Levinas, Luce Irigaray called for an ethics of sexual difference in the early eighties.⁷³ That fashion in dominant feminist theory is now past. But the usefulness of the model does not disappear with a fad. Call this supplementation

⁷³ Luce Irigaray, “The Fecundity of the Caress,” in Richard A. Cohen, ed., *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 231–56.

an ethics of class-culture difference, then: relating remotely, in view of a future “to come,” the dispensers of rights with the victims of wrongs.

With this proviso, let us consider an example of why we need to suture rights thinking into the torn cultural fabric of responsibility; or, to vary the concept-metaphor, activate a dormant ethical imperative. I will give only the bare bones.

Activists from the institutionally educated classes of the general national culture win a state-level legal victory against police brutality over the tribals.

They try to transform this into a national-level legal awareness campaign.⁷⁴

The ruling party supports the activists on the state level. (India is a federation of states. The national level is not involved here.) The ruling party on the local level is generally less answerable to the state precisely because of the discontinuity from the grass roots that I have been insisting upon all along. Indeed, this absence of redress without remote mediation is what makes the subaltern subaltern. On the local level the police of the ruling party consistently take revenge against what is perceived as a victory over “their” party by taking advantage of three factors, one positive, two negative:

1. The relatively homogeneous dominant Hindu culture at the village level keeps the tribal culturally isolated through prejudice.

2. As a result of this *cultural* isolation, women’s independence among the tribals has remained intact. It has not been infected by the tradition of women’s oppression within the general Hindu rural culture.

3. *Politically*, the general, supposedly homogeneous rural culture and the tribal culture share a lack of democratic training.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This case has been discussed in Spivak, “The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview,” in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi (London: Verso, 2000), 335–36, and in Spivak, “Discussion: An Afterword on the New Subaltern,” in Partha Chatterjee and Pradeep Jeganathan, eds., *Community, Gender, and Violence: Subaltern Studies XI* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 324–40.

⁷⁵ I say “supposedly” because the Hindu population of India, somewhere between 700 million and 850million (the 2001 census figures were not available), is, of course, not represented by the poor rural Hindus, although they themselves think of Hinduism generally as a unified set of codes. They

This is a result of poverty and class prejudice existing nationally. Therefore, votes can be bought and sold here; and electoral conflict is treated by rural society in general like a competitive sport where violence is legitimate.

Locally, since the legal victory of the metropolitan activists against the police, the ruling party has taken advantage of these three things by rewriting women's conflict as party politics.⁷⁶ To divide the tribal community against itself, the police have used an incidental quarrel among tribal women, about the theft of a bicycle, if I remember right. One side has been encouraged to press charges against the other. The defending faction has been wooed and won by the opposition party. Thus a situation of violent conflict has been fabricated, where the police have an immediate edge over every one, and since the legal victory in remote Calcutta is there after all, police revenge takes the form of further terror. In the absence of training in electoral democracy, the aboriginal community has accepted police terror as part of the party spirit: this is how electoral parties fight, where "electoral" has no intellectual justification. This is a direct consequence of the educated activists'—among whom I count myself—good hearted "from above" effort at constitutional redress, since at the grassroots level it can only be understood as a "defeat" by police and party.

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are generally prejudiced against SCSTs in their rural poverty, but they are not therefore in the cultural dominant. This is why Raymond Williams, who introduced the powerful instrument of seeing a culture as a dance of archaic residual-dominant-emergent, proposed it as a solution to the habit of seeing cultures as a "system" rather than a process (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977], 121–27). It is interesting that the influential journal *Economic and Political Weekly* has this to say about "growing democracy": "It requires sustained effort at institution building, transparency in government, effective governance and most importantly the rule of law" (*Economic and Political Weekly*, June 9–15, 2001, 2011). Only benefit of the doubt would read the first item as proactive educational effort.

⁷⁶ I hesitate to name these parties because part of my point is precisely that, when no real education is given, the ideational content of a party's platform does not coincide with the held opinions of the rural electorate, who do not hear these ideas except through the opaque high Bengali disquisitions at mass rallies. As it happens, the ruling party in this case is the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) and the opposition parties are Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP/Hindu nationalist) and Trinomul (a splinter of the CPM). To consider this conflict in terms of Communism and fundamentalism would be a complete mistake.

I am not asking that the women be left alone to flourish in some pristine tribality. I am also not speaking about how to stop women's oppression! The police are rural Hindus, the aboriginals are a small, disenfranchised group, the situation is class-race-state power written into the caste system. Teaching is my solution, the method is pedagogic attention, to learn the weave of the torn fabric in unexpected ways, in order to suture the two, not altering gender politics from above. As for gender, I hope the parenthesis below will show why everything cannot be squeezed into this relatively short piece. I am suggesting that human rights activism should be supplemented by an education that should suture the habits of democracy onto the earlier cultural formation. I am the only person within this activist group—organized now as a taxsheltered nonprofit organization—who thinks that the real effort should be to access and activate the tribals' indigenous "democratic" structures to *parliamentary* democracy by patient and sustained efforts to learn to learn from below. *Activate* is the key word here. There is no tight cultural fabric (as opposed to group solidarity) among these disenfranchised groups after centuries of oppression and neglect. Anthropological excavation for description is not the goal here. (I remain suspicious of academic golden-ageism from the colonial subject.) I am not able to give scholarly information. Working hands-on with teachers and students over long periods of time on their own terms without thinking of producing information for my academic peers is like learning a language "to be able to produce in it freely ... [and therefore] to move in it without remembering back to the language rooted and planted in [me, indeed] forgetting it."⁷⁷ As I mentioned earlier, I do not usually write about this activity, at all. Yet it seems necessary to make the point when asked to speak on human rights, because this is a typical wake of a human rights victory. The reader is invited to join in the effort itself. In the meantime I remain a consensus breaker among metropolitan activists, who feel they can know everything in a nonvague way if only they have enough information, and that not to think so is "mystical." The consensually united vanguard is never patient.

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This narrative demonstrates that when the human rights commissions, local, national, or international, right state terrorism, police brutality, or gender violence in such regions, the punishing victory is won in relatively remote courts of law.

⁷⁷ Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Surveys From Exile*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage, 1973), 147; translation modified.

Catharine A. MacKinnon describes this well: “The loftiest legal abstracts...are born...amid the intercourse of particular groups, in the presumptive ease of the deciding classes, through the trauma of specific atrocities, at the expense of the silent and excluded, as a victory (usually compromised, often pyrrhic) for the powerless.”⁷⁸ In the aftermath of victory, unless there is constant vigilance (a “pressure” that is itself a species of terror), the very forces of terror, brutality, or violence that suffer a public defeat, often come back to divide and oppress the community even further. If the community fights back, it does so by the old rules of violence. The dispensation of justice, the righting of wrongs, the restoration of human rights, is reduced to a pattern of abyssal revenge and/or, at best, a spirit of litigious blackmail, *if* the group that has been helped has a strong connection to the regional human rights agencies or commissions (the dominant pressure groups described as “below”), which is by no means always the case. Legal awareness seminars, altogether salutary in themselves, can exacerbate the problem without the painstaking foundational pedagogy which prepares the subject of rights from childhood and from within a disenfranchised culture of responsibility. And, if we get away from such remote areas, human rights dependency can be particularly vicious in their neocolonial consequences if it is the state that is the agency of terror and the Euro-U.S. that is the savior.

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(Incidentally, this narrative also demonstrates that Carole Pateman’s invaluable insight, “that the social contract presupposed the sexual contract,” has historical variations that may not always justify the Eurocentrism that is the obvious characteristic of even *her* brilliant book.⁷⁹ On the other hand, today the history of domination and exploitation has reduced the general picture, especially in the clients of human rights intervention, to a uniformity that may justify Pateman’s remark: “Only the postulate of natural equality prevents the original [European] social contract from being an explicit slave contract” (*ibid.*: 60). Even so brief a hint of this historicized and uneven dialectic between past and present surely makes it clear that feminists must think of a different kind of diversified

⁷⁸ Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Crimes-War, Crimes-Peace,” in Shute and Hurley, *Human Rights*, 84.

⁷⁹ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), x; the next passage quoted is on 60. I am not, of course, speaking of the provenance of social contract theories but rather of historical variations on something like actual social contracts.

itinerary for teasing out the relationship between human rights and women's rights rather than cultural conservatism, politically correct golden agism, or ruthless-to-benevolent Eurocentrism. The suturing argument that I will elaborate below develops in the historical difference between the first two sentences of this parenthesis.)

Even if the immense labor of follow-up investigation on a case-by-case basis is streamlined in our era of telecommunication, it will not change the epistemic structure of the dysfunctional responsibility-based community, upon whom rights have been thrust from above. It will neither alleviate the reign of terror nor undo the pattern of dependency. The recipient of human rights bounty whom I have described above, an agent of counterterrorism and litigious blackmail at the grassroots, will continue not to resemble the ego ideal implied by the Enlightenment and the UDHR. As long as real equalization through recovering and training the long-ignored ethical imagination of the rural poor and indeed, all species of subproletarians on their own terms—is not part of the agenda to come, she or he has no chance of becoming the subject of human rights as part of a collectivity, but must remain, forever, its object of benevolence. We will forever hear in the news, local to global, how these people cannot manage when they are left to manage on their own, and the new imperialism, with an at best embarrassed social Darwinist base, will get its permanent sanction.

The seventh article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, following eighteenth century European radical thought, says that “the law is an expression of the will of the community”.⁸⁰ Among the rural poor of the global South, one may attempt, through that species of education without guarantees, to bring about a situation where the law can be imagined as the expression of a community, always to come. Otherwise the spirit of human rights law is completely out of their unmediated reach. The training in “literary reading” in the metropolis is here practiced, if you like, in order to produce a situation, in the mode of “to come,” where it can be acknowledged that “reciprocally recognized rating [to acknowledge a corresponding integrity in the other] is a condition without which no civil undertaking is possible.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Paine, *Rights of Man*, 79.

⁸¹ William Sacksteder, “Mutually Acceptable Glory,” in Caws, *Causes of Quarrel*, 103.

The supplementary method that I will go on to outline does not suggest that human rights interventions should stop. It does not even offer the impractical suggestion that the human rights activists themselves should take time to learn this method. Given the number of wrongs all the world over, those who right them must be impatient. I am making the practical suggestion for certain kinds of humanities teachers, here and there, diasporics wishing to undo the delinking with the global South represented by impatient benevolence, second-generation colonial subjects dissatisfied by the divided postcolonial polity. (This is not to limit the readership of this essay, of course. Anyone can do what I am proposing.) Only, whoever it is must have the patience and perseverance to learn well one of the languages of the rural poor of the South. This, I hope, will set them apart from the implicit connection between world governance and the self-styled international civil society. (About this last, I am writing elsewhere.)

One of the languages. For the purposes of the essential and possible work of righting wrongs—the political calculus—the great European languages are sufficient. But for access to the subaltern episteme to devise a suturing pedagogy, you must take into account the multiplicity of subaltern languages.

This is because the task of the educator is to learn to learn from below, the lines of conflict resolution undoubtedly available, however dormant, within the disenfranchised cultural system; giving up convictions of triumphalist superiority. It is because of the linguistic restriction that one is obliged to speak of just the groups one works for; but, in the hope that these words will be read by some who are interested in comparable work elsewhere, I am always pushing for generalization. The trainer of teachers will find the system dysfunctional and corrupted, mired in ritual, like a clear pond choked with scum. For their cultural axioms as well as their already subordinated position did not translate into the emergence of nascent capitalism. We are now teaching our children in the North, and no doubt in the North of the South, that to learn the movement of finance capital is to learn social responsibility. It is in the remote origins of this conviction—that capitalism is responsibility—that we might locate the beginning of the failure of the aboriginal groups of the kind I am describing: their entry into (a distancing from) modernity as a gradual slipping into atrophy.⁸²

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⁸² For an uncritical summary of this cultural formation as universal history, see Ronald Reagan, “Free Enterprise,” Radio Essay (1979), retrieved from www.newyorktimes.com.

This history breeds the need for activating an ethical imperative atrophied by gradual distancing from the narrative of progress—colonialism/ capitalism. This is the argument about cultural suturing, learning from below to supplement with the possibility of the subjectship of rights.⁸³

Now I go back to my broader argument—a new pedagogy. The national education systems are pretty hopeless at this level because they are the detritus of the postcolonial state, the colonial system turned to rote, unproductive of felicitous colonial subjects like ourselves, at home or abroad. This is part of what started the rotting of the cultural fabric of which I speak. Therefore, I am not just asking that they should have “the kind of education we have had.” The need for supplementing metropolitan education—“the kind of education we have had”—is something I am involved in every day in my salaried work. And when I say “rote,” I am not speaking of the fact that a student might swot as a quick way to do well in an exam. I am speaking of the scandal that, in the global South, in the schools for middle-class children and above, the felicitous primary use of a page of language is to understand it; but in the schools for the poor, it is to spell and memorize.

Consider the following, the vicissitudes of a local effort undertaken in the middle of the nineteenth century: Iswarchandra Banerjee, better known as Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, a nineteenth century public intellectual from rural Bengal, was twenty when Macaulay wrote his “Minute on Indian Education.” He fashioned pedagogic instruments for Sanskrit and Bengali that could, if used right (the question of teaching, again), suture the “native” old with Macaulay’s new rather than reject the old and commence its stagnation with that famous and

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⁸³ We should not forget that Kant fixed the subject of the Enlightenment as one who could write for posterity and the whole world *as a scholar* (Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” in James Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 60–61). As the reader will see, our effort is to suture a cultural inscription rather unlike Kant’s into the thinking and practice of the public sphere and an education that will not preserve class apartheid. An unintended posterity, a world not imagined by him as participant in the cosmopolitical.

horrible sentence: “A single shelf of a good European library [is] worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.”⁸⁴

Vidyasagar’s Bengali primer is still used in state-run primary schools in rural West Bengal.⁸⁵ It is a modernizing instrument for teaching. It activates the structural neatness of the Sanskritic Bengali alphabet for the teacher and the child, and undermines rote learning by encouraging the teacher to jumble the structure in the course of teaching at the same time. The wherewithal is all there, but no one knows (how) to use it any more.⁸⁶

The first part of the book is for the active use of the teacher. The child does not read the book yet—just listens to the teacher, and learns to read and write by reading the teacher’s writing and writing as the teacher guides. Reading and writing are not soldered to the fetishized schoolbook. In very poor rural areas, with no books or newspapers anywhere, this is still a fine way to teach. (If you have been stumped a hundred times in a lot of places by both teacher and student producing some memorized bit from the textbook when asked to “write whatever comes to mind,” you are convinced of this.) Halfway through the book, the child begins to read a book, and the title of that page is *prothom path*, “first reading”, not “first lesson”. What a thrill it must have been for the child, undoubtedly a boy, to get to that moment. Today this is impossible, because the teachers, and the teachers’ teachers, indefinitely, are clueless about this book as a do-it-yourself

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⁸⁴ Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education,” in *Speeches by Lord Macaulay with his Minute on Indian Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 349. When Khushwant Singh, an Indian writer in English, opined last year that you could say “blue sky” a million different ways in English, whereas in Hindi you could only say “neela asman,” I realized the failure of Vidyasagar’s experiment. The problem, then as now, is the one I have already indicated: one English, the superb and supple, technologically adroit language of the victor; the many languages of the vanquished; restricted permeability. Going down is easy; coming up is hard. The Ford Foundation can run a program called “Crossing Borders.” But the literatures in the domestic languages are dying. And even this is a middle-class matter. Let us go back to the rural poor.

⁸⁵ Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, *Barnaparichaya* (Calcutta: Benimadhab Sheel, n.d.).

⁸⁶ Binaybhushan Ray, “‘Shikkhashar’ theke ‘Barnaparichaya’—Shomajer Shange Shishu Pathhyer Paribartan” *Akadami Patrika* 6 (May 1994): 12–62, makes no mention of the experimental pedagogy of the text and the Xeroxes seem to have been obtained from the India Office Library in London.

instrument. Well-meaning education experts in the capital city, whose children are used to a different world, inspired by self-ethnographing bourgeois nationalists of a period after Vidyasagar, have transformed the teacher's pages into children's pages by way of ill-conceived illustrations (see next page).⁸⁷

In the rural areas this meaningless gesture has consolidated the book as an instrument for dull rote learning. The page where Vidyasagar encourages the teacher to jumble the structure is now a meaningless page routinely ignored. I could multiply examples such as this, and not in India alone. Most of the subordinate languages of the world do not have simple single language dictionaries that rural children could use. Efforts to put together such a dictionary in Bengali failed in false promises and red tape. The habit of independence in a child's mind starts with the ability to locate meaning without a teacher. If the dictionary were put together by the kind of wellmeaning experts who put together the pictures in the primer, it would be geared for the wrong audience.

⁸⁷ For self-ethnography, see Rosalind Morris, *In the Place of Origins: Modernity and Its Mediums in Northern Thailand* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).



The generalizable significance of this case is that, at the onset of colonialism/capitalism, when the indigenous system of teaching began to be emptied out of social relevance, there had been an attempt to undo this. The discontinuity between the colonial subject and the rural poor is such that the

instruments of such undoing were thoughtlessly deactivated. (This relates to the concept-metaphor of activation that I am using in this part of the essay.) The metropolitan specialist has no sense of the pedagogic significance of the instruments. My discovery of the specific pattern of the primer was a revelation that came after eight years of involvement with using the primer. Since I do not consolidate instruction for the teacher except in response to a felt need, it was only then that I was letting the teacher at one school take down hints as to how to teach the students at the lowest level. As I continued, I realized the primer had preempted me at every step! I hope the impatient reader will not take this to be just another anecdote about poor instruction. And I hope I have made it clear by now, in spite of all the confusion attendant upon straying from the beaten track, that the practice of elementary pedagogy for the children of the rural poor is one of my main weapons, however humble.

The interference of the state can also be a cruel negligence. This is the point of the following story. I have included two personal details to show how caste politics, gender politics, and class politics are intertwined in the detail. These details are typical.

Each of the rural schools of which I speak has a tube well. This provides clean water for the entire group. Near two of these schools the tube well is broken. The aboriginals cannot mend it for the same reason that the metropolitan middle class cannot do these repair jobs. They are not used to it and Home Depot hasn't hit yet.

One of my fellow students in college occupies a leading position in a pertinent ministry on the state level. I renewed contact with this man after thirty-one years, in his office in Calcutta, to ask for tube wells. Not only did I not get tube wells after two trips separated by a year, but I heard through the rumor mill that, as a result of his boasting about my visit, his wife had disclosed in public, at a party, that she had complained to his mother about our ancient friendship!

A near relative in the next generation, whom I had not seen but briefly when he was an adolescent, held a leading administrative position on the district level. I got an appointment with him, again to beg for the tube wells. I did not get them. But he did tell me that he was in line for a fellowship at the Kennedy School. Where the infrastructure for the primary education of the poor seems negligible even in the line of official duty, boasting about one's own spectacular

opportunities for higher education seems perfectly plausible: internalized axiomatics of class apartheid. I use the detail to point at a pervasive problem.

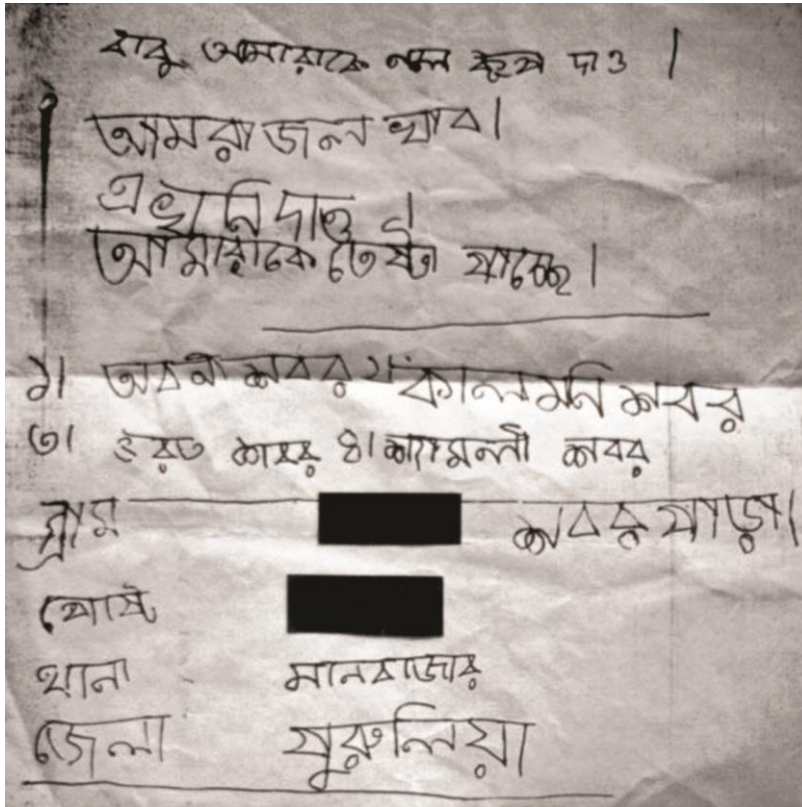
The Hindu villagers insulted a boy who went to fetch water from the tube well in the main village. At night, the oldest woman was about to go get water under cover. We sat together in her kitchen and boiled a pot of water.

The next morning, the teacher in the school could not prove that the students had learned anything. She is a young Hindu widow from the village, who has failed her Secondary School leaving exam. As a rural Hindu, she cannot drink water touched by the aboriginals, her students. As I kept berating her, one of these very students spoke up! (She loves the students; her not drinking water from their hands is internalized by them as normal, much less absurd than my drinking hot boiled water. On her part, going back to the village every afternoon, keeping the water-rule, which she knows I abhor, compares to my standing in the snow for six hours to replace my stolen green card, I later thought.)

The student spoke up to say that all but three in the school had accompanied their parents “east,” and so had not come to school for months. Going east: migrant labor.

Just as not repairing tube wells is taken as proof of their fecklessness, taking their children on these journeys is seen as proof that they don’t know the value of education. These are oral tradition folks for whom real education takes place in the bosom of the family. By what absurd logic would they graduate instantly into a middle-class understanding of something so counterintuitive as “the value of education”? Such lectures produce the kind of quick-fix “legal awareness”-style lectures whose effects are at best superficial, but satisfying for the activists, until the jerrybuilt edifice breaks down. When the community was addressed with sympathy, with the explicit understanding that behind this removal of the students from school lay love and responsibility, some children were allowed to stay behind next year. When I spoke of this way of dealing with absenteeism to the one hundred so-called rural teachers (stupid statistics) subsidized by the central government, one of the prejudice-ridden rural Hindu unemployed who had suddenly become a “teacher” advised me—not knowing that this elite city person knew what she was talking about—that the extended aboriginal community would object to the expenditure of feeding these children. Nonsense, of course, and prejudice, not unknown in the native informant.

When I saw that the three students who had not “gone east” were doing fine, and that a year had gone by without tube wells, I said to them, write a letter. Another student, sitting back, looked so eager to write that I let her come forward as well. Each one give a sentence, I said, I will not prompt you. Here is what they wrote:⁸⁸



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I told them the secret of alphabetization. They successfully alphabetized their first names. My second visit to this man’s office, the source of the prurient party gossip in Calcutta, was to deliver the letter, in vain.

⁸⁸ The message reads as follows: Sir, give us a tube well. We will drink water. Give it now. We are thirsty. 1) Abani Sabar, 2) Kalomoni Sabar, 3) Bharat Sabar, 4) Shaymoli Sabar (Serially ordered in Bengali alphabet): Sabar hamlet, vill: P.O: Police Station: Manbajar District: Purulia; (name of officer) Kolkata.

I have covered the place names because we do not want a tube well from a remote international or national philanthropic source. The water's getting boiled for me. They are drinking well water. We want the children to learn about the heartlessness of administrations, without short-term resistance talk. The bounty of some U.S. benefactor would be the sharp end of the wedge that produces a general will for exploitation in the subaltern.⁸⁹ *Mutatis mutandis*, I go with W. E. B. DuBois rather than Booker T. Washington: it is more important to develop a critical intelligence than to assure immediate material comfort.⁹⁰ This may or may not bear immediate fruit. Let me repeat, yet once again, although I fear I will not convince the benevolent ethnocentrist, that I am not interested in teaching "self-help." I am interested in being a good enough humanities teacher in order to be a *conduit* (Wordsworth's word) between subaltern children and their subaltern teachers. That is my connection with DuBois, who writes a good deal about teacher training.

The teachers on this ground level at which we work tend to be the least successful products of a bad system. Our educator must learn to train teachers by attending to the children. For just as our children are not born electronic, their children are not born delegitimized. They are not yet "least successful." It is through learning how to take children's response to teaching as our teaching text that we can hope to put ourselves in the way of "activating" democratic structures.

And it is to distinguish between "activating" and producing good descriptive information for peers (the appropriate brief for an essay such as this) that I should like to point at the difference between Melanie Klein and Jean Piaget. Attending to children, Klein's way of speaking had turned into a kind of sublime literalness, where the metaphor is as literal as reality itself. In order to flesh out Freud's intuitions about children, Klein learned her system from the children themselves. Her writings are practical guides to people who wished to "learn" that language. That, too, is to learn to learn from below.

By contrast, all the confident conclusions of Piaget and his collaborators in *The Moral Judgment of Children* would be messed up if the investigators had

⁸⁹ I have explained this phenomenon in "Megacity," *Grey Room*, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 8–25.

⁹⁰ W. E. B. DuBois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet, 1995 [1903]), 78–95.

been obliged to insert themselves into and engage with the value system the children inhabited. Piaget is too sharp not to know this. “It is one thing to prove that cooperation in the play and spontaneous social life of children brings about certain moral effects,” he concludes,

and another to establish the fact that this cooperation can be universally applied as a method of education. This last point is one which only experimental education can settle...But the type of experiment which such research would require can only be conducted by teachers or by the combined efforts of practical workers and educational psychologists. And it is not in our power to deduce the results to which this would lead.⁹¹

The effort at education that I am describing—perhaps comparable to Piaget’s description of “practical workers”—the teachers—and “educational psychologist”—the trainers—with the roles productively confused every step of the way—hopes against hope that a permanent sanction of the social Darwinism—“the burden of the fittest”—implicit in the Human Rights agenda will, perhaps, be halted if the threads of the torn cultural fabric are teased out by the uncanny patience of which the Humanities are capable at their best, for the “activation” of dormant structures.

Indeed, this is the “Humanities component,” attending upon the object of investigation as other, in all labor. Here is the definitive moment of a Humanities “to come,” in the service of a Human Rights, that persistently undoes the asymmetry in our title “Human Rights, Human Wrongs” by the uncoercive rearrangement of desires in terms of the teaching text described earlier in this essay.

The Greek poet Archilochus is supposed to have written “the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” This distinction between two types of thinkers was developed by Isaiah Berlin into the idea that fox-

⁹¹ Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of Children*, trans. Marjorie Gabain (New York: Free Press, 1965), 406. This difference between saying and doing is often honored by the best sayers. Thus Sahlins distinguishes between “a conventional metaphor of exposition” and “a true history of experiment” (Sahlins, *Stone Age*, 192).

thinkers are fascinated by the variety of things, and hedgehog-thinkers relate everything to an all-embracing system.⁹²

My experience of learning from children for the last decade tells me that nurturing the capacity to imagine the public sphere and the fostering of independence within chosen rule-governance is the hedgehog's definition of democracy, which will best match the weave of the torn yet foxy fabric—great variety of detail—of the culture long neglected by the dominant. The trick is to train the teachers by means of such intuitions, uncoercively rearranging *their* (most often unexamined) desires for specific kinds of futures for the children. No mean trick, for these teachers have been so maimed by the very system of education we are trying to combat, and are so much within the class apartheid produced by it, that they would blindly agree and obey, while the trainer was emoting over consciousness-raising. Great tact is called for if the effort is to draw forth consent rather than obedience. In addition, the children have to be critically prepared for disingenuously offered cyberliteracy if these groups get on the loop of “development.”⁹³ The hope is that this effort with the *teachers* will translate into the teaching of these reflexes in the educational method of the children who launch *the trainer* on the path of the hedgehog. The children are the future electorate. They need to be taught the habits and reflexes of such democratic behavior. Do you see why I call this necessary and impossible? As I remarked about Humanities teaching, you cannot gauge this one.

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To suture thus the torn and weak responsibility-based system into a conception of human dignity as the enjoyment of rights one enters ritual practice transgressively, alas, as a hacker enters software. The description of ritual-hacking below may seem silly, perhaps. But put yourself on the long road where you *can* try it, and you will respect us—you will not dismiss as “nothing but” this or that approach on paper. Insofar as this hacking is like a weaving, this, too, is an exercise in *texere*, textil-ity, text-ing, textuality. I must continue to repeat that my emphasis is on the difficulties of this texting, the practical pedagogy of it, not in

⁹² Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986 [1953]).

⁹³ This point cannot be developed here. Please see Spivak, “From Haverstock Hill Flat to U.S. Classroom, What's Left of Theory?” in Judith Butler John Guillory, Kendall Thomas, eds., *What's Left of Theory? New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–40.

devising the most foolproof theory of it for you, my peers. Without the iterative text of doing and devising in silence, the description seems either murky or banal.

Subordinate cultural systems are creative in the invention of ritual in order to keep a certain hierarchical order functioning. With the help of the children and the community, the trainer must imagine the task of recoding the ritual-to-order habits of the earlier system with the ritual-to-order habits of parliamentary democracy, with a teaching corps whose idea of education is unfortunately produced by a terrible system. One learns active ritual as one learns manners. The best example for the readership of this anthology might be the “wild anthropology” of the adult metropolitan migrant, learning a dominant culture on the run, giving as little away as possible. The difference here is that we learn from the vulnerable archaic (Raymond Williams’s word captures the predicament better than the anthropological *primitive*), but also without giving much away. The point is to realize that democracy also has its rituals, exaggerated or made visible, for example, when in our metropolitan life we seek to make politically correct manners “natural,” a matter of reflex.

It is because this habit—of recoding ritual (always, of course, in the interest of uncoercive rearrangement of desires) for training other practitioners—rather than for production of knowledge about knowledge, has to be learned by the teacher as a reflex that I invoked the difference between Klein and Piaget. I will not be able to produce anthropologically satisfying general descriptions here because no trainer can provide satisfactory descriptions of the grammar of a language that s/he is learning painfully. This *is* the distinction I want to convey. I have such fear of derision of the detail of my work that I feel obliged to cite a self-defense that I offered at Columbia when I presented there a talk whose London version drew forth my invitation to participate in the Amnesty Series at Oxford.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Please notice this earlier repetition of points made in the current essay. The piece itself was not about human rights and the Humanities but about what I have learned from the oral formulaic as practiced by the women in Manbhumi: “I’m a modernist literary scholar. Acknowledged research methods in my field would be to follow the life-detail of the author or authors beyond the definitive biography, follow through on pertinent items indicated in the correspondence and in interviews, check the relationship between the critical and creative materials, and of course, consult the critical tradition exhaustively. There is no requirement that the method of connecting these details go beyond the simplest cause-effect structure.

“No such research method has been followed in this afternoon’s paper.

What follows must remain hortatory—an appeal to your imagination until we meet in the field of specific practice, here or there. Of course we all know, with appropriate cynicism, that this probably will not be. But a ceremonial lecture allows you to tilt at windmills, to insist that such practice is the only way that one

“My sources of speculation are some women in Manbhum and a man from Birbhum. It occurs to me that an alternative research method could have been followed here. I could have consulted what anthropological and historical literature is available on the Kheriyas and the Dhekaros, the groups to which these people belong. With the latter, it is the very question of belonging that is being negotiated. There is nothing of that in this paper either.

“To tell you the truth, the paper is hopelessly anecdotal. I have tried to encourage myself by saying that the anecdotes have something of the evidentiary contingency of the literary. Depth rather than breadth of evidence? Who knows? I place the facts in place of footnotes: I have been training teachers in Manbhum for the last ten years. My method is simple: to see how the students are learning and not learning, on the basis of these, to give simple practical instructions to the teacher.

...

“Because I work hard to change this state of affairs, because I feed the children a hot meal a day, and because I live with them when I do this work a certain acceptance has come from the men and women on the basis of which a mutual accountability has grown. My justification is this. The examples I offer may seem simple. But it has taken all this work to earn the right to be a person with whom these examples could be produced; and the right to claim a reading that’s in the place of library work, detective work, fieldwork.

“For the first few years, talk about this work in progress seemed forbidden, because it was too fragile. Now it seems not only possible, but called for, yet the risk of ridicule or worse, unexamined congratulations loom. Somewhat against my better judgment, then, I will add a word specifically about the work. In the field of subaltern education, the best talk statistics, money, school buildings, teachers, textbooks and supplies. These are fine things. I am focused elsewhere. In the field of training there are, first, some cases of altogether benevolent Eurocentric yet culturalista training. I hesitate to name names because these are, after all, good people. The training provided by the state is generally inferior and formulaic and usually does not trickle down to the level of which I am speaking. The training provided by activists is generally from above and emphasizes consciousness raising: rights, resistance, nationalism, identity spliced on to literacy and numeracy. My method is to learn from below how to fashion, together, a way of teaching that will put in place reflexes or habits of mind for which the shortcut name is “democracy.” Since this is the largest sector of the future electorate, my belief is that without the habit of democracy, no reform will last. To make visible the lines of force here, I offer my first anecdote, by way of preamble” (“Travel and the Nation,” Mary Keating Das Lecture, Columbia University, March 2000).

can hope to supplement the work of human rights litigation in order to produce cultural entry into modernity.

Fine, you will say, maybe Human Rights interventions do not have the time to engage in this kind of patient education, but there are state-sponsored systems, NGOs, and activists engaging in educational initiatives, surely? The NGO drives count school buildings and teacher bodies. The national attempts also do so, but only at best. Activists, who care about education in the abstract and are critical of the system, talk rights, talk resistance, even talk nationalism. But instilling habits in very young minds is like writing on soft cement. Repeating slogans, even good slogans, is not the way to go, alas. It breeds fascists just as easily. UNESCO's teaching guides for Human Rights are not helpful as guides.

Some activists attempt to instill pride, in these long-disenfranchised groups, in a pseudohistorical narrative. This type of "civilizationism" is good for gesture politics and breeding leaders, but does little for the development of democratic reflexes.⁹⁵ These pseudohistories are assimilated into the aetiological mythologies of the Aboriginals without epistemic change. Given subaltern ethnic divisions, our teaching also proceeds in the conviction that, if identitarianism is generally bad news here, it is also generally bad news there.

Let me now say a very few words about the actual teaching, which is necessarily subject to restricted generalizability, because it is predicated upon confronting the specific problems of the closest general educational facility to which the teachers have had, and the students might have, access. Such generalizations can be made within the framework of the undoing of those specific problems. One generalization seems apposite and relates to my parenthesis on Pateman. Whatever the status of women in the old delegitimized cultural system, in today's context emphasis must always be placed on girl-children's access to that entry, without lecturing, without commanding, earning credibility, of course. Another minimally generalizable rule of thumb in this teaching I will focus on the one that Vidyasagar, the nineteenth century Bengali intellectual, picked up a hundred and fifty years ago: undermine rote learning.

⁹⁵ I am grateful to Henry Staten for the felicitous word *Civilizationism*.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, I am not speaking of the fact that a student might swot as a quick way to do well in an exam. I'm speaking of the scandal that, in the global South, in the schools for middleclass children and above, the felicitous primary use of a page of language is to understand it; in the schools for the poor, it is to spell and memorize. This is an absolute and accepted divide, the consolidation of continuing class apartheid I referred to earlier. As a result of this, "education" is seen upon subaltern terrain as another absurdity bequeathed by powerful people and, incidentally, of no use at all to girlchildren.

My own teachers, when I was a student in a good middle-class Bengali medium primary school in Calcutta, explained the texts. But as I have mentioned, there is no one to explain in these rural primary schools. I walked a couple hours to a village high school in the national system and waited an hour and a half after opening time for the rural teachers to arrive. I begged them to take good care of the two aboriginal young women I was sending to the school. In late afternoon, the girls returned. Did she explain, I asked. No, Just spelling and reading. An absurd history lesson about "National Liberation Struggles in Many Countries," written in incomprehensible prose. I am going into so much detail because no urban or international radical bothers to look at the detail of the general system as they write of special projects—"nonformal education," "functional literacy," science projects here and there. Just before I left India in January 2001, a filmmaker made an English documentary entitled something like "A Tribe Enters the Mainstream." My last act before departure was to make sure that the shots of my school be excised. The so-called direct interviews are risible. How can these people give anything but the expected answers in such situations? And yet it is from such "documentaries" that we often gather evidence. I have just received news that this video will be shown at a nationwide Human Rights gathering in the capital city with international attendance in September 2001. What is the generalizable significance of these embittered remarks? To emphasize the discontinuity between the domestic "below" and the grassroots before I offer the final report on the education of Gayatri Spivak.

My project seems to have defined itself as the most ground-level task for the breaking of the production and continuation of class apartheid. I now understand why, in Marx's world, Marx had come down to something as simple as the shortening of the working day as "the grounding condition [*die*

Grundbedingung]" when he was speaking of such grand topics as the Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity.⁹⁶

The discovery of the practical use of the primer was an important moment for me. Other moments would be difficult to integrate into this; they might seem inconsequential or banal. Something that can indeed be reported is that, since I presented my paper in February 2001, I have learned how to communicate to the teachers and students—for whom the absurd education system *is* education—that it is the class apartheid of the state that is taken on in the move from rote to comprehension. I can now show that there is no connection in this absurd education (to memorize incomprehensible chunks of prose and some verse in response to absurd questions in order to pass examinations; to begin to forget the memorized material instantly) with the existing cultural residue of responsibility. (In metropolitan theoretical code, this lack of connection may be written as no sense at all that the written is a message from a structurally absent subject, a placeholder of alterity, although the now-delegitimized local culture is programmed for responsibility as a call of the other—alterity—before will. Thus education in this area cannot activate or rely on “culture” without outside/inside effort.) For the suturing with enforced class-subalternization I had to chance upon an immediately comprehensible concept-metaphor: when there is no exercise for the imagination, no training in intellectual labor—*matha khatano*—for those who are slated for manual labor—*gatar khatano*—at best, the rich/poor divide (*barolok/chhotolok* big people/small people) is here to stay.⁹⁷ At least one teacher said, at leave-taking, that he now understood what I wanted, in the language of obedience, alas. There is more work for the trainer down the road, uncoercive undermining of the class-habit of obedience.

Perhaps you can now imagine how hard it is to change this episteme, how untrustworthy the activists’ gloat. For the solidarity tourist, it is a grand archaic sight to see rural children declaiming their lessons in unison, especially if, as in that mud-floored classroom in Yunan, six- to nine-year-olds vigorously dance

⁹⁶ Marx, *Capital* 3:959; translation modified.

⁹⁷ For an example of involving the children of exploitation in intense *matha khatano* on the other side, see John Tierney, “Here Come the Alpha Pups,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 5, 2001, 38–43.

their bodies into ancient calligraphy. But if you step forward to work together, and engage in more than useless patter, the situation is not so romantic. Learning remains by rote.

It is a cruel irony that when the meaning of *sram* in Vidyasagar's Lesson 2—*sram na korile lekhopora hoy na*—is explained as “labor” and the aboriginal child is asked if she or he has understood, he or she will show their assent by giving an example of manual labor. In English, the sentence would read—without labor you cannot learn to write and read—meaning intellectual labor, of course.

Produced by this class-corrupt system of education, the teachers themselves do not know how to write freely. They do not know the meaning of what they “teach,” since all they have to teach, when they are doing their job correctly, is spelling and memorizing. They do not know what dictionaries are. They have themselves forgotten everything they memorized to pass out of primary school. When we train such teachers, we must, above all, let them go, leave them alone, to see if the efforts of us outsiders have been responsive enough, credible enough without any material promises. When I see rousing examples of “people’s movements,” I ask myself, how long would the people continue without the presence of the activist leaders? It is in the context of earning that credibility that I am reporting my access to the new concept-metaphor binary: *matha khatano/gator khatano*: class apartheid: *barolok/chhotolok*.

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I am often reprimanded for writing incomprehensibly. There is no one to complain about the jargon-ridden incomprehensibility of children’s textbooks in this subaltern world. If I want you to understand the complete opacity of that absurd history lesson about “National Liberation Struggles in Many Countries,” devised by some state functionary at the Ministry of Education, for example, I would have to take most of you through an intensive Bengali lesson so that you are able to assess different levels of the language. Without venturing up to that perilous necessity, I will simply recapitulate: first, the culture of responsibility is corrupted. The effort is to learn it with patience from below and to keep trying to suture it to the imagined felicitous subject of universal human rights. Second, the education system is a corrupt ruin of the colonial model. The effort is persistently to undo it, to teach the habit of democratic civility. Third, to teach these habits, with responsibility to the corrupted culture, is different from children’s indoctrination into nationalism, resistance-talk, identitarianism.

I leave this essay with the sense that the material about the rural teaching is not in the acceptable mode of information retrieval. The difficulty is in the discontinuous divide between those who right wrongs and those who are wronged. I have no interest in becoming an educational researcher or a diasporic goldenagist. I will ask my New York students what concept-metaphor served them best. (Dorah Ahmad told me this afternoon that what she liked best about my graduate teaching was the use of stories that made immediate sense!)

Here are some nice abstract seemingly fighting words:

Generative politics is by no means limited to the formal political sphere but spans a range of domains where political questions arise and must be responded to. Active trust is closely bound up with such a conception...No longer depending on pre-given alignments, it is more contingent, and contextual, than most earlier forms of trust relations. It does not necessarily imply equality, but it is not compatible with deference arising from traditional forms of status.⁹⁸

If you want to attempt to bring this about—for the sake of a global justice to come—hands on—you begin in something like what I have described in this essay.

I am so irreligious that atheism seems a religion to me. But I now understand why fundamentalists of all kinds have succeeded best in the teaching of the poor—for the greater glory of God. One needs some sort of “licensed lunacy” (Orlando Patterson’s phrase) from some transcendental Other to develop the sort of ruthless commitment that can undermine the sense that one is better than those who are being helped, that the ability to manage a complicated life support system is the same as being civilized. But I am influenced by deconstruction and for me, radical alterity cannot be named “God,” in any language. Indeed, the name of “man” in “human” rights (or the name of “woman” in “women’s rights are human rights”) will continue to trouble me.

“Licensed lunacy in the name of the unnamable other,” then. It took me this long to explain this incomprehensible phrase. Yet the efforts I have described may be the only recourse for a future to come when the reasonable righting of wrongs will not inevitably be the manifest destiny of groups that remain poised to right them; when wrongs will not proliferate with unsurprising regularity.

⁹⁸ Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, 93–94.

