Enlightenment, Modern, and Postmodern Rock Concerts : An Example of Creative Non-fiction Academic Writing

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"*Modern man drags an immense amount of indigestible knowledge stones around with him which on occasion rattle around in his belly.*"

Friedrich Nietzsche,
On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life, 1874.
(Loc. 508)

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Abstract

This paper uses the metaphor of facts as stones to stimulate a limited-selection retrospective on five aspects of the postmodern debate — 1.) postmodern feminism; 2.) post-colonialism and postmodernism; 3.) the turn to literature for direction in the role of postmodern thinking toward resolving present-day challenges; 4.) whether to care about context and relegate authorship to an "author function" rather than a particular personality, in short, the question of whether context is the truest "author" of the postmodern world; and 5.) the all-embracing question of how we may behave morally and ethically in light of the work-in-progress status of the preceding four areas of inquiry — to reflect on the place of the individual in reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism.

Key Words : feminism, colonialism, postmodern ethics, Foucault's "author function", literary imagination

Part 1:　Introduction

Enlightenment, Modern, and Postmodern Steps: From Texts to Textual Analysis to Contextual Analysis

Facts are stones. Some stones are used to build great edifices. Others are broken up to gravel roadways. Many are used as weapons.

Foundational ideas of modern thought, on topics ranging from the science of perception to transformation of moral philosophy, owe much to

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Enlightenment reformulation of earlier notions on these subjects.

Modern thought may be characterized as an exercise in critical thinking—often a stated outcome of the successful completion of university-level coursework. Of course, critique craves criteria. In this regard, methodology is to modernism what the belief in reason and the scientific method was to the Enlightenment. Methodology was the bedrock of modernism. Beyond the sciences, methodology manifested itself in everything from the creation of operational definitions in the social sciences to the science and craft of textual analysis in the arts. Works could be regarded as artifacts and subjected to the same forensic analysis one might apply to a shard of pottery from an archeological dig.

Modernism, in the simplest terms, may then be characterized as a process of textual analysis. Artifacts can be texts and texts can be artifacts; the symmetry is elegant and direct. Books and bones, symphonies and sonnets, paintings and photographs, dances and dramatic performances, architecture and anatomy, legal procedure and religious liturgy may all be regarded as texts. Each text is a nut; crack it to get to the meat. Break atoms to get to the energy of the universe. The story of every text as artifact or artifact as text—the narrative that propels us through the arc of every account—is there to be told.

Currently, our knowledge of the external world is gained by regarding its elements as artifacts to be examined and as texts to be analyzed. Once we can establish/ determine/ or lay claim to an understanding of the narrative of a text, its secrets may be revealed and deeper meanings can be plumbed and satisfactory explanations of the phenomenon can be presented. The wonder of textual analysis was and is that everything ever needed was already there to be discovered in the entity itself. Patterns and motifs, metaphors and tropes—the full array of indicators—are open to

interpretation. Science uses its methods to unravel DNA from RNA and reveal the patterns that determine future generations. Literary criticism dissects a different set of specimens. Both claim to have prized the meaning, or at least one plausible meaning, from the object itself. Individuals, co-authors, or research teams present evidence based on rigorous analysis, based on accepted standards within their particular disciplines, and based on the expertise they have painstakingly earned to qualify as legitimate practitioners.

The addition of postmodernism

Postmodernism expands modernism. All the modern tools are used. A new and wider way of understanding modern conditions is also introduced. That is the *post* in postmodernism; postmodernism is the next step, not the elimination of the staircase. Careful textual analysis and examination of artifacts continues to provide evidence for the verification of information. Facts are established in light of earlier knowledge gained and challenged and refined within standards that are always being elevated. Confirmation provides a provisionally workable proposition; the *proof* is used insofar as it is useful, and proofs are upgraded as better solutions are crafted. Accredited gatekeepers, from researchers to editors along the line of peer reviewers and qualified commentators, critique each claim and lively debate advances the discussion.

What next step, then, takes us to the realm of postmodernism? The postmodern step is from text to context. The question, "What is going on in this text/ work/ artifact?" expands to the consideration of the circumstances in which the text/ work/ artifact was created—its context.

While this paper is presented as an example of creative non-fiction academic writing, we also offer discussion of how a wider sense of creative writing may connect with the context of postmodernism.

Rather than to opine in the abstract, it will be useful to consider a selection of postmodern luminaries across a variety of perspectives. These include feminism and post-colonialism; the turn to literature for direction in the role of postmodern thinking toward resolving present-day challenges; whether to care about context and relegate authorship to an "author function" rather than a particular personality; and to reflect on the place of the individual in reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism.

Part 2: A Sampling of the Varieties of Postmodern Contextualization

2.1 Feminism and Post-colonialism

In critical response to Norma Alarcon's "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism" and Kwame Anthony Appiah's "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern", the theme we explore is in how we may see the world from the perspective of others. How does one get beyond a position—feminism, post-colonialism, or postmodernism—that seems so easily to fall into being characterized as simply amounting to an oppositional situation?

How does one get beyond a narrow concept of feminism as a concern of white, Western, educated, affluent women and take a wider and non-binary perspective? This is the question in Alarcon's article. For Appiah, the linkage between post-colonialism and postmodernism explores how the linguistic and literary turn may offer insights into a wider view of postmoden*ism* and postmodern*ity.*

As a vehicle for analysis, though more narrowly for Alarcon, each scholar uses a particular cultural artifact as an entry point into discussion. Alarcon assesses the challenges and impact of "a collection of essays, poems, tales and testimonials that would give voice to the contradictory experiences of 'women of color'" (Alarcon 140), entitled *This*

Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color. Appiah feels, "*Yoruba Man with a Bicycle* … provides us with an image of an object that can serve as a point of entry to my theme: a piece of contemporary African art that will allow us to explore the articulation of the postcolonial and the postmodern" (Appiah 139).

2.1.1   Alarcon and Post-feminist Feminism

In "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism", Alarcon lays out the problem that in a work specifically designed to move beyond where "writers were aware of the displacement of their subjectivity across a multiplicity of discourses: feminist/lesbian, nationalist, racial, socioeconomic, historical, etc. … [and which] implies a multiplicity of positions from which they are driven to grasp or understand themselves and their relations with the real, in the Althusserian sense of the word … *Bridge* writers, in part, were aware that these positions are often incompatible or contradictory, and others did not have access to the maze of discourses competing for their body and voice" (140).

Alarcon explicates a number of the features of this maze, beginning with the question of who is regarded as the subject of feminism. We find "The modal 'person' in feminist theory still appears to be a self sufficient individual adult … [who] … corresponds to the female subject most admired in literature which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak had characterized as one who 'articulates herself in shifting relationship to . . . the constitution and 'interpellation' of the subject not only as individual but as 'individualist' [and that] Consequently, the 'native female' or 'woman of color' can be excluded from the discourse of feminist theory" (141).

The "'masculine cast' of radical feminist language, for example, noting the terms of 'raw power, brute force, martial discipline, law and order with a feminist face - and voice'" (142) is also discussed, as

are its theoretical consequences. These are laid out in the following extract. Alarcon says,

> this gendered standpoint epistemology leads to feminism's bizarre position with regard to other liberation movements, working inherently against the interests of non-white women and no one else. For example, Sandra Harding argues that oppositional thinking (counteridentification) with white men should be retained even though "[t] here are suggestions in the literature of Native Americans, Africans, and Asians that what feminists call feminine versus masculine personalities, ontologies, ethics, epistemologies, and world views may be what these other liberation movements call Non-Western versus Western personalities and world views. (143)

Alarcon notes a number of problems, ranging from the "exclusionary practices in Women's Studies"(145) to the fact that modernist-based assumptions are decidedly Western.

> Standpoint epistemologists have made use of the now gendered and feminist notion of consciousness, without too much question. (This notion, of course, represents the highest value of European culture since the Enlightenment.) The inclusion of other analytical categories such as race and class becomes impossible for a subject whose consciousness refuses to acknowledge that 'one becomes a woman' in ways that are much more complex than in a simple opposition to men. In cultures in which 'asymmetric race and class relations are a central organizing principle of society,' one may also 'become a woman' in opposition to other women. In other words, the whole category of woman may also need to be problematized. (145)

The challenge of meaningfully engaging difference is also a paradoxical pursuit. "There is a tendency in more sophisticated and elaborate gender standpoint epistemologists to affirm 'an identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race, and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures' with one breath, and with the next to refuse to explore how that identity may be theorized or analyzed, by reconfirming a unified subjectivity or 'shared consciousness' through gender. The difference is handed over with one hand and taken away with the other" (150).

Alarcon comments that, "The choice of one or many themes is both theoretical and a political decision. Like gender epistemologists and other emancipatory movements, the theoretical subject of *Bridge* gives credit to the subject of consciousness as the site of knowledge but problematizes it by representing it as a weave" (152). Alarcon ends saying, "current political practices in the United States make it almost impossible to go beyond an oppositional theory of the subject, which is the prevailing feminist strategy and that of others; however, it is not the theory that will help us grasp the subjectivity of women of color" (152).

These two extracts set up interesting possibilities to consider. Having explored the difficulties and dead ends in theoretical approaches to feminism in the years following *Bridge*, two approaches seem implied. One is that the political aspect must be given more energy. A second is that oppositional theory must be both altered and augmented to include *female* as a feature that interacts with immigration status, race, ethnicity, income, language, culture, LGBT orientation, physical condition, psychological status and an ongoing series of 'woven discourses' that respond to the richly complex conditions of gender in an emerging postmodernist and post-feminist context.

We now turn from Norma Alarcon's "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism" to focus on

Kwame Anthony Appiah's views on post-colonialism and postmodernism.

2.1.2 Appiah and Art as Engagement

While Norma Alarcon's article considered how a "gendered standpoint epistemology leads to feminism's bizarre position with regard to other liberation movements … [that] … may be what these other liberation movements call Non-Western versus Western personalities and world views" (Alarcon, 143), Appiah explores the linkage between postcolonialism and postmodernism in terms of how artistic, linguistic and literary turns may offer insights into a wider view of postmoden*ism* and postmodern*ity*.

We feel that Appiah has effectively accomplished two goals. First, he has applied the sort of critique that Alarcon makes of feminism to postmodernism's ability to provide supportive insights into Non-Western liberation movements. Second, he has provided tangible (paradoxically, by examining cultural artifacts such as art and literature) criteria for analysis that go beyond 'theoretically totalizing' projects he and Alarcon critique.

On the subject of postmodernism as a term fraught with as much contention as that of feminism (in our comparison, not in Appiah's words), which Appiah describes as "shark-infested waters around the semantic island of the postmodern" (140), he contends that, "postmodernism is equally offensive in all the respects enumerated (think of punk rock or pornography), it is no longer at all 'oppositional' in that sense; indeed, it constitutes the very dominant or hegemonic aesthetic of consumer society itself and significantly serves the latter's commodity production as a virtual laboratory of new forms and fashions. The argument for a conception of postmodernism as a periodizing category is thus based on the presupposition that, even if all the formal features enumerated above were already present in the older high

modernism, the very significance of those features changes when they become a cultural dominant with a precise socio-economic functionality" (142). Appiah says that this view does "leave open, then, the relations between postmodern*ism* and postmodern*ity*. Where the practice is theory—literary or philosophical—postmodernism as a theory of postmodernity can be adequate only if it reflects to some extent the realities of that practice, because the practice is itself fully theoretical. But when a postmodernism addresses, say, advertising or poetry, it may be adequate as an account of them even if it conflicts with their own narratives, their theories of themselves. For, unlike philosophy and literary theory, advertising and poetry are not largely constituted by their articulated theories of themselves" (142).

We find the central moment of Appiah's argument comes forward most clearly in the following extracts. He says, "I want to argue that to understand our—our human—modernity we must first understand why the rationalization of the world can no longer be seen as the tendency either of the West or of history; why, simply put, the modernist characterization of (144) modernity must be challenged. To understand our world is to reject Weber's claim for the rationality of what he called rationalization and his projection of its inevitability; it is, then, to have a radically post-Weberian conception of modernity" (145) and "Modernity has turned every element of the real into a sign, and the sign reads 'for sale'; this is true even in domains like religion where instrumental reason would recognize that the market has at best an ambiguous place" (145).

In terms of providing a concrete basis for assessment of the postmodern and post-colonialism through considerations of cultural artifacts such as art and literature, Appiah's excoriates, "What *is* postmodernist is Vogel's muddled conviction that African art should not be judged 'in terms

of [someone else's] traditional criteria.' For modernism, primitive art was to be judged by putatively *universal* aesthetic criteria, and by these standards it was finally found possible to value it. The sculptors and painters who found it possible were largely seeking an Archimedean point outside their own cultures for a critique of a Weberian modernity. For *post*moderns, by contrast, these works, however they are to be understood, cannot be seen as legitimated by culture and history-transcending standards" (148). In a key passage further on in this argument, Appiah asserts,

> All aspects of contemporary African cultural life—including music and some sculpture and painting, even some writings with which the West is largely not familiar—have been influenced, often powerfully, by the transition of African societies through colonialism, but they are not all in the relevant sense postcolonial. For the post in postcolonial, like the post in postmodern is the post of the space clearing gesture I characterized earlier: and many areas of contemporary African cultural life—what has come to be theorized as popular culture, in particular—are not in this way concerned with transcending, with going beyond, coloniality. Indeed, it might be said to be a mark of popular culture that its borrowings from international cultural forms are remarkably insensitive to—not so much dismissive of as blind to—the issue of neocolonialism or 'cultural imperialism.' This does not mean that theories of postmodernism are irrelevant to these forms of culture: for the internationalization of the market and the commodification of artworks are both central to them. But it does mean that these artworks are not understood by their producers or their consumers in terms of a postmodern *ism* [italics added for emphasis]: there is no antecedent practice whose claim to exclusivity of vision is rejected through these

artworks. What is called 'syncretism' here is made possible by the international exchange of commodities, but is not a consequence of a space-clearing gesture. (149)

Finally, while Appiah concedes "the international commodification of African expressive culture … [is] a commodification that requires, by the logic of the space-clearing gesture, the manufacture of Otherness" (156), he also contends "the contemporary African art piece called "*The Man with a Bicycle* is produced by someone who does not care that the bicycle is the white man's invention—it is not there to be Other to the Yoruba Self; it is there because someone cared for its solidity; it is there because it will take us further than our feet will take us; it is there because machines are now as African as novelists" (157).

This is a demonstration of the concrete basis for his earlier-stated dictum that "postmodernism as a theory of postmodernity can be adequate only if it reflects to some extent the realities of that practice" (142).

In an assessment of literature, one with a conclusion far less cheerful than the insights offered about *The Man with a Bicycle* art object, Appiah points to literature as the most useful entry into the reality of practice through the humanism it communicates and the social justice it demands. He explains, "For what I am calling humanism can be provisional, historically contingent, antiessentialist (in other words, postmodern), and still be demanding. We can surely maintain a powerful engagement with the concern to avoid cruelty and pain while nevertheless recognizing the contingency of that concern. Maybe, then, we can recover within postmodernism the postcolonial writers' humanism—the concern for human suffering, for the victims of the postcolonial state … —while still rejecting the master narratives of modernism" (155).

Here we find, along with powerful critiques of

notions of the postmodern, what may be termed a "turn to literature" as offering the most promising method of gaining insights leading to practical strategies applicable to feminism as well as Non-Western liberation movements.

2.2 The turn to literature for direction in the role of postmodern thinking toward resolving present-day challenges: Parker and Preston

In critical response to David Parker and Larry Preston's work on the vital nature of the literary imagination in framing the postmodern condition, we continue our theme that the turn to literature provides the most promising direction in the role of postmodern thinking toward resolving present-day challenges.

In the writings of Parker and Preston there is a tension between wanting some essential, some irreducible spirit of human goodness versus the postmodern rejection of totalizing and idealized Enlightenment notions of a grand narrative of metanarrative that too-often becomes equivalent (if it was not already so at its inception) with white, male, European, educated, moneyed and privileged Western structural institutional hegemonic oppression. We begin with Parker.

2.2.1 Parker

In Chapter 2, "A new turn toward the ethical", in a section of his work called "The ethical unconscious", David Parker reflects on a number of contemporary philosophers who link literature with ethics. Parker feels it's significant these individuals—such as Martha Nussbaum, Richard Eldridge, and Richard Rorty—are theorists rather than literary critics (33). It may be argued that the consequence of this shift amounts to a turning *away* from literary figures to establish, discuss and validate the ways literature engages with ethical issues to create a form of academic specialization that isolates its

impact to the academy and distances it from more pedestrian popular culture. Parker simply observes that turning *toward* theorists means "the 'turn *toward* the ethical' within literary studies is closely connected to a turn toward the literary within ethics" (33). It's notable that Parker conflates ethics with the formal theorizing of scholars rather than the social practices of individuals. Yes, it would be more cumbersome to say *ways academics study how humans conduct themselves in interacting with the world* instead of *ethics*. It would also be more accurate, but having stated that refinement, let's move on.

Considering that "literature and the arts help ethics" the way that "mathematics helps physics do its job" (33) does set up another typically postmodern conundrum. A positive outcome of the rejection of positivism is that ethics stops being "a second-class discourse which dealt only with the 'subjective' or 'ephemeral' side of experience, as opposed to science, which alone addressed 'objective' reality" (33). The difficulty arises in finding a method for avoiding the sort of "ethical skepticism leading from Hume … in which ethics is at the very best a second-class discourse" (34).

We find the central moment, the "charm point" of the turn to literature summarized in Parker's précis of Nussbaum, is in emphasizing "either the mutually antagonistic nature of important values, or the ethical importance of contingency or the passions, or the priority of particulars over generalities–all of which tend to resist systematic theoretical statement of the kind attempted in the available styles of conventional philosophy" (35).

Parker poses the following question. Is it "impossible to remain purely on the level of the linguistic or the semiotic … [and are such claims] … simply self-delusive" (39)? He answers this question in the affirmative to require his readers to grant the inescapability of the sphere of ethics (39) to present his idea that any attempts to escape (he uses the

word suppress) the presence of ethics signals the existence of an "ethical unconscious" (40).

What we see is the tension we alluded to at the start of this section—the wish for an irreducible spirit of human goodness versus the postmodern rejection of totalizing and idealized Enlightenment notions of a grand narrative. Parker flags as his crucial point that "the erosion of the canon [presumably in the form of the existence of an "ethical unconscious" safeguarding the irreducible spirit of human goodness] ... has serious ethical consequences" (40) and this really doesn't seem like much of a point. Rather, it seems like he is foregoing his conclusion. What are those consequences? And, if an "ethical unconscious" is always at work, doesn't this preserve the canon?

Finally, it seems Parker has done such a good job of linking the roles of ethical theory with imaginative literature that his conclusion is unsurprising. He notes that literary theory already acknowledges this relationship and that because "other theorists [and here he is referring to ethical theorists] have not been quite so sensible... a defence of the continuing importance of the literary canon as theory's necessary Other is continually being called for" (42).

Now, let's turn to an article by Larry Preston, which takes up the same challenges and may provide a more satisfing discussion of meeting them.

2.2.2　Preston

The abstract to Larry Preston's "Theorizing Difference: Voices from the Margins," states his main premise. "Theory more attentive to difference needs to gain access to the meanings that circulate within different lives, especially as reflected in literary writing of those who, themselves, speak and write from sites of difference" (941).

Preston says that "The problematics of difference within the arena of political theory are related to issues of passing and passages in a number of ways" (942) and takes issue with the situation in which "theorists seem to view their language as a (the?) neutral passageway through which all identities and differences can be seen and interpreted" (942).

In a section titled "passing for", about the language of theory, Preston observes that the postmodern "view that language is central to how we understand ourselves and others is now rather unproblematic (Derrida 1982; KoJodny 1985; Miller 1988; Rorty 1989; Showalter 1982, 1985; Wittgenstein 1953; and countless others)"[, that] "'empirical' patterns emerge because they reflect the ways in which linguistic meanings and practices have played out within the context of social life"[, which lead to the conclusion that] "it is no longer sensible to view different sociological 'ways of life' as anything more than the distinct meanings and practices—the language games—associated with different linguistic 'forms of life'" (943). This situation is important to Preston's argument because he feels that the rules of this language game must be expanded. Moreover, Preston's contention—which we agree with and which echoes Parker's position above—is that this dynamic has always been in play and that it must be consciously cultivated rather than pompously attacked.

While Parker sees "literary canon as theory's necessary Other" (Parker, 42) and Preston would certainly agree, Preston is more specific about how language forms passageways for other voices to be heard. In terms of theory's challenge in ever seeing itself clearly, the following concerns are pertinent. "Isn't the language-of-theory falsely passing as a language that can speak for everyone? Is it not only the echoed voice of those who have been constructed by—who speak and write from—the practices and routines of the language-of-theory?" (Preston, 945). Assuming an affirmative answer to those questions, the distillate from this conclusion is that one must pass beyond theoretical language

because "attention to literature and literary forms undoubtedly extends the reach of careful analysis and theoretical argument" (947) while also bearing in mind the caveat that "major literature is typically written from the meanings offered by the dominant discourse" (948).

While never using the term 'minor literature' in juxtaposition to major literature, the best available option in attempting to hear the voices from the margins is to appreciate that "creative reterritorialization of language by minority writers matters for purposes of political theory" (949) and to abjure the damning-with-faint-praise that characterizes celebrating the peculiar uniqueness of distinct narratives. In fact, "minority voices suggest that if cherished parts of their particular stories are made secure, no one need waste analytical prose shoring up the individuality of their choices" (950). Although posed as a question, Preston really makes more of a statement when he says, "Why not leave disparate, reflective/literary accounts in place, clearly associated with the form of life that has called them up—doubting any effort to prioritize them or to analyze just which one is more basic or consistent or true by some general view" (950).

As we ponder where this might leave us— certainly in a condition of uncertainty, which Preston advocates as a necessary humility—it is also relevant to explore what this uncertainty might open us to.

On the topic of how some feminist writing has valued the literary turn, Preston notes that, "In an effort to pass beyond the male-centered character of dominant theory, French feminists Monique Wittig (1969, 1980), Helene Cixous (1976, 1991), and Luce Irigaray (1985a, 1985b, 1993) move back and forth between writing literature (essays, novels) and theory" (946).

We close with three additional extracts from Preston, which reference creative fiction non-academic writing as well as creative non-fiction academic writing.

Under the title, "Literary Life and Language: Passing Beyond the Language of Theory", Preston observes,

> If not routine, the use of literature and literary forms of writing are not absent from social and political theory. Allegories and metaphors, as well as writing that is richly literary, are central to Plato's Republic and figure prominently in the writing of such disparate philosophers as Niccolo Machiavelli (1957, 1988), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1931, 1964, 1979), Friedrich Nietzsche (esp. 1966, 1967, 1968, 1974), Michael Walzer (1988), and Richard Rorty (1989). Such attention to literature and literary forms undoubtedly extends the reach of careful analysis and theoretical argument. (947)

Preston rather humorously speaks in "reaffirmation of Foucault's view that intellectuals who have a penchant for firmly gluing together general claims or prescriptions from carefully selected scraps of aristocratic presumption and intuition are to be regarded with great caution (1972,126-33) " (951).

Finally, Preston opines on the necessity of the creative element—creative writing or otherwise—in the postmodern world. He writes,

> Does this mean that those who would refashion theories may face the prospect of also learning to write as novelists and poets, essayists and playwrights? I suspect so, at least some of the time. If we are to proceed from metapolitical theory to political theories-without-a-gaze, it is hard to see how passing beyond the voice of secure and confident, detached analysis can be avoided. It is also difficult to imagine that those who pass their days entirely within the form of life of privileged academic theorists can acquire much facility in using anything but theoretical language. Yet those who have little or no facility to reach imaginatively into and to write about the differences within particular

people's lives are probably not to be trusted when they would fashion the principles and politics that affect those lives. Their analytical reach exceeds their imaginative grasp. (951)

While we feel the rocks roll in a concerted fashion, we may also envision the image of a dance palace as we consider the various moves and gestures—each with its own meaning and intent—involved in communicating the ideas and actions needed to create a better world to remove obstacles that stop groups and individuals from creating a better world for themselves. We may see Larry Preston orchestrating a rumba demonstrating his contention that "literary and analytical languages need to learn how to dance together, leading and following and moving together in turn as suggested by the tempo of different rhythms" (Preston, 943).

We end this section with brief discussion of two luminaries, Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty, weighing in on the turn to literature for direction in the role of postmodern thinking toward resolving present-day challenges.

2.3　Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty

The idea of personal stories drawing in voices from the fringe, that echoes Larry Preston's (1995) comments on voices from the margins, also bears on Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty's assertions on the work personal stories in literary works do in understanding other communities and in creating more humane social contexts.

Nussbaum (1995) chooses novels, in particular, as important creative works in terms of "literary imagination and public life" because they invoke story arcs that confer the "ability to imagine what it is like to live the life of another person who might, given changes in circumstances, be oneself or one of one's loved ones" (Nussbaum (1995), 5).

This is a sentiment Rorty(1998) also expresses. He refers to this action as "sentimentality" and describes how it operates through sharing of stories

that touch our similarities. He suggests the sorts of long sad stories that put us in another person's position are the ways to invoke a more useful sense of culture. Rorty's relevant question isn't " 'Why should I be moral?' but rather … 'Why should I care about a stranger, a person who is no kin to me, a person whose habits I find disgusting?' [and advises that a] … better sort of answer is the sort of long, sad, sentimental story that begins, 'Because this is what it is like to be in her situation" (Rorty 1989), "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality", 185). In terms of the socially transformative potential of Rorty's invocation to experience the lived reality of the other, his observations on changing the vocabulary/ the narrative itself by understanding, reinvention and refusing to "play by the rules of somebody else's final vocabulary" (*Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 133) are part of the action plan.

Nussbaum (1995) and Rorty (1989) are clearly on the same page, with an "interest in the ordinary" (Nussbaum (1995), 9) and in Rorty's (1989) comment above ("Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality", 185) even though they pen different marginal notations on that page. Nussbaum (1995) argues for the novel as the best way to "get potentially universalizable concrete prescriptions by bringing a general idea of human flourishing to bear on a concrete situation, which we are invited to enter through the imagination" (8). Rorty (1989) would abjure the universalizable concrete prescriptions part of Nussbaum's (1995) sentiment while expanding the texts from novels to a wider range of literature, including oral traditions and spoken word testimonies. While Nussbaum advises that literary "insights should not displace the workings of economic science" (12), Rorty (1989) would challenge economic science to present the sort of insights into the human condition a literary imagination provides.

Both Nussbaum and Rorty comment of the

function of literature in providing the narratives that allow context to play such a pivotal role in the postmodern world. This formulation, of context as the defining necessity in truly understanding the texts—the operating manuals—of current scholarship and the narratives of our postmodern world, leads to another question. Since context is the primary function, how important is the author? Might the author simply be noted as having performed an "author function" as a way to allow the reader/ audience to more directly engage with the narrative? Michel Foucault addresses this issue in our next section.

2.4 Whether to care primarily about context and relegate authorship to an "author function" rather than a particular personality: Foucault and the use of the author function as a *deus ex machina*

In critical response to Michel Foucault's multilayered discourse in "What is an author?" and the relation this bears to the significance of individual agency in the postmodern world, we contend there is merit in exploring associations correlated with the word author. In presenting another way of looking at Foucault's concept of the author function, introducing notions of authority, authenticity, and authorization leads to a sense of what a postmodern ethic must seek.

Foucault ends "What is an author?" by posing the rhetorical question of what difference it makes who is speaking. He begins by reflecting on the time before the concept of author attained privileged status as an individual mark of honor and quoting Beckett's absurdist (and what Simon Critchley, below, would term passive nihilist) query "'What does it matter who is speaking,' someone said, 'what does it matter who is speaking'" (*Foucault Reader*, 101) as a portrayal of the indifference of contemporary postmodern writing.

The project "What is an author?" engages in is

one in which the turn to the self as represented by individual authors is repudiated and the "absence" of the author is employed to suggest a useful construct in the form of the "author function". This is, "a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse" (*FR*, 118).

We may now use the author function to explore a number of problematic terms that comprise the vocabulary of postmodernism as want (of some basis for the author function) and repudiation (of the notion of author as subject originator). Author as the author function is invested with three operational features: authority, authenticity, and authorization.

By authority, we may refer to concepts such as the legitimate use of power, control and rights. The question arises, "By what right may we say someone is an author?" Foucault poses the question as, "If an individual were not an author, could we say that what he wrote, said, left behind in his papers, or what has been collected of his remarks, could be called a 'work'? [and notes that] Even when an individual has been accepted as an author, we must still ask whether everything that he wrote, said, or left behind is part of his work" (*FR*, 103).

On the question of authenticity, there is the nuance that we seek a truth that can be genuinely validated. The following query speaks to this functionality. "If I discover that Shakespeare was not born in the house that we visit today, this is a modification which, obviously, will not alter the functioning of the author's name. But if we proved that Shakespeare did not write those sonnets which pass for his, that would constitute a significant change and affect the manner in which the author's name functions" (*FR*, 106). Here we have a functional (we may say a *performative*) designation of the author's name in which a demand for authenticity wishes to be met.

This leads to a third association, authorization, correlated with the word author as embodied in the author function, which is nuanced with notions of the need for agreement, permission, consent or some species of consensus—as a way of representing what is actually taking place. "The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society" (*FR*, 108) [and] "The author is the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning (*FR*, 118) [because] these aspects of an individual which we designate as making him an author are only a projection, in more or less psychologizing terms, of the operations that we force texts to undergo, the connections that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize, [and, moreover, these] operations vary according to periods and types of discourse. We do not construct a 'philosophical author' as we do a 'poet'" (*FR*, 110).

In conclusion, the heart of the author function seems to be in its use as a substitute/ doppelganger for, as a *deus ex machina* of, the very essences postmodernism contests. Concepts nuanced in the word author—authority, authenticity, and authorization—may be invoked via the author function.

As an addendum to this conclusion, and as an illuminating excursion, we herein share our response to queries posed by a colleague who read the above section. The following questions were posed: "Given Foucault's position regarding authorship, how would you place him as an intellectual and why? In other words, what kind of 'author' is he? Is he the initiator of another kind of discursivity? If so what kind? What kind of functions do his work play in the current times?"

We offer the following reply.

In terms of Foucault's position regarding authorship, we think he does conform to the earlier classical standards of St. Jerome that he delineates.

His works are appreciated as of a similar quality and standard, he asserts his voice consistently as the author of the works, we see the contradictions in his work explained through references to his maturation as a thinker and explicable as experimentation with different ways of formulating his thoughts, and there are no peculiar gaffs whereby he references something that happened after his death.

As for Foucault as the initiator of another kind of discursivity, we sense that's his desire and also feel he provides himself, in the following extract, with an "out" if posterity fails to elevate him to the status of a Freud or Marx. Foucault explains, "What I have just outlined regarding the initiation of discursive practices is, of course, very schematic; this is true, in particular, of the opposition that I have tried to draw between discursive initiation and scientific founding. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two; moreover, nothing proves that they are two mutually exclusive procedures. I have attempted the distinction for only one reason: to show that the author function, which is complex enough when one tries to situate it at the level of a book or a series of texts that carry a given signature, involves still more determining factors when one tries to analyze it in larger units, such as groups of works or entire disciplines" (*FR*, 117).

In current times we find Foucault's works function to consolidate a broad flow of thought streams. His breadth as a thinker—philosopher, literary critic, historian, linguist, social theorist, activist—and the density of his prose are attractive and repulsive. By that we mean he'll always be able to provide insights into a range of social justice issues, from prison reform to surveillance to Lacanian nuanced discussions of master signifiers and Freudian archetypes, and there will always be an initial tendency to balk at the degree of concentration needed to fathom the depth of his thinking.

While Foucault, above, has focused on social discourse that necessarily must go beyond individual personalities and challenge notions that authorial intent is the final arbiter of the meaning of a work, discussion of the role of the individual is useful in providing counterpoints. We now turn our focus to reflect on the place of the individual in reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism. We begin with two modern thinkers, William James and John Dewey.

2.5 Reflections on the place of individual morality in reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism.

2.5.1 William James and John Dewey: The Imperative of Individuality and the Esthetics of Ethics

In critical response to the challenge we feel both James and Dewey engage in, of reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism, we begin with some points of commonality between them. The first is that ethics on any level must be the result of feeling from an experiential perspective.

We respond to what we feel. So, do we feel intellectually or can feeling only be an emotional response? This begets a second question. How are we to distinguish between feeling intellectually and feeling emotionally? Here it's important to recognize a binary that suggests intellect is superior to emotion. The point, however, is **not** that intellect is better than emotion. Rather, intellect **follows** emotion. We end up feeling intellectually if there is enough merit in our emotional feelings. The mistake is in imagining that these intellectual constructs are independent from the emotions that produced them.

The journey is from attempting to describe what is, to discussing how we feel about it, to questioning why we feel that way. This is a movement from the discursive to the rhetorical. As one moves from description to engagement (as how one feels about it), there is also a need to justify why one feels that way and to encourage/ persuade others to feel the same way. Simply put, we may say this is a movement from "what" to "how" to "why." The "how" concerns how we feel and the wish to explain and justify how we could feel. The "why" continues our explanation with self-analysis that allows us to feel comfortable in our beliefs—in short, to feel our moral attitude connects with ethical behavior even in the absence of any absolute and universal and totalizing ethical standards—and to try to persuade others as to why they should feel the same way. Here we have the rhetorical element as a feature we are aware of and that we don't seek to suppress. Indeed, the advocacy of one's felt needs and beliefs is a mark of "critical thinking" that speaks to both the awareness of our own biases and the presentation of the strongest possible arguments in favor of our opinions in light of this understanding. These observations are made in light of William James' discussion of conflicting demands and the fundamental basis of ethics lying in the contesting of demands that, in the real world, must necessarily involve inconsistencies.

Akin to this concept of emotional feeling leading to intellectual feeling, Dewey comments on the origins of sweet versus bitter and how that "was not to denote qualities of sense as such but to discriminate things as favorable and hostile" (15) as an emotional reaction to the environment rather than a scientific assessment of sense data.

Dewey talks about how artificial it is to separate the art from the experience of seeing the art. That is, we see art in a gallery and this is a community whether other individuals are there discussing the art with us or if we happen to be there and few others wander through the particular salon we're in (1). This is even more true about classic works of art.

When Dewey comments "Most European museums are, among other things, memorials of

the rise of nationalism and imperialism" (7), the point is that there must be care and concern about the use to which the art was, is, or will be put. This sentiment is echoed much later in the following extract. "Were art an acknowledged power in human association … and were morals understood to be identical with every aspect of value that is shared in experience, the 'problem' of the relation of art and morals would not exist" (362).

Dewey's real project is in "recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living" (9). In discussing what it really means to be able to appreciate (as in, to gather in and accumulate/ appropriate in an appropriate rather than a predatory manner) the perspectives of others—through artistic emulation or otherwise—Dewey calls for going beyond mere imitation and decoration and to internalize, to "enter into the structure [to] bring about an organic blending of attitudes characteristic of the experience of our own age and that of remote peoples" (347) [to produce, as an enduring effect,] "an expansion of *their* [italics used by Dewey to connote individuals able to appreciate this process] sympathetic imagination" (348).

The philosophical ramification of this is that "when the art of another culture enters into attitudes that determine our experience genuine continuity is effected" (249) to create a community and continuity that do not physically exist, and yet are functional and effective (250). Succinctly echoing our conceptualized flow from emotional feeling to intellectual feeling as the need to justify feelings one has acted on as a way to invoke the sympathetic imagination, Dewey quotes Shelley that "the deed shall breed the thought" (363).

At this point, we turn to William James.

Roughly corresponding to our ideas above, on the flow from discursive to rhetorical engagement, James lays out an analytical progression of the origin, the meaning, and the measure of

ethical philosophy. These are, "respectively the psychological question, the metaphysical question and the casuistic question. The psychological question asks after the historical origin of our moral ideas and judgments; the metaphysical question asks what the very meaning of the words "good," "ill," and "obligation" are; the casuistic question asks what is the measure of the various goods and ills which men recognize, so that the philosopher may settle the true order of human obligations" (Introduction, ¶3). Briefly, it seems a feckless quest and rather a straw man argument to imagine there might be an "essence [that] would be *the* good upon which all thinkers were agreed, the relatively objective and universal good that the philosopher seeks" (§III. ¶4). Equally problematic is the notion of obligation (which is unable to resolve the problem of demand) and the problem of conflicting demands and the question of who has the most valid claim to have their demands met.

William James draws an interesting distinction between truth and good. "Truth supposes a standard outside of the thinker to which he must conform" (§II. ¶3), while in the search for *the good*, "the real superiority and authority which are postulated by the philosopher to reside in some of the opinions, and the really inferior character which he supposes must belong to others, cannot be explained by any abstract moral 'nature of things' existing antecedently to the concrete thinkers themselves with their ideals" (§II. ¶7). James' central argument is that, "ethical treatises may be voluminous and luminous as well; but they never can be final, except in their abstractest and vaguest features; and they must more and more abandon the old-fashioned, clear-cut, and would-be 'scientific' form" (§IV. ¶2).

While James couches his discussion of personal ethics in the mantle of the imperative of individuality distinct from "any abstract moral 'nature of things' existing antecedently to the concrete thinkers

themselves with their ideals" (§II. ¶7) and Dewey sees an esthetics of ethics through the conflation of "morals understood to be identical with every aspect of value that is shared in experience" (362), their commonality in invoking feeling from experience as the substrate of morality and the raw material of ethics after postmodern thinking (with both James and Dewey being durably ahead of their times) is most striking.

We now turn to more chronologically contemporary thinkers, Richard Bernstein and Simon Critchley, in furthering our discussion of how these (to echo Nietzsche's phrases) "knowledge stones" which "rumble around in our bellies"—issues of personal morality and public ethicality—are individual and societal challenges, often succinctly described as problems of self and others in the phrase *the turn to the self*.

2.5.2　Richard Bernstein and Simon Critchley: Problems of self and others

In critical response to Bernstein and Critchley, in terms of *the turn to the self*, we begin with the following question. How is the attempt to see the world through others' eyes a postmodernist dilemma, actually a post-postmodernist dilemma, and what can be done to resolve it?

Richard Bernstein begins by briefly tracing a background on the rejection of humanism and undertakes to reject that rejection. He takes up the "challenge to defend these 'shared assumptions, commitments, and insights'" (2) that people seem to wish there to be. Proceeding almost by way of hyperbole, he says he does not accept "what has now become a cliché among many 'postmodern' writers, i.e., that humanism is passé" (Bernstein, 3) and laughable. The key point in Bernstein's enterprise of responding to the critique of humanism is stated in the following sentence. "The basic condition for all understanding requires one to test and risk one's convictions and prejudgments
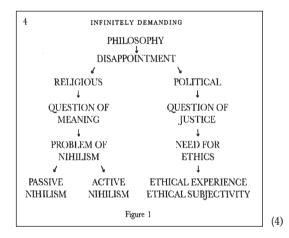
[which Bernstein falls short of calling prejudices] in and through an encounter with what is radically 'other' and alien" (4). Bernstein notes both that the "primary rhetorical gesture of the 'postmodern' moment is to be critical … [and that] … there is also a questioning, undermining and deconstruction of any and all fixed standards of critique" (7). One question to consider is why this is such a problem. There are two possibilities that Bernstein moots. One is that we're caught in a loop of Habermasian and Apelian 'performative contradictions' and the other is that this dilemma engenders "new genres of critique without requiring affirming norms of critique" (7).

Bernstein's position is, "I do not think we can any longer responsibly claim that there is or can be a final reconciliation" (8) and uses a term from astronomy, the constellation, as a metaphor which allows disparate elements to nevertheless group into a functioning whole, where some concepts exert force fields that attract or repulse other notions. On the conjunction of ethical and political considerations, Bernstein comments, "Although we can distinguish ethics and politics, they are inseparable. For we cannot understand ethics without thinking through our political commitments and responsibilities. And there is no understanding of politics that does not bring us back to ethics" (9).

On the question of how we may see the world through the eyes of others, Bernstein says "I agree with Gadamer when he tells us that 'in a conversation, when we have discovered the other person's standpoint and horizon, his ideas become intelligible without our necessarily having to agree with him'" (10). Bernstein closes (12) with acknowledgement of both the need to resist forced reconciliation of ideas, referencing both Kuhn and Lyotard as capturing something "in the air" even though both their works have a contradictory and exploratory feel. Bernstein also acknowledges the influence of Rorty (13) in his own work.

Simon Critchley, in a very non-Rorty frame of reference, begins his *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment and Politics of Resistance* with a species of the "without God what meaning can there be to life?" query that existentialism has long ago answered. Critchley's summation of the condition of solitary personal existence in a purposeless meaningless universe is that post-Kantian philosophy is a history of disappointment. He advises that the two forms of this disappointment of most urgent concern are on the religious and political fronts.

Critchley presents his point of view in the following diagram:

```
4            INFINITELY DEMANDING

                 PHILOSOPHY
                      ↓
               DISAPPOINTMENT
           ↙                      ↘
     RELIGIOUS                 POLITICAL
         ↓                         ↓
    QUESTION OF              QUESTION OF
      MEANING                  JUSTICE
         ↓                         ↓
    PROBLEM OF                 NEED FOR
     NIHILISM                   ETHICS
         ↓           ↓             ↓
   PASSIVE      ACTIVE     ETHICAL EXPERIENCE
   NIHILISM    NIHILISM    ETHICAL SUBJECTIVITY

                   Figure 1
```
(4)

The left side of this chart represents the ultimately untenable position we must direct our attentions away from. In moving away from either type of nihilism, Critchley uses the phrase "philosophical activity" to "mean the free movement of thought and critical reflection … [as] … militant resistance to nihilism" (2). Critchley refines this definition as, "thinking through of the fact that the basis of meaning has become meaningless" (2) "…without bewitching ourselves with new and exotic forms of meaning, with imported brands of existential balm" (3). He concludes that, "in a world that is all too rapidly blowing itself to pieces, the passive nihilist closes his eyes and makes himself into an island [and that] at the present time [2007] … the quintessence of active nihilism is [the terrorist group] *al-Qaeda* [and] … we are living through a chronic re-theologization of politics" (5). The right side of the chart must then be the proper course.

Critchley states his position with a prescription. "What is required, in my view, is a conception of ethics that begins by accepting the motivational deficit in the institutions of liberal democracy, but without embracing either passive or active nihilism" (8). He refers to ethical experience as the "core structure of moral selfhood" and as an "existential matrix of ethics" (9) and says his principal task is to develop a theory of ethical subjectivity (10). Thereafter follows an energetic attempt to construct, for want of a less-paradoxical phrase, an objective system of ethical subjectivity. While Critchley engages in interesting acrobatics, gymnastics or balletic maneuvers, to elucidate his three concepts—commitment, demand, responsibility—needed to create or appreciate his notion of ethical subjectivity, the mechanics of his system present an unconvincing complexity. Working through examples and counter examples, what we are left with is a sort of guilty conscience arbiter of morality.

Truly, there are gems in the mining Critchley is doing. For example, he closes his first chapter with two incisive points that present a useful role and an accurate description of postmodern ethics. We agree with his view that "ethics is the disturbance of the political status quo" [and] "the continual questioning from below of any attempt to impose order from above" (13). This is certainly at variance with an ethics predicated on maintenance of the status quo. Critchley cites moral positions, such as Adam Smith and Hume's concept of moral sympathy, as demands "to which the self gives its approval" (17). The problem is that Critchley's observations, including his concluding

sentiment that "all questions of normativity, whether universalistic or relativistic, have to follow from some conception of what I am calling ethical experience" (23), are perfectly reasonable without his triad of commitment, demand, responsibility as an envisioning/ explanation/ system of ethical subjectivity.

Unsatisfyingly, this leaves us with more of a general sense—a thread from inference and extrapolation—than as a *sine qua non*, that seeing the world from the perspective of the other is entailed in the turn toward the self. While Bernstein takes other and alien interests into account as a hallmark of the process whereby individuals may ever hope to gain self-knowledge and Critchley's ethical subjectivity acknowledges Enlightenment notions of moral sympathy as foundational, the necessity of seeing the world from the perspective of the other is not explicit. Rather, it is incidental and what is essential is that one is being a good person by behaving in good ways that include being virtuous toward others *as a condition of improving the self*. Finally, it may amount to the same result. At bottom, the answer to the question "Are you helping me because you love me or are you helping me because you want to appear to be helpful as a way of improving yourself?" may be less important than the help given.

Part 3: Conclusion: on the weaponization of contextualization and the vilification of postmodernism: How have the stones been grinding and how have the stones been used and how is the gravel being thrown?

In part, the back-of-our-mind question and impetus for this paper was the following question. How is confusion about postmodernism connected to present-day xenophobia and claims that we

are living in a "post-truth" era? Stanley Fish, in his recent *New York Times* article entitled "'Transparency' Is the Mother of Fake News", was a source of both inspiration and confirmation for our limited-selection retrospective on five aspects of the postmodern debate—postmodern feminism; post-colonialism and postmodernism; the appeal to literature in respecting minority voices; the question of whether context is the truest "author" of the postmodern world; and the all-encompassing question of how we may behave morally and ethically in light of the work-in-progress status of the preceding four areas of inquiry. If we were to consider a metaphor to describe our reflections on the place of the individual in reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism, it might be in the following question: How may we steer a laden cart with provisionally-attached axles—sometimes it feels as if the cart is a sledge being dragged— over a roadway of loosely-packed gravel without the wheels being shaken off? And yet, to paraphrase Nietzsche from our epigraph, it is the presence of these *indigestible knowledge stones rattling around in the belly* that defines the postmodern condition in which understanding context is the guiding principle for appropriate action.

Fish, in the following extract, uses the phrase *point of view* in describing what we take *context* to entail. He asserts:

Speech proceeding from a point of view can at least be recognized as such and then countered. You say, "I know where those guys are coming from, and here are my reasons for believing that we should be coming from some place else" —and dialogue begins. It is dialogue inflected by interests and agendas, but dialogue still. But when speech (or information or data) is just sitting there inert, unattached to any perspective, when there are no guidelines, monitors, gatekeepers or filters, what you have are innumerable bits (like Lego) [*parenthetic*

simile added by Fish] available for assimilation into any project a clever verbal engineer might imagine; and what you don't have is any mechanism that can stop or challenge the construction project or even assess it. What you have, in short, are the perfect conditions for the unchecked proliferation of what has come to be called "fake news."

We may, in light of the above extract, interpret the "bits" that Fish likens to Lego as the "facts" (which can also be described as truth claims) we analogize as stones. Fish, without using the term *weaponize*, may be interpreted to be arguing that "transparency" serves to *weaponize* opinions by placing those of the expert and the bigot on the same level. We agree. Further, the notion that facts are stones—durable, but not indestructible—leads to the following question. Whose interests are served by the destruction of the truth claims of established facts?

The answer is less dramatic than the question might imply. Nearing the end of 2018, we seem to be at a particular historical moment when phrases, like "alternate facts" and "fake news", are used, respectively, to justify one proposition or discredit another. Yet, standards of factual verifiability and journalistic integrity are clear and well established and both can be checked. We are presented with the popular notion that we are living in a "post-truth" or "post-fact" era and Fish comments on how "the rise of fake news has been attributed by some to the emergence of postmodern thought" (Fish, 2018). Rather, these notions of postmodernism are the result of ignorance about what postmodernism actually is. In reply to charges that postmodern thought, "derides facts and absolutes, and insists that there are only narratives and interpretations" (Fish, 2018), Fish counters that:

> …insistence on the primacy of narratives and interpretations does not involve a deriding of facts but an alternative story of their

emergence. Postmodernism sets itself against the notion of facts just lying there discrete and independent, and waiting to be described. Instead it argues that fact is the achievement of argument and debate, not a pre-existing entity by whose measure argument can be assessed. Arguments come first; when they are successful, facts follow — at least for a while, until a new round of arguments replaces them with a new set of facts. (Fish, 2018)

What, then, is the mundane reason for the popularity of phrases like "alternate facts" and "fake news" when legitimate methods of verification are available? On this question, Fish observes, "in the brave new world of the internet, where authority is evenly distributed to everyone with a voice or a podcast, no one believes anybody, or (it is the same thing) everyone believes anybody" and concludes that "what has brought us to this sorry pass is not the writings of Derrida or Foucault or any postmodern guru but the twin mantras of more free speech and absolute transparency" (Fish, 2018).

We agree and present a seven-word assessment: Lies used for political purposes are propaganda. There's nothing new about propaganda or the techniques of deception it employs. We recall a 1960s educational game, aptly called "The Propaganda Game", —it taught players 55 types and six categories of propaganda techniques for use during the game—as throwback proof of just how predictable and remarkably **not** new the techniques of propaganda are. As a perusal of the list in the notes at the end of this paper will reveal, the messages are the same even if the apparatus whereby propaganda is conducted is constantly updated.

Additionally, we draw attention to expressions like "the ethical universe after postmodernism" used in the discussion above. The phrase "after postmodernism" must be read as *after learning the lessons of postmodernism* rather than as *after*

the rejection of *postmodernism*. The question is one which we frame as more than a search for ethical standards in spite of the fact that all ethical standards have been called into question, but an understanding that higher ethical standards are *not* about edicts and absolutes. The bar has not been lowered to a "situation ethics" apology (often presented as a justification for doing whatever one can get away with) that there are no standards. Rather, ethical responses exist to be applied to a variety of situations. As Richard Rorty has argued, effort and empathy are required. Rorty uses the term sentimentalism to characterize the sort of empathy required to behave in an ethical manner in light of the great variety of ethical standards with which we may not agree and which we must understand even if we do not respect or adhere to them. Sentimentalism, in Rorty's ethics-after-postmodernism sense, is the beneficiary of Adam Smith's concept of the flow of moral sentiment from the Enlightenment. Again, the result is that a higher standard (and the word standard is used here as description of the prevailing norm rather than as a prescription for a Platonic ideal) of human conduct is required.

A variety of schools of thinking, using modern textual analysis and postmodern contextual analysis, trade ideas and debate methods in their lively and productive critique of each other. The question, at bottom, is of what historical moment these debates are the key to unlocking. How can they reconcile current polarities that have transformed lively debate into violent vying for a lock grip on single and simplistic solutions as equivalently presentable and singularly viable approaches? We may trace back the quest for best-solution-whatever-the-context systems and find there are none. We search deeper, betting that taking context into account will ensure a workable system. We lose the bet; it doesn't provide better accommodation. Instead, shallow recourse to the paean for diversity as a

panacea to entrenched injustices sparks sentiments of resentment on one side and impotence on the other. Entrenched interests oppose a measure toward equalization declaring, "it's gone too far" while disenfranchised individuals and groups protest that "it hasn't gone far enough."

How did public debate resolve or evolve or devolve to bring us to a world so unlike the one we bend our creativity toward making? Academics may contend that scholarly debate continues to challenge the sorts of propagandistic discourse that ensue in the polity; but this attempted disconnect and suggested dichotomy of society from academy ill serves any self or other-defined constituency. Intellectual abdication is egregiously irresponsible; sound voices are needed in unsound discussions. However discordant the din, ideas, which are used like stones bashing together, act in concert. The clanking has the sound of Sisyphus' rock rolling down the mountain over a bed of gravel. The concerted effort is the engine that rolls the rock back up. And yet, the concerted effort isn't concerted or coordinated in intent, only in affect. Rumblings are like thunder and we ponder how we will be engulfed in this squall moment in the storm of history. We grapple with practical problems and seek compelling conclusions. We see the power of the narrative connected to life in the postmodern world. We also see the promise of simple solutions sabotaging the necessary complexity in the multifaceted debates where community is negotiated and diversity is celebrated for the creative energy it brings (rather than savaged and reviled as the instrument of the supposed-concessions it wrings).

Time and space do not permit conversation on Nietzsche's *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*. That must be the subject for a later paper, but we also note how his observations on there being "three kinds of history: monumental, an antiquarian and a critical kind of history" (Loc. 304)

may be discussed as entry points to our opening remarks on foundation/ Enlightenment, textual/ modern, and contextual/ postmodern thought. Also to be the addressed in that later paper would be Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Times*, in which we see the strong parallel of "passage from the 'solid' to a 'liquid' phase of modernity" as a marker of postmodernism.

For now, in this brief consideration, we trust that some useful opportunities have been offered, some vantage points have been provided, from which to reflect on the place of the individual in reconstructing the ethical universe after postmodernism and on the usefulness of what we regard as creative non-fiction academic writing as a "free" style for presenting diverse works.

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Endnote

Robert Allen & Lorne Greene: *The Propaganda*

Game [Excerpts]

The reader is urged to review the examples and explanations in the listed techniques. For reference, below are the 55 titles and six categories of propaganda techniques used in Allen and Greene's game, based on the book *Straighter Thinking* by George H. Moulds, published in 1966 by AIM (Autelic Instructional Materials) Publishers, New Haven, CT.

III. Explanations of Techniques

A. Techniques of Self-Deception
  1. Prejudice
  2. Academic Detachment
  3. Drawing the Line
  4. Not Drawing the Line
  5. Conservatism, Radicalism, Moderatism
  6. Rationalization
  7. Wishful Thinking
  8. Tabloid Thinking
  9. Causal Oversimplification
  10. Inconceivability

B. Techniques of Language
  1. Emotional Terms
  2. Metaphor & Simile
  3. Emphasis
  4. Quotation Out of Context
  5. Abstract Terms
  6. Vagueness
  7. Ambiguity
  8. Shift of Meaning

C. Techniques of Irrelevance
  1. Appearance
  2. Manner
  3. Degrees & Titles
  4. Numbers
  5. Status
  6. Repetition
  7. Slogans
  8. Technical Jargon
  9. Sophistical Formula

D. Techniques of Exploitation
  1. Appeal to Pity
  2. Appeal to Flattery
  3. Appeal to Ridicule
  4. Appeal to Prestige
  5. Appeal to Prejudice
  6. Bargain Appeal
  7. Folksy Appeal
  8. Join the Bandwagon Appeal
  9. Appeal to Practical Consequences
  10. Passing from the Acceptable to the Dubious

E. Techniques of Form
  1. Concurrency
  2. Post Hoc
  3. Selected Instances
  4. Hasty Generalization
  5. Faulty Analog
  6. Composition
  7. Division
  8. Non Sequitur

F. Techniques of Maneuver
  1. Diversion
  2. Disproving a Minor Point
  3. Ad Hominem
  4. Appeal to Ignorance
  5. Leading Question
  6. Complex Question
  7. Inconsequent Argument
  8. Attacking a Straw Man
  9. Victory by Definition
  10. Begging the Question

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