

THE PREMIER DEMAND UPON  
AMERICAN EDUCATION

by

Eric Crawford, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
with a Major in Applied Philosophy and Ethics  
May 2022

Committee Members:

Craig Hanks, Chair

Jo Ann Carson

Russell G. Moses

**COPYRIGHT**

by

Eric Crawford

2022

## **FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT**

### **Fair Use**

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

### **Duplication Permission**

As the copyright holder of this work I, Eric Crawford, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

## **DEDICATION**

For my boys, T and N.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

For their support and encouragement, I would like to thank Vincent Luizzi, Peter Hutcheson, and Lori Gallegos.

Jo Ann Carson and Russell G Moses gave their time and supplied constructive advice for this project. Their expertise and kindness are warmly appreciated.

A separate mention goes to Nevitt Reesor whose regular conversations have helped me grow in confidence and refine my expression.

Finally, I would like to thank Craig Hanks. Without his direct support and guidance, this thesis would not have been written. His insightful suggestions can be seen in both the form and substance of this paper. He has been supportive in many capacities: as a thinker, a teacher, and as a human being, and for all of this I am thankful.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. A NEW CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE.....	1
II. A WITHERED AMERICAN EXPERIENCE .....	23
III. REIFICATION AND UTOPIA IN HIGHER EDUCATION .....	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	87

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. 1945a.....	1
2. 1890.....	30
3. 1906.....	32
4. 1945b.....	34
5. 1945c.....	36
6. 1945d.....	37
7. 1968.....	39
8. 2004.....	44
9. 2001 – present .....	47

## I. A NEW CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE



Figure 1: 1945a

“A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen. When we want to find reasons for it, this imperative is as refractory as the given one of Kant was once upon a time. Dealing discursively with it would be an outrage, for the new imperative gives us a bodily sensation of the moral addendum- bodily because it is now the practical abhorrence of the unbearable physical agony to which individuals are exposed even with individuality about to vanish as a form of mental reflection. It is in the unvarnished materialistic motive only that morality survives.”  
– Theodor Adorno *Negative Dialectics*



This thesis is an attempt to contextualize Adorno's new categorical imperative, and to suggest its urgent relevance for contemporary critical pedagogy, especially with regard to universities in the United States. Adorno's thought is dense, complex, and covers a wide range of theoretical and social topics; my presentation of his thought here can only be partial and selective. I am not aspiring to an exhaustive theoretical analysis of his concepts. I aim merely to draw out aspects of his thinking which, hopefully, provoke a critical reevaluation of how the university is presently situated in the structure of contemporary American society. J.M. Bernstein's *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* offers an excellent reading of Adorno's ethical thought and its relationship to history, society, and to moral theory in general. Where I have tried to give elucidation of Adorno's concepts and ideas I have relied heavily on Bernstein's account. My primary concern in this thesis is to broach a conversation about *application* of theory, as praxis, not so much with advancing or developing theory in its own right. A common and pervasive idea about Adorno tells us that this is precisely where his thought is at its weakest; the *Grand Hotel Abyss* characterization carries with it the charge that Adorno's thought is impotent in its fatalism. Frankfurt School Critical Theory is thought to be silent, even dismissive, regarding social and political action. Adorno scholars almost unanimously refute this picture. Careful readers detect a utopian impulse that resists totalization, tenacious even in the face of catastrophe, and which offers the possibility of what we can call ethical progress. I hope to present a limited picture of Adorno's thought together with a limited picture of our present environment to make the case that action is not only possible, but also that it is urgently demanded.

My specific target for application of Adorno's new categorical imperative is the

state-academic nexus. In Adorno's thought, the state and the university are institutions which function in service of the social totality. Under advanced capitalism, the social totality evinces repressive and violent characteristics which come to be obscured or rationalized in reified consciousness. One of the primary concerns of critical theory is to expose the ways in which reified consciousness and the social totality mutually determine and sustain one another. Critical pedagogy asks how educational institutions participate in the reproduction of the social totality along with the forms of reified consciousness most appropriate to that totality. There is a latent awareness throughout much critical pedagogical scholarship that suffering and social violence are consequences of the current educational status quo. My particular focus here is with the form of social violence executed by the state. I will claim that the American university, as an institution, is complicit with state violence, but also that the university presents a site of struggle, that the life of the university can be developed such that the academy resists, more than it aids, in the reproduction of state violence.

### **Adorno's New Categorical Imperative**

Adorno's phrase 'new categorical imperative' invites comparison with its Kantian predecessor. Like Kant, Adorno is concerned with autonomy, the possibility of rational action, and the ethical demands which reason places upon action. Like Kant's, Adorno's new categorical imperative forswears justifying reasons. However, this 'refractory' character of Adorno's new categorical imperative comes about through an entirely different line of reasoning than the one through which Kant's is grounded. We can gain a clearer understanding of Adorno's categorical imperative by seeing it in light of the

critical objections he raises regarding Kant's theory of practical reason.

### **“Excursus II: Juliette, or Enlightenment and Morality”**

Jointly written with Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* engages extensively with Kantian thought and its legacy. Adorno and Horkheimer sought to lay bare the manner in which the catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not alien to enlightenment, but rather immanent to it. Bernstein's account of disenchantment and its accompaniment with universalism and nihilism inflect my reading here. I further agree with Bernstein that, at least in part, the reversion of enlightenment to myth which Adorno and Horkheimer frequently illustrate is fruitfully understood as a loss of self-reflection. Nietzsche's dictum that “the highest values devalue themselves” reverberates through the text.

By the time we arrive at the third chapter, “Excursus II: Juliette, or Enlightenment and Morality”, enlightenment has been identified with autonomy (echoing Kant) and mastery over nature, and these are understood as simultaneously emancipatory and destructive. Weberian disenchantment also comes to play a major role in the process of enlightenment, and we can understand Kant's critical philosophy as advancing disenchantment: theoretical and moral knowledge disavow the need to be grounded in transcendent, supersensible entities, and the tribunal of reason, it is hoped, will dispel superstition and dogmatism. However, disenchantment proves fatal to Kant's version of morality. This is because Kant's theory evokes God and the immortality of the soul in order to meet conditions of acceptance in a world where morality and happiness often fail to coincide. Ultimately, “[Kant's] attempt to derive the duty of mutual respect from the

law of reason, ... has no support within the *Critique*.”<sup>1</sup> The ground of motivation for the categorical imperative, for treating humanity as an end in itself, is not able to withstand the force of disenchanting, theoretical reason. Disenchantment drives a wedge between justifying reason and motivating reason. Scientific reason and bureaucratic rationality then occupy the practical. Disenchanted practical reason becomes “the organ of calculation, planning; it is neutral with regard to ends;”<sup>2</sup>. Enlightenment, as it mythologizes itself, becomes less reflective and loses sight of the need to satisfy conditions of acceptance, and since it is not able to supply autonomous agents any substantive ends outside of themselves, the highest good of Kant’s moral law comes to be supplanted by the highest good of science in its mimesis of nature, namely *self-preservation*. “Becoming simply an organ, thinking reverts to nature.”<sup>3</sup>

Enlightenment sees to it that the affective austerity of Kantian practical reason is radicalized. Where Kant subordinated sentiment to calculating reason, de Sade and Nietzsche push this “scientific principle to annihilating extremes.”<sup>4</sup> Disenchanted reason becomes hostile towards inclinations contrary to the immediate principle of self-preservation such as those that spring from charity and pity. In taking the law of nature as its own, practical reason becomes remorseless. It is alongside these observations on de Sade’s and Nietzsche’s hostility towards pity that we encounter the phrase ‘*bourgeois coldness*’<sup>5</sup> which is to reappear in *Negative Dialectics* as the ‘principle of bourgeois subjectivity’.

---

<sup>1</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.67

<sup>2</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.69

<sup>3</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.68

<sup>4</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.68

<sup>5</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.80

Another major theme explored in the chapter and tied with the idea of coldness is reason's systematic 'withering' of experience. This is an idea which Adorno inherited from Benjamin and developed throughout his later works. The third chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* anticipates what Adorno will later investigate as identity-thinking's suppression of the non-identical, specifically, the erasure of somatic, non-conceptual experience. Although the authors had not yet adopted those terms, "Excursus II" describes the dialectic of enlightenment as characterized, at least in part, by reason's rejection of the particular in favor of the universal. The formalism of enlightenment suspends narrow, personal interest; the body becomes mere matter in need of mastery, something to be used towards some other predetermined end, and not an end in itself. Not just pity, but also pleasure falls away as a legitimate end.

For Adorno and Horkheimer, who here follow Weber, the ascent of scientific reason is mirrored in the increasing bureaucratization of 'rational' society.

[Reason] acknowledges no determination other than the classification of the social operation. No one is different to the purpose for which he has been produced: a useful, successful, or failed member of professional and national groups. ... Science stands in the same relationship to nature and human beings in general as insurance theory stands to life and death in particular. Who dies is unimportant; what matters is the ratio of incidences of death to the liabilities of the company.<sup>6</sup>

"Excursus II" also partially explores the social-political aspect of the dialectic of enlightenment. The notion of the autonomous individual is undermined in enlightenment's reversion to myth: the reified drive of self-preservation in an economy of private control pits human beings against one another, and the social totality becomes an irrational, "destructive, natural force". Unfettered market forces have disfigured the

---

<sup>6</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.66

premodern notion of noblesse oblige; it is only allowed to reappear in cynical form. The social order goes the way of morality. When enlightenment becomes self-conscious, the claims of 'divine right' or any other supersensible ground for political power dissolve before reason. But the authority of reason proves to be heteronomy. As Nietzsche was keen to point out, *a priori* reason does not compel us one way or another; in the end, it is power that decides. "The antiauthoritarian principle necessarily becomes its own antithesis, the agency opposed to reason: its abolition of all absolute ideas allows power to decree and manipulate any ties which suit its purposes."<sup>7</sup> Human beings become matter for rulers to administrate analogously to a scientific administration of previously wild nature. "The totalitarian state manipulates nations"<sup>8</sup>. "By elevating the cult of strength to a world-historical doctrine, German fascism took it to its absurd conclusion."<sup>9</sup> "... when power was at stake, the rulers have piled up mountains of corpses even in recent centuries."<sup>10</sup> The socio-political effects of enlightenment have proven deeply ambiguous. We can no longer harbor a naïve faith in the inevitability of social progress. The enthronement of reason was directly responsible for the Terror and indirectly culminated in the Final Solution.

Before I leave this exegesis of "Excursus II", I'd like to recapitulate those ideas which I find pertinent to contextualizing the new categorical imperative and then address what has become a nagging concern for readers of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The first of these is that after the Enlightenment, humanity does not survive as a substantial end for

---

<sup>7</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.73

<sup>8</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.70

<sup>9</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.79

<sup>10</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.93

morality. The morality of the modern era in its unreflective consciousness comes to mirror the morality of nature; *self-preservation becomes the highest good*. The calculating character of practical reason demands the suppression of personal interest. *Coldness* becomes a ubiquitous feature of bourgeois society. Reason comes to oppose that which it is unable to fully register. The materiality of existence cannot be fully accommodated to the rational system, and so *the body and its affective capacities become objects of control and domination*. Unreflective enlightenment, enlightenment in its reversion to myth, lays bare what was also true of premodern societies behind their organizing myths: *it is power, and not truth or reason, which decides the shape of social life*.

It is true that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not hold out much to its readers in terms of a program for praxis. Indeed, not just the possibility of utopia, but the possibility of thinking utopia is problematized. In their refusal to console us with a false hope in progress, the authors have been accused of fatalism and resignation. However, although the text is thoroughly pessimistic in tone, it is not entirely pessimistic in its program. The authors write of the secret utopia hidden in the concept of reason indicating that at least, not all hope is lost, and more, that a wholesale rejection of reason in favor of irrationalism is dangerous and premature. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is performative as well as prophetic; it insists that self-reflection still holds promise: “Only thought which does violence to itself is hard enough to shatter myths.”<sup>11</sup> The possibility of effective resistance to reified consciousness occupies much of Adorno’s oeuvre and becomes one of the central themes of his major work: *Negative Dialectics*.

---

<sup>11</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer *Dialectic of Enlightenment* p.2

## Negative Dialectics

Adorno offers another salient criticism of Kantian practical reason in *Negative Dialectics*. Following Marin Shuster, I will present this criticism in terms of a theory of action.

Adorno finds fault in Kant's conception of the will. According to him, Kant conceives of the will as the faculty responsible for action, yet his theoretical account of the will proves unsatisfactory for a theory of action. "The part of action that differs from the pure consciousness which in Kant's eyes compels the action, the part that abruptly leaps out—this is spontaneity, which Kant also transplanted into pure consciousness, lest the constitutive function of the "I think" be imperiled."<sup>12</sup> Kant's conception of the will falls too much on the side of pure consciousness and of constitutive subjectivity to properly attend to the objective. Adorno believes that rational action requires a third term to mediate between subject and object, rational and non-rational, consciousness and body. For this, he introduces the provisional label 'the addendum'.

The Buridan ass thought experiment proves helpful in illustrating Adorno's concept of the 'the addendum'. The scenario imagined is one of an ass equidistant between two equal bales of hay. The thought experiment hinges on the elimination of any empirical factors which might lead our ass towards one bale rather than the other. Kant deploys this experiment to demonstrate the spontaneity of the will, to provide "empirical evidence of the right to 'introduce freedom into science'"<sup>13</sup>, but for Adorno the example serves to underscore the empty formalism of his theory. He tells us that such

---

<sup>12</sup> Adorno *Negative Dialectics* pp.229-30

<sup>13</sup> Adorno *Negative Dialectics* p.224



examples “are not apt to occur where they are not devised or brought about in order to demonstrate freedom. And even if something of the kind were discoverable anywhere, it would be irrelevant to any person’s life and therefore ἀδιάφορον for freedom.”<sup>14</sup> For Adorno, freedom and action cannot be understood in terms of pure consciousness. What is needed for rational action is ‘the addendum’.

Adorno devotes four pages of *Negative Dialectics* to ‘the addendum’ in a section bearing the same title. He introduces the concept as vague, consistent with how he characterizes its experience. The addendum is Adorno’s answer to modernity’s diremption of thought and action. *Hamlet* dramatizes the dilemma of the modern subject: the more self-conscious the subject, the greater the gap between thought and action. In the end, Hamlet, like Buridan’s ass, does take action on his decision; however the “subject’s decisions do not roll off in a causal chain; what occurs is a jolt, rather.” Adorno does not conceive of ‘the addendum’ as entirely nonrational, though he concedes that it appears irrational under ‘rationalistic rules’. This is because ‘the addendum’ “denies the Cartesian dualism of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. ... The addendum is an impulse, the rudiment of a phase in which the dualism of extramental and intramental was not thoroughly consolidated yet ...”

This is a good place to give further elaboration to Adorno’s theory of action. Martin Shuster describes Adorno’s view of action as environmentally situated such that action is “best understood as *drawn out of us*.”<sup>15</sup> The addendum, however, as an impulse does not necessarily mean unfree action. Hamlet is able to conceptualize his revenge,

---

<sup>14</sup> Adorno *Negative Dialectics* p.224

<sup>15</sup> Shuster *Autonomy After Auschwitz* p.77

choose it as his own, and it becomes constitutive of who he is. Shuster distinguishes ‘impulse’ actions from ‘reflex’ actions. The former belong to agents and the latter to organisms. An impulse action demonstrates *who* an agent is; a ‘reflex’ agent demonstrates *what* an organism is.

Adorno gives us another example to work out his meaning of the addendum. In his lectures titled *History and Freedom*, he recounts his conversation with Fabian von Schlabrendorff, one of the survivors of the July 20 plot to assassinate Hitler. Putting to him the question of how he and his coconspirators had decided to act against Hitler, even though they knew the risk was high and the chance of success low, von Schlabrendorff replied that he and his accomplices had felt compelled to act, as if on an impulse. We can understand von Schlabrendorff’s decision as both rational and irrational as well as issuing forth, like a jolt, from an ineluctable physical impulse.

It is important to point out here that Adorno is not suggesting freedom and action consist in abandoning oneself to impulse - doing so would be to endorse a form of irrationalism since reason would be denied its regulatory role in guiding action. Rather, he is criticizing the propensity of abstracting, instrumental reason to deny its somatic ground. Adorno adopts a view of consciousness similar to Freud’s, wherein thinking arises in response to material need. Another way of putting this point is that, for Adorno, thinking and action are always rooted in the body. An adequate picture of consciousness must make room for the material even as some of that material eludes conceptualization. In the section titled ‘Passage to Materialism’, Adorno stresses the irreducibility of the somatic moment as “the not purely cognitive part of cognition”. His insistence on this irreducibility of the object becomes a central motif for his negative dialectics.

For Adorno, the addendum recalls the body as an element in rational action where it had been unavailable for Kant owing to the latter's preoccupation with pure consciousness. As we saw in "Excursus II", the method of science which subsumes particulars to universals tries to eliminate the somatic element. Bodies become matter. Pain, suffering, pity, and compassion appear to be irreconcilable with the demands of universalizing practical reason, and so they become nothing at all, or they are held in suspicion as residues of our regrettable frailty. The '*moral addendum*' which appears alongside the new categorical imperative is a direct counter to this tendency. We can think of the 'moral addendum' as a spontaneous impulse to aid another in their suffering.

The 'moral addendum' does not speak in *a priori* principles; we are not given pure, rational grounds to act for the sake of another. It begins with the body and the recognition that pain and suffering threaten the integrity of that body. If it is rational to avoid pain and suffering for oneself, it only takes a small step to demonstrate the rationality of aiding others who are in pain. This, Adorno accomplishes by harnessing the 'unvarnished materialistic motive' and mimetic identification. When we identify with another's suffering, in a sense, we feel something of that suffering ourselves. This is not an idle fiction for consciousness, but an important element for 'self-preservation'. Anthropologically, it is in our rational interest to respond mimetically to the suffering and pain of others. This may be because what threatens another also threatens oneself, and so attending to that threat serves the self as well as the other. We can also say that if compassion and pity do not directly serve our own immediate, material interest, by responding to the suffering of others we increase the likelihood that in future times of need, others might likewise respond to our own suffering. In this way, self-preservation,

the law of nature, which in the current state of things effects a kind of war of all against all, is reconceptualized in the new imperative as the principle by which we are now tasked with intervening for the sake of others. The impulse to intervene against injustice is at the same time a self-interested one.

After these considerations of the moral addendum, we are better positioned to understand the new categorical imperative. Adorno is not making the claim that since we can all agree that Auschwitz was evil, then we should all agree that nothing similar should happen. Such a reading neglects the depth of Adorno's thought behind the new imperative. We need to "arrange our thoughts and actions" because the way in which they are currently arranged brought us Auschwitz, but we cannot expect to do so effectively if we rely on traditional philosophy and its insistence on putatively 'pure' thought. For Adorno, the attempt to purify thought of its non-conceptual content is responsible, at least in part, for the catastrophes of modernity. 'Dealing discursively [with the new categorical imperative] is an outrage' precisely because the discursive mode cannot do justice to our bodily felt impulse to intervene against such suffering.

It should be clear by now that, for Adorno, freedom is a thoroughly social and historical concept. Conceptions of freedom which are attainable within the private consciousness are vacuous and potentially dangerous. The 'administered world' chokes off our possibilities for freedom as it reduces experience and agency to match its own concept. The urgency for thinking and action to orient away from what brought us Auschwitz is matched with equal difficulty. The social environment, of which higher education is an important part, is at once a precondition for free action, a major impediment to free action, and the occasion of the demand for freedom.

## **“Education After Auschwitz”**

Bernstein offers a helpful, if overstated claim, in elucidating Adorno’s view of the social totality: “Adorno accepts some version of the Weberian/Marxist analysis of contemporary society which claims that the major institutions of society have been rationalized in accordance with the needs and autonomous mechanisms of capital reproduction, and that hence these institutions are no longer available as spheres of ethical practice.”<sup>16</sup> Almost every page of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and of *Minima Moralia* confirms the first part of this; Adorno sees every institution and every facet of modern life as, at least in part, colonized by the economic order. However, I find Bernstein’s claim that, for Adorno, these institutions are ‘no longer available as spheres of ethical practice’ to overstate the problem as Adorno sees it. Adorno’s thought often turns to concerns about pseudo-activity, attempts to reform the social order which, in fact, merely serve to reinforce it. The picture he paints of the social totality often stresses the impotence of the individual before that totality. If Adorno had given up altogether on the possibility of ethical, institutional change, then his radio address “Education After Auschwitz” would be a performative contradiction. If he believed that mass media was irredeemably involved in social domination and that schools inevitably reproduce established relations of power, then for him to get on the radio and discuss the need for institutional reform in the world of education would require some imaginative explanations.

“The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again.”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Bernstein *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* p.41

<sup>17</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

The first line of Adorno's 1966 address echoes the new categorical imperative which was published in *Negative Dialectics* the same year. Adorno's spoken prose in this talk, as in his published lectures, is thoughtful and penetrating but nowhere as dense as in his written works. The accessibility of "Education After Auschwitz" recommends it to the uninitiated, and Adorno uncharacteristically offers recommendations for praxis. These latter considerations prompt me to assert that this text deserves wider dissemination.

Adorno devotes the first part of his speech to establishing, for the listener, the contemporary urgency of that 'premier demand' roughly twenty-five years after Auschwitz. The new categorical imperative does not need justification, to do so would be "...monstrous in the face of the monstrosity that took place. Yet the fact that one is so barely conscious of this demand and the questions it raises shows that the monstrosity has not penetrated people's minds deeply, itself a symptom of the continuing potential for its recurrence as far as peoples' conscious and unconscious is concerned."<sup>18</sup> For Adorno, the threat of something like Auschwitz recurring did not subside with the close of the war. "... the fundamental structure of society, and thereby its members who have made it so, are the same today ..."<sup>19</sup> This claim must have been startling for those of his listeners who had comforted themselves that the barbarism of national socialism was a thing of the past.

We cannot afford to write Auschwitz off as if it were an aberration in comparison to some grand march towards progress. The fact that Auschwitz "happened is itself the expression of an extremely powerful social tendency." Nationalism is a potent force, as

---

<sup>18</sup> Adorno "Education After Auschwitz"

<sup>19</sup> Adorno "Education After Auschwitz"

is subsuming human beings under calculative reason. Both are present today, and capable of producing genocide. Adorno speculates on Freud's thesis in *Civilization and its Discontents* that the threat of barbarism may be endemic to civilization itself, requiring a constant vigilance.

Furthermore, one cannot dismiss the thought that the invention of the atomic bomb, which can obliterate hundreds of thousands of people literally in one blow, belongs in the same historical context as genocide. The rapid population growth of today is called a population explosion; it seems as though historical destiny responded by readying counter-explosions, the killing of whole populations. This only to intimate how much the forces against which one must act are those of the course of world history.<sup>20</sup>

The existence of nuclear weapons adds urgency to this premier demand. This topic will be taken up explicitly in a later chapter, but it is worth underscoring Adorno's explicit mention of the bomb. I will argue that taking seriously the new categorical imperative entails, among other things, the pursuit of total nuclear disarmament. What he says here about acting against the course of world history is echoed in *Negative Dialectics* when he writes, "Universal history must be construed and denied."<sup>21</sup> In the same paragraph, "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb." I take these comments as evidence that the threat of Hiroshima happening again is just as relevant to the new categorical imperative as the Auschwitz model.

One of the central points Adorno raises in the speech is the need for critical self-reflection. This is partly because, in his view, much of the psychology of Auschwitz's executioners was constituted by unreflective hate. People ought to be taught to reflect

---

<sup>20</sup> Adorno "Education After Auschwitz"

<sup>21</sup> Adorno *Negative Dialectics* p.320

inwardly before striking outwardly. “The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection.”<sup>22</sup> The need for critical self-reflection is also social as well as psychological. Adorno intends a general enlightenment wherein “intellectual, social, and cultural” life reflect on the motives for the horror and make them conscious.

This emphasis on self-reflection is consistent with his and Horkheimer’s earlier observations regarding the dialectic of enlightenment. It follows, then, that Adorno rejects the romantic appeal to restoring long lost social bonds as a means to heal society. It is not that interpersonal bonds per se are regressive, but their reification in society is dangerous. It was those premodern bonds which gave license to authority and sanctioned barbarism in its earlier forms. The answer lies in a more fully developed enlightenment, not in a nostalgic retrieval of outdated codes of conduct. “The single genuine power standing against the principle of Auschwitz is autonomy, if I might use the Kantian expression: the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not cooperating.”<sup>23</sup>

It is in this vein that Adorno takes aim at collective identity. “People who blindly slot themselves into the collective already make themselves into something like inert material, extinguish themselves as self-determined beings. With this comes the willingness to treat others as an amorphous mass.”<sup>24</sup> The most immediate image, of course, is the devoted Nazi. In the collective frenzy of the party rally, the devotee relinquishes their autonomy, becomes a part of the mass, and as they see themselves so are they inclined to see others. Again, the social tendency which produced fascist

---

<sup>22</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

<sup>23</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

<sup>24</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”



ideologues willing to sacrifice their individuality has not disappeared.

The role of technology in fostering a reified consciousness, Adorno states, needs more careful study. He contends that there is something ‘pathogenic’ about society’s current relationship with technology. Again, the dialectic of enlightenment is illustrated. Adorno tells us that people have come to fetishize technology, to see it as an end in itself. They’ve forgotten that the proper ends for technology are human self-preservation and dignity. The type who comes to mythologize technology is like the “one who cleverly devises a train system that brings the victims to Auschwitz as quickly and smoothly as possible [and] forgets about what happens to them there.”<sup>25</sup> The strictly technical attitude of the engineer with no concern for humanity as such is a paradigmatic example of ‘bourgeois coldness’.

“If coldness were not a fundamental trait of anthropology, that is, the constitution of people as they in fact exist in our society, if people were not profoundly indifferent toward whatever happens to everyone else except for a few to whom they are closely bound and, if possible, by tangible interests, then Auschwitz would not have been possible, people would not have accepted it.”<sup>26</sup> Adorno’s observation on coldness as a necessary condition for Auschwitz lends weight to his earlier claim that conditions which produced Auschwitz still obtain, that the ‘fundamental structure’ of society was not significantly different.

Adorno also takes up what he calls the traditional educational ideal of hardness. He refers to Wilhelm Boger’s defense at his Auschwitz trial wherein Boger evoked

---

<sup>25</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

<sup>26</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

hardness as the educational key to discipline. This idea is ‘utterly wrong’ in inculcating indifference to pain. Such indifference to one’s own pain slides easily to indifference towards the pain of others. Being hard towards oneself earns one “the right to be hard with others”<sup>27</sup>. It is worth pointing out that again, it is not self-determination which is at issue but the ideal of hardness which strives to eliminate the somatic element and blocks any possibility of a moral impulse.

Before his concluding remarks, Adorno briefly visits the topic of love. Love is the ideal on the other side of bourgeois coldness, but in this wrong state of things, it lies too far away for most of us. “Every person today, without exception, feels too little loved, because every person cannot love enough.”<sup>28</sup> It cannot be preached; “no one has the right to preach it.”<sup>29</sup> It cannot be exhorted of anyone to love, doing so would exemplify the command structure of the society which constricts love. It seems that the best we can do is to approach love negatively, by studying the conditions which support and maintain the general coldness which obtains.

At the close of his address, Adorno offers a few concrete suggestions towards satisfying the ‘premier demand’. “Concrete possibilities of resistance nonetheless must be shown.”<sup>30</sup> His first suggestions are that closer studies should be done of perpetrators; Adorno hopes that a deeper understanding of the authoritarian personality can enable us to grasp the underlying psychological conditions of coldness. Political education is to be centered on the new categorical imperative. This means for Adorno that political science

---

<sup>27</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

<sup>28</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

<sup>29</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

<sup>30</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

is to be sociologized. Political forms are not to be understood as self-subsisting entities but are shown to be dependent upon the “societal play of forces” elsewhere often characterized in terms of contradiction.

### ***Minima Moralia***

Adorno’s reflections on love and the lack of it hearken to his observations in *Minima Moralia*. In this work Adorno investigates the effects of the totalizing social order on private and public life. His musings on the state of ‘damaged life’ are meant to illustrate the impossibility of completely escaping the totalizing logic of modern society. Bernstein’s claim that Adorno sees institutions as “no longer available as spheres of ethical practice” overstated as it is, is supported in *Minima Moralia*’s relentless critique of the ‘the false life’.

I mention *Minima Moralia* here after discussing “Education After Auschwitz” because in the former work, Adorno evinces a relentless self-criticism with regard to the state of the intellectual in modern society. He does not flinch from recognizing how the division of labor has damaged intellectual life. The status of intellectuals in modern society problematizes their relationship to the suffering around them. This is part of Adorno’s professed guilt.

One of the recurring themes of the intensely personal *Minima Moralia* is Adorno’s reflection on the ‘damaged life’ of the intellectual. Academic culture manifests a falseness. Intellectual life has inculcated an aloofness, a moral sequestering to the ivory tower. The demand to conform to the culture of the academy is at the same time a demand to conform to the administration of the social totality. Thinking itself becomes

colonized. In essay 46, titled “On the morality of the thinking”, Adorno issues a direct complaint against contemporary ‘sophisticated’ thought: “It is just this passing-on and being unable to linger, this tacit assent to the primacy of the general over the particular, which constitutes not only the deception of idealism in hypostasizing concepts, but also its inhumanity, that has no sooner grasped the particular than it reduces it to a through-station, and finally comes all too quickly to terms with suffering and death for the sake of a reconciliation occurring merely in reflection – in the last analysis, the bourgeois coldness that is only too willing to underwrite the inevitable.”<sup>31</sup> We must rid ourselves of the illusion that the academy is somehow preserved from the failings of the social order, and instead come to an honest assessment of the complicity of intellectual life in social dysfunction. Academics are called upon to rationalize the power they answer to -- any reticence to do so puts them at odds with their own professional organization. It is worth repeating, however, that Adorno does not forswear the intellectual life altogether. His own career was an attempt to shift the culture of intellectual life from within. The picture he gives us is one in which no one escapes the logic of the social totality. The ‘good life’ is thus beyond our grasp, but resistance to the social totality, however limited, is not only possible but urgently demanded. Adorno’s point is not that philosophy and education are lost to the prevailing order but that anyone who seeks to bring philosophy and education to bear upon the ills of the society must also acknowledge how those ills have contaminated their own thoughts and action. *Minima Moralia* is not a mere lament, it is also a call for thinkers to acknowledge their own complicity with power. Critical self-reflection is more than just good philosophical practice, it is a precondition for any

---

<sup>31</sup> Adorno *Minima Moralia* p.74

further ethical thought and action.

## II. A WITHERED AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Continuing with the theme of critical self-reflection, this section of my thesis will serve to contextualize the new categorical imperative for the American reader. The focus on US state violence here should not be misconstrued as stemming from a particular animus towards America; I do not understand this thesis to be anti-American. Rather, it is informed by a concern for responsibility. There is a two-fold sense of this responsible. First, the US state must be held accountable for its actions of violence against populations. Of course, there are other state and non-state actors perpetrating violence against civilians around the globe, and Washington cannot be held responsible for all inter- and intra-national conflicts. But, there is a distinct reluctance on the part of US national security officials, foreign policy pundits, and US-based international relations scholars to hold the US government responsible for *its* history of perpetrating violence against non-combatants. On the international stage, states do not generally admit their own wrongdoing though they are often quick to accuse their rivals. Second, Americans must learn to assume responsibility for their *own* state. To whatever extent a state is democratic, the citizens of that state have a responsibility to hold their own state accountable for the violence it perpetrates. If citizens globally are only prepared to denounce the actions of states that are not their own, then the democratic path to peace terminates in a dead end. However, if citizenries can democratically hold their own governments responsible for pursuing peaceful diplomacy and dialogue, the democratic path to peace may hold serious promise.

### **“Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence”**

By way of drawing attention to the violence of US state power, the speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in April of 1968 opposing the US intervention in Vietnam complements the aims of this thesis. A close reading of MLK’s “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence” reveals several similarities with Adorno’s “Education After Auschwitz.” It should come as no surprise that King and Adorno hit upon common themes - both were students of the German philosophical tradition, and both were committed to emancipation.

As each took a concrete event of violence as their starting point, Auschwitz for Adorno and Vietnam for MLK, they both took pains to impress upon their audiences that these catastrophes had a social basis. We cannot understand the American intervention in Vietnam solely in terms of international antagonism. There are deeper, underlying social ills King is concerned to communicate. In Buberian fashion, King calls for a revolution of values away from a ‘thing-oriented society’ towards a ‘person-oriented society’. Here, the Buberian distinction between the I-It relation and the I-Thou relationship is cast in a sociological frame.

It is worth drawing out the Buberian theme in King’s call. In *I and Thou*, Buber stresses that the I which comports itself to an It is not the same I which comports itself to a Thou. The I-It relation serves instrumentality; through It, people become Hes and Shes. People become objects of experience, but the I which says I-It can never do so “with their whole being”. By contrast, the I which says I-Thou can only do so “with their whole being”. This suggests that remaining in a world of object experience makes impossible the realization of one’s ‘whole being’. Buber stresses that love is only possible with the

I-Thou. I-It does not admit genuine interpersonal relationships. King's meaning in drawing on Buber in this context, is that Americans must learn to speak of the Vietnamese citizen with the I-Thou, and similarly they must learn to speak of the drafted soldier, or the returning soldier, with the I-Thou. The I-It which predominates, which speaks of the foreigner and soldier as objects, lends itself to inhumanity and violence.

King's and Buber's concerns that object language predominates social relations dovetail with Frankfurt School critiques of instrumental rationality. The development of practical reason which is outlined in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* exhibits the same propensity to quantify, calculate, classify, and treat all things as things put to service towards a higher goal, ultimately the self-preservation of the social totality. The 'thing-oriented society' which treats persons as Its and not as Thous can be understood as a manifestation of bourgeois coldness. The opposite of bourgeois coldness for Adorno, Buber, and King is love. All three see love as an antidote to many of the ills facing modern society, but Adorno, unlike the other two, does not preach it positively. Adorno's negative approach is oriented towards negation of coldness, and this thesis follows the more modest aim of critiquing state violence and the coldness which supports it. The exhortation to a global order where humankind is united in love, admirable and praiseworthy as it is, appears as a lofty ideal alongside the more immediate imperative that Auschwitz does not happen again.

The same paragraph in which King calls for a revolution of values towards a 'person-oriented society', he also gives name to what he earlier had called the three evils of society. "When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of *racism*, *materialism*, and



*militarism* are incapable of being conquered.”<sup>32</sup> Today, King is well remembered for his fight against racism, but his concerns about materialism and militarism were equally integral to his struggle. It is worth noting that King’s concern about militarism has largely been scrubbed from his legacy, and there has also been a corresponding loss of public consciousness about the dangers of militarism. American society today still harbors nationalist and militarist currents, and we have a public political discourse that takes racism and materialism as major issues, but American militarism has been spared the same scrutinizing public gaze. It is one of the chief aims of this thesis to contribute to a resurgent critique of American militarism. One of the lessons we should recall from King is that the struggle against militarism is a *social justice* issue.

King explicitly aims to give voice to the voiceless. Much of his work in civil rights can be understood in this way, but so too can we understand King’s concern for the perspective of the Vietnamese. It has become commonplace today to decry the American intervention in Vietnam as too costly for America. Americans are brought to understand that the tragedy of the Vietnam War can be adequately expressed by the blood and treasure expended by America as against its failure to meet its strategic military and geopolitical aims. This myopic view of the conflict is directly countered by King. In a move consistent with Adorno’s categorical imperative which asks us to identify with the victims of state violence, King asks his audience to think what “strange liberators” Americans must seem who “poison their water” and “kill a million acres of their crops”. “We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men. What liberators?”<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> King Jr., Martin Luther “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence” (*italics mine*)

<sup>33</sup> King Jr., Martin Luther “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence”

We can draw a parallel with the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. Many Americans today regard the invasion of Iraq as a tragic mistake because so much American blood and treasure was invested in a failed ‘nation-building’ project. Too few Americans consider how the occupation of Iraq was disastrous for Iraqi people. What strange liberators the ‘coalition of the willing’ turned out to be as they waged a bloody counter-insurgent war and tortured detainees over the years following their invasion.

King uses the phrase ‘concentration camp’ three times in his description of what the US military was perpetrating in Vietnam. The comparison to Nazi Germany was deliberate and harrowing: “What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe?”<sup>34</sup> King understood, as best as he could from his vantage point, how terrible American military power seemed to its victims in SE Asia. These explicit references to concentration camps indicate similarities to the Third Reich which Americans are loathe to admit, but it is precisely hard truths such as these which we must confront with honesty if we are to take seriously the imperative that Auschwitz must not happen again.

King tells his audience that “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today [is] my own government.” With the war raging in Vietnam occupying much of public discourse, and with the history of police violence against Black people, his immediate audience could grasp his meaning. It is worth posing the question, however, as to how applicable that statement would be to the present day, although the purpose of this thesis is not undermined if one wishes to question whether the US is ‘*the* greatest purveyor of violence in the world’. It is enough to demonstrate that the US government is *a* great

---

<sup>34</sup> King Jr., Martin Luther “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence”

‘purveyor of violence in the world’. To this end, the following section seeks to give some historical examples up to the present, of US state-violence and mass murder.

**“...so that nothing similar will happen...”**

To start with, it must be acknowledged that the horror of Auschwitz is particular. As a concrete event, Auschwitz itself must be understood in terms of the specific conditions which served as its ground and of the historical forces which realized its possibility. To subsume events such as Auschwitz under a homogenizing category is dangerous. We cannot understand the Holocaust as simply another eruption of evil, as one of many in a long line of historical tragedies; such an approach would preclude appropriate understanding. However, taken in its radical particularity, there is also no possibility that Auschwitz will happen again. We must not read the ‘nothing similar’ of the new categorical imperative too austere. To make sense of the new categorical imperative, we must deploy concepts, draw comparisons, and keep an eye to the sufficiently similar. An event exactly identical to Auschwitz will not happen again, but this is no comforting assurance, especially as we acknowledge that similar events have already taken place and new ones already appear on the horizon.

Furthermore, there is a limitation to what language can convey. In seeking to make the case that America has, and can again, perpetrate atrocities similar to Auschwitz, I am forced to deal in facts. In doing so, the mode of I-It comes to stand where the I-Thou must but cannot. I am compelled to relate numbers of dead, although as Adorno says of Auschwitz, “—to quote or haggle over the numbers is already inhumane.”<sup>35</sup> There

---

<sup>35</sup> Adorno “Education After Auschwitz”

is a guilt which attends the speaking of tragic victims as statistics, as members of a set; doing so repeats the crime of failing to recognize the full humanity in each and every one. However, there is an even greater guilt which attends passing over these dead in silence while the conditions which brought their tragic demise still obtain.

Let us start then, by taking note of the most salient characteristics of Auschwitz: Immediately, we understand Auschwitz as a state-sanctioned, mass killing. The emergency of war and the call for national self-preservation provided the context for the targeting of civilians. The state justified its action in terms of the health and security of the nation. The barbarism of Auschwitz did not unfold chaotically; it proceeded systematically and according to the logic of premeditated murder. Auschwitz deployed novel technologies in logistics and destruction. Those who participated in the systemic, mass killing exhibited a cold indifference towards their victims far removed from our modern notions of humanity. All of this was facilitated by the relentless othering of the victims; Auschwitz was possible because the victims were not seen as German and not seen as fellow humans.



Figure 2: 1890<sup>36</sup>

The massacre at Wounded Knee is remembered as one of the most notorious episodes of the ‘Indian Wars’. An estimated 250-300 Lakota men, women, and children were massacred by the US military. Long before Hitler had written about his plans of ridding Germany of Jews and less than a week after the massacre at Wounded Knee, Frank L. Baum, the author of *The Wizard of Oz*, wrote in the Pioneer newspaper, “The Pioneer has before declared that our only safety depends upon the total extirpation [sic] of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth.”<sup>37</sup> As late as 1975, the US Army refused to

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/bodies-of-sioux-indians-being-unceremoniously-piled-into-a-news-photo/2669550?adppopup=true>

<sup>37</sup> Giago “The Man Who Called for the Extirpation of the Lakota”

recognize Wounded Knee as a massacre; it took an act of Congress nearly 100 years after the event for the state to officially acknowledge the massacre.



Figure 3: 1906<sup>38</sup>

Auschwitz did not happen without comparative precedent. The 20th century came upon the scene with grisly portents of the violence to come. In South Africa, the Second Boer War saw “concentration camp” enter the lexicon. There, an estimated 26,000 women and children met their untimely end at the hands of British authority. Also at the same time, the US military was engaged in a colonial war in the Philippines where civilians were targets of punitive violence and concentration camps were deployed to subjugate a population. America’s Manifest Destiny had reached outward across the Pacific as it assumed the colonizing mission which inspired Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden.” At the beginning of the Philippine-American War, General William Shafter

---

<sup>38</sup> <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/moro-insurgents-1906/>

told the Chicago News that, "It may be necessary to kill half of the Filipinos in order that the remaining half of the population may be advanced to a higher plane of life than their present semi-barbarous state affords."<sup>39</sup> The American imperialist occupation was enforced with genocidal reprisals. General Jacob Smith is reported to have ordered, "I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn, the more you kill and burn the better it will please me. I want all persons killed who are capable of bearing arms in actual hostilities against the United States."<sup>40</sup> In another counter-insurgency campaign, an estimated 800-900 Moro people in the Sulu province were massacred at Moro Crater in March of 1906. Many of those massacred were women and children; the atrocity caused a scandal in the US as public support for the occupation turned.

---

<sup>39</sup>Francia, Luis H., *A History of the Philippines: From Indos Bravos to Filipinos* p.138

<sup>40</sup> Miller, Stuart Creighton *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* p.220





Figure 4: 1945b<sup>41</sup>

The catastrophe of the second World War provided the conditions and context for events similar to Auschwitz. Though much smaller in scale, a state-sanctioned, mass killing took place with the fire bombing of Dresden in February of 1945. An estimated 25,000 civilians were killed in an indiscriminate bombing campaign which made use of incendiary devices. Allied forces claimed that the attack on Dresden was justified, though historians have questioned the military utility of the bombing. Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* gives the reader a sense of the chaos experienced by those in Dresden, but we also know that in the skies above Dresden thousands of allied air force personnel were methodically following orders. The bombs and the bombers were among the latest in military technology. A wartime mentality wherein the enemy (both military

---

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/dresden-bombing-wwii-allies>

and civilian) deserves neither pity nor mercy was a necessary precondition; the civilians of Dresden had already been removed from the circle of humane consideration.



Figure 5: 1945c<sup>42</sup>

Less than a month after the devastation of Dresden, the US Air Force launched what would become the single deadliest air raid of that war. Operation Meetinghouse targeted working class neighborhoods in central Tokyo with incendiary bombs and, in one night of bombing, took the lives of an estimated 80 to 100 thousand civilians. As with Dresden, the direct military utility of the raids has been called to question. Damage to Tokyo's heavy industry was relatively light, but casualties among the civilian population were disproportionately heavy. This deliberate targeting of civilians for the purposes of inciting terror has prompted many to describe the firebombing of Tokyo as a war crime.

---

<sup>42</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_Tokyo#/media/File:Tokyo\\_kushu\\_1945-3.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Tokyo#/media/File:Tokyo_kushu_1945-3.jpg) Photo taken by Ishikawa Kōyō(1904-1989) around 10 March, 1945.



Figure 6: 1945d<sup>43</sup>

In August of the same year of the firebombings of Dresden and Tokyo, the US Air Force unveiled its deadliest new weapon. The first atomic bomb to be deployed against a civilian population, a conservatively estimated 70,000 residents of Hiroshima were killed by its blast. Around the same number perished in the following months due to burns and radiation-linked sickness. Years after the bomb, survivors of the blast had to contend with high rates of cancer and leukemia.

As with Dresden and Tokyo, the target was chosen to cause massive civilian casualties and terror. The rationalization of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and

---

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/23/national/politics-diplomacy/71-years-debate-bombs-shows-no-sign-resolution/>

Nagasaki, that the bombings were necessary to cause a Japanese surrender and to avoid an even more deadly land invasion of Honshu, though unquestioned in US schools, has been heavily criticized. A major contributing factor to the firebombing of Tokyo and the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the widespread dissemination of racist, anti-Japanese propaganda. This event also announced the beginning of a new era of global existential threat about which more will be discussed later in this paper.





Figure 7: 1968<sup>44</sup>

The end of the Second World War saw the inauguration of the Cold War – a simmering enmity between two superpowers that threatened the unimaginable destruction of all-out nuclear war. Against this backdrop the US government waged a policy of indirect antagonism with the communist bloc through proxy conflicts. The US intervention in Vietnam is perhaps the most infamous of these. The Vietnamese population suffered hundreds of thousands of deaths from carpet bombing and the use of Agent Orange. That conflict saw systemic violation of international law as the US military routinely failed to differentiate between combatants and civilians. The notorious

---

44

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%E1%BB%B9\\_Lai\\_massacre#/media/File:My\\_Lai\\_massacre.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%E1%BB%B9_Lai_massacre#/media/File:My_Lai_massacre.jpg)

massacre at My Lai where hundreds of unarmed civilians were cruelly raped, tortured, and murdered was but the most publicized expression of the US military's barbarism. Such brutal crimes, sanctioned by the state, were largely facilitated by widespread dehumanization. As members of an occupying force fighting an insurgency, US military personnel came to understand that any civilian might pose a threat. The Vietnamese people came to be acceptable targets of violence for no other reason than that they were Vietnamese.

### **Apostrophe**

I will interrupt this brief litany of American military atrocities to draw attention to a turn in the management of public consciousness. As has been indicated, American military atrocities, when documented and reported to the public, have weakened public support for state violence. The atrocities at Wounded Knee, Moro Crater, Hiroshima, and My Lai, each galvanized anti-war and anti-imperialist sentiment at home. Evidence of criminal, inhumane policy, when communicated to the American public, catalyzes the re-arrangement of thought and action against the continuation of state sanctioned mass murder. This dynamic has not gone unnoticed by the American security establishment. A major lesson of Vietnam, for the American prosecutors of aggression there, was that prosecution of war requires deeper engagement in a parallel propaganda war. 'Collateral damage', which entered common usage in military discourse during the Vietnam War, has become a term of art for journalists serving state interests. The communications industry subverts genuine democracy where it functions to manufacture consent, where instead of serving public interests it serves state interests by manipulating

public opinion. The effects of this focus on the general pedagogical function of mass media and its instrumentality in war were analyzed in depth alongside the live, televised Gulf War of 1991; Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* interrogates the virtuality of that war to the point of denying its reality. Although Baudrillard seems too quick to dismiss the very real loss of life that occurred in that conflict, much of his analysis illustrates the profound change in war 'coverage' in the post-Vietnam state-influenced US media apparatus.

We must now be ever mindful of the inability of 'official' war correspondents to deliver to their audiences the brutal reality of war. Baudrillard's Gulf War correspondents transmit to their audiences a virtual war, a non-war; 'coverage' is spun in a state-friendly vein even while the reality of war is concealed. Television audiences become hostages in an information war. The 2003 Iraq War confounds several of Baudrillard's arguments about the current status of warfare; the virtual war which Americans were delivered through cable news was not capable of completely displacing or masking the actual war. We cannot say, with a straight face, that the Iraq War did not take place. We can, however, say that the conflict was systematically misrepresented to the American public. As with the Gulf War, every effort is made to present a 'clean war'; narratives and images which did not serve state interests were suppressed.

This aspect of the post-modern condition presents a challenge to Adorno's new categorical imperative. This is because the new categorical imperative asks us to identify with the victims of atrocity. How can a public identify with victims it knows little or nothing about? If the US military had succeeded in censoring all news about My Lai, would the American public have learned about that massacre? The public cannot oppose



what it is ignorant about, and if populations are information hostages who are kept in ignorance about the suffering caused by their own state, then a moral imperative to intervene in that suffering cannot be realized.

Here, later developments in Frankfurt School Critical Theory have direct import. I will briefly mention Habermas and then Honneth. To start, we can speak of the manicured image of war given by state-serving journalists as a failure to realize the ideal speech act. War correspondents who seek to conceal the full reality of war participate in a form of deception. Rather than accept, as Baudrillard does, that all reportage is unavoidably deceptive, we can insist that honesty and professionalism are rational virtues for war correspondents. If we take Baudrillard's view, the images and accounts of Auschwitz that circulated at the close of the second world war primarily served to consolidate the power of the Allied victors. As a descriptive thesis, this cynical understanding may tell us something about how images and narratives are in fact disseminated. However, the American public were also made aware of the atrocities at Dresden and Hiroshima, and this reporting may have been about more than prestige or personal gain. Perhaps a genuine concern to establish a universal understanding of human rights and non-combatant protections motivated these reports. This could provide the beginning of a normative basis for judging the honesty and professionalism of war correspondents.

If we have war correspondence which approaches public-minded communicative action, then the suffering caused by the American state will not be suppressed for American audiences. When Americans come to understand that the victims of war include civilians, men, women, and children much like themselves, they begin to

recognize the humanity of the people caught up in the conflict. Adorno's new categorical imperative is strengthened through consideration of Honneth's work on recognition. Hersey's expose on Hiroshima countered the anti-Japanese racist, and dehumanizing, propaganda of the previous war years. Americans learned to recognize that thousands of human beings were indiscriminately annihilated with one detonation. The stories of their lives, their suffering, and the images of the destruction to human bodies weighed, for a time, on American public consciousness. My answer to Baudrillard's challenge regarding the virtuality of war is to assert a duty to honestly represent human beings *as* human beings to be recognized as such, and not as mere 'collateral damage.'

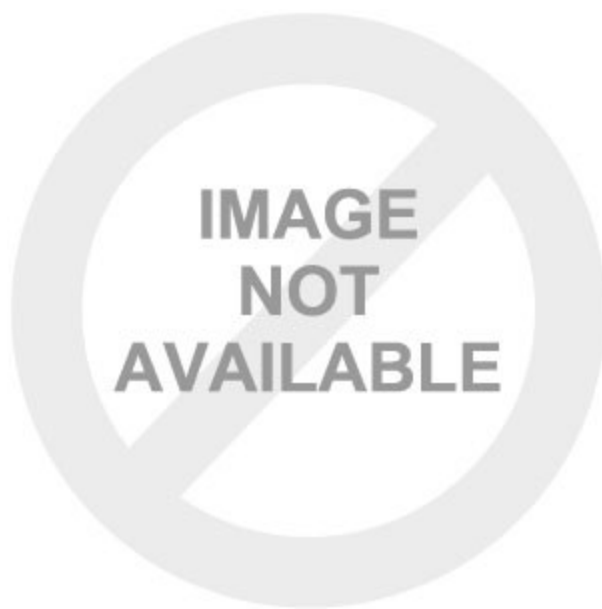


Figure 8: 2004

### **The Second Battle of Fallujah**

A generation after Vietnam the so-called War on Terror has replaced the Cold War as the chief rationale of US intervention, and we have seen a continuation of state-sanctioned mass murder. Several abuses have been committed under the pretense of the War on Terror, and some of the most notorious of these occurred during the US occupation of Iraq beginning in 2003. The Second Battle of Fallujah began shortly after the US presidential election of 2004. This counter-insurgency attack on Fallujah has been severely criticized for perpetrating war crimes. The US military is accused, again, of insufficiently discriminating between civilians and combatants over the course of the urban siege. White phosphorous was confirmed to have been deployed in that battle<sup>45</sup>, and subsequent studies involving survivors of that battle have indicated the use of

---

<sup>45</sup> Wilson, Jamie “US admits using white phosphorus in Falluja”

depleted uranium<sup>46</sup>. As had happened during the US occupation of Vietnam, military personnel came to distrust and resent the population they were claiming to protect. Just as the Japanese and Vietnamese people had come to be dehumanized in prior wars, dehumanizing anti-Arab sentiment came to hold a strong presence in US barracks. Unlike in other atrocities, however, information has been tightly controlled by the US military. The total number of civilian casualties resulting from the US invasion and occupation of Iraq varies according to the source; estimates of civilian casualties from the Second Battle of Fallujah range from 581 to 6,000. Images and live footage of that battle have been sequestered away from the eyes of the American public.

Up to this point, I have been highlighting what might be regarded as singular acts of atrocity. Because Auschwitz is understood as designating a singular event at a singular place, the atrocities I've listed above, from Wounded Knee to the Second Battle of Fallujah, have been presented to highlight the resonances between these events and Auschwitz. However, these events are better understood as illustrative concentrations, as signifiers of the greater barbarism of the respective campaigns within which they took place. For Adorno's new categorical imperative, I read Auschwitz as a synecdoche for the Holocaust. Thus, Wounded Knee is a singular example of the genocide by the US government of the Indigenous American people, the Moro Crater massacre a singular example of the genocidal policies of the US occupation of the Philippines, Dresden, the firebombing of Tokyo, and Hiroshima represent the indiscriminate killings of civilians by Allied forces in the Second World War, and My Lai and Fallujah are representative of the

---

<sup>46</sup> Edwards, Rob "US fired depleted uranium at civilian areas in 2003 Iraq war, report finds"

broader catastrophes of the Vietnam War and the Iraq War respectively. Even as these particular events are shocking in their concentrated intensity, we must learn to see them, not as isolated events, but as harrowing examples of the barbaric effects of American foreign policy and military practice.

404  
Page not found

Figure 9: 2001 – present

### **Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)**

The War on Terror has also been the occasion for the widespread use of military drones. As well as deploying drone strikes in theatres of active combat such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, the DoD and the CIA have used drones in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. The use of drones has been heavily criticized after reports of attacks on unarmed civilian parties. The efficacy of these strikes and their ability to perform ‘targeted’ killings that minimize civilian casualties are difficult to ascertain through the fog of war, but reports suggest that drone warfare is nowhere as ‘clean’ as the American security establishment would have us believe. Because of the secrecy surrounding the DoD, and especially the CIA, use of military drones, an accurate account of civilian deaths through the US drone program is not available to the public. Growing public discontent about the use of drones and their reported civilian casualties prompted Obama to promise new, more stringent criteria for strike approval and more rigorous, publicly available accounting of their efficacy as precision instruments. However, the Obama administration also held a policy of counting all military-aged males as enemy

combatants until proven otherwise, even as intelligence gathering around the use of drones is admittedly hampered by the lack of on the ground personnel. The cynical effect of this policy has been to reduce the number of dead civilians by artificially inflating the number of dead combatants. In 2019, the Trump administration rescinded the Obama era order for an annual account of drone strikes and casualties. The media blackout on the US drone program was briefly punctured by the revelations of whistleblower Daniel Hale. The federal government, under the Trump and then Biden administrations, prosecuted Hale under the Espionage Act. At the time of his sentencing, the Washington Post credited his whistleblowing for the following revelation: “During one five-month stretch of an operation in Afghanistan, the documents revealed, nearly 90 percent of the people killed were not the intended targets.”<sup>47</sup>

In this section, I have been drawing attention to US military atrocities committed against non-combatants. A problem has been raised regarding the unwillingness or inability of professional journalists to report on US military atrocities after Vietnam. However, journalists are not the only available witnesses. Combatting the suppression of information regarding US atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan, several veterans of those wars have chosen to speak about the horrors they witnessed and participated in during their deployments. Along with the revelations of whistleblowers like Daniel Hale, these veterans’ voices have proven invaluable in educating the American public about the barbaric reality of war today.

If one takes the time to listen to the harrowing accounts of these American

---

<sup>47</sup> Weiner, Rachel “Daniel Hale, who leaked information on U.S. drone warfare, sentenced to 45 months in prison”

veterans, something of the real war breaks through the establishment-curated virtual war. More than this, these veterans are able to communicate something which embedded journalists with all their press freedoms afforded cannot: the guilt of atrocity. We have, in America, thousands of veterans who suffer PTSD due in large part to what has come to be known as *moral injury*. Briefly, moral injury is the damage suffered by agents when they become powerless witnesses, or even active participants, in heinous acts which violate their own core moral values. This concept fits well with Adorno's notion of the moral addendum as it straddles the physical and the psychological dimensions of action. Moral injury, like Adorno's addendum, encompasses the extramental and the intramental. The impulse to speak out about these crimes of state aligns with Adorno's notion of the moral addendum.

Listening to veterans speak candidly about the horrors of war allows us to hear and see what journalists are barred from relating. In a world where information, especially information about atrocities committed by one's own state, is increasingly controlled, the voices of those veterans who have suffered the sights of massacres can take a soterial role. In telling us what we would not otherwise be told, we can learn enough to oppose the violence perpetrated by our own state. When we hear about the innocents who were slaughtered in Fallujah, we are strengthened in our opposition to that war and to all wars. Moreover, when a veteran suffering moral injury is given the chance to speak, they are afforded something indispensable for their recovery. Their public service of speaking about the truths they witnessed is at the same time an act of personal healing. Tragically, the militarism which pervades American society does not properly concern itself with the suffering of American veterans; soldiers return to a world that



desperately wishes to ignore anything incriminating of American military power.

Instead, they are thanked for their ‘service’ and given the understanding that people don’t really wish to know what actually happened on tour. Some veterans have expressed that the reflex thanking of their ‘service’ is for them another act of violence.<sup>48</sup>

In these pages, I have focused on the killing of civilians as directly perpetrated by the American military. The reason has been primarily to impress upon the reader the ways in which the American state is responsible for repeated events of mass murder. I must also mention that there have been thousands of murders for which the American state is less directly responsible – the atrocities which have been sponsored by the American state but which have been carried out directly by ‘friendly’ regimes. When taking account of the ways in which American foreign policy has produced effects similar to Auschwitz, we must not neglect the several clandestine and diplomatic supports which have enabled mass murder. US sponsorship of Sutarso, Pinochet, Pahlavi, and the Nicaraguan contras, just to name a few episodes out of many, resulted in the killings of thousands of civilians with the tacit approval of Washington.

### **The nuclear Sword of Damocles**

Even as the United States bears the ignoble distinction of being the only state to have used nuclear weapons against civilians, there has been insufficient activity on the part of the American public to ensure that such an atrocity as committed by their own state is never repeated. The history of America’s nuclear posture from 1945 to the

---

<sup>48</sup> Janssen, Scott “I Work With Dying Veterans. Here's Why I Don't Automatically Thank Them For Their Service.”

present has been mostly ignored by the broad public. I would like to finish this brief account of American military atrocity by making a few points about American nuclear posturing past and present.

To start, Americans must learn to confront some of the suppressed history regarding the atomic bombing of Japan. The justification for the atomic bombings of August 1945 has been called to question by several historians. Many challenge the narrative that the atomic bombings were necessary to force a Japanese surrender, that without the use of atomic weapons, only a massive invasion of the home islands would have brought the war to an end. There is substantial evidence which suggests that Japan was on the verge of surrender in any case, that Japanese war planners understood the futility of continuing the war. More damning, however, is the evidence that US war planners chose to forego a much more humane option. It had been suggested that an atomic detonation just off the coast of Japan, or in a low-population area, would have served to demonstrate the power of this new weapon, and that this could be sufficient to prompt a Japanese surrender. Criminally, this suggestion was ignored, and the Truman administration opted instead to maximize the terror of their new weapon by deploying it in a population-dense urban center. That Hiroshima also held important military assets gave a pretext, but a committee had already ruled out pure military installations for the first attack, since these installations were found outside, or on the fringes, of population dense areas. There was a conscious choice to choose a target which could serve two functions: there needed to be a nearby military installation to justify the target, but there also needed to be population-dense area to maximize the psychological effect of the bombing. The fact that the first atomic weapon used in war was already an attack on a

major urban center and not a warning detonation over an unpopulated area undermines the myth that that bombing was justified and necessary.

Following the close of the war, the American state embraced nuclear weaponry and sought to maintain its monopoly on the use of nuclear force. US diplomatic strategy then and now has sought to restrain other states' pursuit of nuclear weapons even while the US builds and maintains a large arsenal. This strategy, called *nuclear apartheid* (nuclear weapons for me, not for thee) in Shane Maddock's book of the same title, has met with only limited success. A handful of states have been able to circumvent this strategy and have developed their own nuclear weapons programs. The 1967 Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, sadly, has served to shore up the American strategy of nuclear apartheid. The treaty holds that signatory states without existing nuclear weapons forswear their acquisition. This part has been largely enforced. The treaty also holds that signatory states with existing nuclear weapons begin the process of disarmament. This part of the treaty has subsequently been ignored when it is not postponed indefinitely by subsequent NPT review conferences. The history of US nuclear diplomacy is one of bad faith negotiations which make more likely, not less, that Hiroshima might happen again.

The United States government has, since 1945, threatened to use nuclear weapons on several occasions. Both the Truman and the Eisenhower administrations threatened their use during the Korean War. Eisenhower threatened to use nuclear weapons against China on more than one occasion. Nixon threatened to use nuclear weapons in Vietnam. There were back-channel nuclear threats delivered to Saddam Hussein in the run up to the Gulf War, and Iran has seen US politicians deliver implicit threats of nuclear attack on

several occasions. These threats give the lie to the claim that the US possession of nuclear weapons serves only a deterrent function. If, indeed, the American state only holds nuclear weapons for deterrence, then it would not threaten other populations with nuclear strike as cavalierly as it does. Furthermore, successive administrations' refusal to adopt a no first use policy regarding nuclear weapons fatally undermines the claim that the US arsenal has a purely deterrent intention.

Even under the logic of deterrence, the threat, explicit or implicit, of nuclear attack makes nuclear hostages of civilian populations. For this reason, Stephen Lee and other disarmament activists speak of nuclear hostages. Any state holding nuclear weapons also has the capacity to threaten catastrophe, but the doctrine of mutually assured destruction makes this hostage taking total. In effect, the US government threatened to kill millions of Soviet citizens in the event of a nuclear exchange with the understanding that Soviet weapons reciprocally threaten the lives of millions of US citizens. Hostage swapping had been a premodern method of maintaining peace, one which seemingly fell out of practice as our modern sensibilities took hold. But this practice did not disappear so much as migrate to a much larger and potentially more catastrophic register. Current US nuclear policy contributes to the taking of the whole world into nuclear hostage.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the current impasse facing the nuclear disarmament movement. In April of 2009, Obama delivered a speech in Prague announcing a renewed commitment to nuclear disarmament. Even Henry Kissinger called for a recommitment to the disarmament clause of the NPT. However, these calls for nuclear disarmament were not reciprocated in Moscow or in Beijing, and the primary

reason for this can be seen when we take account of the relative disparities in conventional military strength. Simply put, the US government was in a position to call for global nuclear disarmament because the US was enjoying a moment of unipolar hegemony supported by conventional military power developed under the idea of “full spectrum superiority”. What this means is that the US currently wields conventional military power far in excess of its nearest rivals. It is precisely because of this extreme imbalance in conventional military power that non-aligned nations Russia and China are reticent to disarm the nuclear arsenals. Conversely, many suspect that if the distribution of conventional military power were more even, then the US would no longer support global nuclear disarmament. Perversely, the fear of the outside world which makes Americans clamor for a military capable of taking any and all comers causes this nuclear sword of Damocles to persist long after the NPT; the end of the Cold War meant only a temporary cooling of the nuclear threat while the US government squandered its position as lone superpower to advance greater hegemony instead of greater peace.

In these pages, I have tried to make the case that Americans must critically self-reflect on the role of their nation on the world stage. We must confront the uncomfortable history of American military atrocity. As at Auschwitz, the US military has kept non-combatants in concentration camps, targeted civilians for punitive killing, indiscriminately murdered thousands at a time, deployed chemical weapons such as napalm and white phosphorous, and all these acts were executed in an environment charged with racial animosity. A reified consciousness which aligns itself with state power and excuses the mass murder of civilians deadens the critical self-reflection demanded of American society. We cannot simply accept ‘collateral damage’ as an

inevitable consequence of war without a system of accountability. If we are to call ourselves a democratic society, then we need a public which is adequately informed to judge the conduct of its state war planners. We must endeavor to hear and tell those stories which the American security establishment eagerly suppresses. We must allow ourselves to feel solidarity with the victims of America's geopolitical strategy. In order to ensure that these, or similar, events are not repeated, we must learn to be honest; we must recognize why it was that King described the US government as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." American society must rearrange its thought and action such that Hiroshima, or nothing similar, ever happens again.

### **The American University**

There are, of course, a broad range of factors which go into the militarization of society. In the US, a strong sense of American exceptionalism feeds into a view of the US military as a force for democracy and human rights. The culture industry, through film, television, and gaming, has presented an avenue for safe, sanitized, virtual war. An American cultural trend which expresses the worship of power and dominance, in many ways verification of the diagnosis offered in "Excursus II", finds in the military a socially accepted form of satisfaction. Materially, the confluence of capital interests with state-security interests and the unchecked, growing power of this nexus, provides American militarism its ground. The point I want to make is that we must also scrutinize the American system of education. In many ways, American education reproduces the conditions which made Hiroshima possible, and which make it possible of happening again. The American university must bear some responsibility for the militarization of

American society. The university is still an influential institution bearing on the intellectual and cultural life of our society. This gives the university an important role to play in the making of war and of peace. Sadly, in the history of the American university there has been more cooperation with warmongers than there has been with war resisters.

Consciousness of the role of the American university in the militarization of society swelled alongside popular resistance to the Vietnam War. Senator J. William Fulbright, who at the time was the chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, delivered a Senate speech in December of 1967 wherein he decried what he called the military-industrial-academic complex: “The universities might have formed an effective counterweight to the military-industrial complex by strengthening their emphasis on the traditional values of our democracy, but many of our leading universities have instead joined the monolith, adding greatly to its power and influence.”<sup>49</sup> Later, as student and faculty resistance to the Vietnam War grew, the American university was able, however briefly, to act as that counterweight; the student movement played an important role in developing the broad, public opposition which ultimately caused the end of American military involvement in Vietnam.

To understand what Fulbright meant by military-industrial-academic complex, it is expedient to review some of the prior history of university cooperation with the war machine. When Eisenhower warned America about the danger of the growing military-industrial complex in 1961, the influence of that nexus of power over the life of the American university was already well entrenched. During the Second World War, an unprecedented share of DoD research contracts began to be allocated to universities.

---

<sup>49</sup> Fulbright Senate Speech December 13, 1967

MIT emerged from that war with “seventy-five separate contracts worth \$117 million.”<sup>50</sup> The University of California was awarded the administration of the Los Alamos Laboratory where atomic weaponry was born. MIT, UC Berkeley, Caltech, Stanford, and other universities would continue to foster strong ties with the Pentagon through the Cold War. Speaking of MIT in 1962, physicist Alvin Weinberg remarked that it is increasingly difficult “to tell whether the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a university with many government research laboratories appended to it or a cluster of government research laboratories with a very good educational institution attached to it”.<sup>51</sup>

DoD influence on scientific research programs throughout the Cold War was extensive. The disciplines of electronics, aeronautics, and physics were practiced in American universities with an orientation towards military application. As Eisenhower warned, “the government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity”, and the effects were borne out by the directions in which those disciplines developed in the American university. Nuclear physics and microwave physics were held in esteem over and against other branches of physics precisely because of their perceived applicability to weapons technology. Due to the powerful influence of federal funding, peaceful, civilian ends for American science and technology assumed a subordinate position to military ends.

Philosopher of science Ian Hacking has expressed concern for the way in which military-oriented research affects our forms of knowledge. He points out that the questions which guide scientific research are formulated contingently. They do not usher

---

<sup>50</sup> Leslie, Stuart W. *The Cold War and American Science* p. 14

<sup>51</sup> Leslie, Stuart W. *The Cold War and American Science* p. 14



directly from a pure *a priori*; scientific questions reflect the historical and cultural values of the scientific community which posits them and pursues their answers. Hacking is keen to draw out the cumulative effect of this process: as new knowledge is produced, the boundaries of what is possible to think or imagine take new shape. The development of laser technology, as well as that of weapons delivery systems, are highlighted by Hacking as forms of knowledge which developed according to contingently held values and priorities sustained by military interests. Hacking warns us that weapons research is not simply dangerous due to the weapons produced, but also due to the effects of such research on the consciousness of the society which conducts it: “It is not just the weapons—we can dismantle them in a few years with good will—that are funded, but the world of mind and technique in which those weapons are devised.”<sup>52</sup>

Hacking’s concern complements Adorno’s association of bourgeois coldness and reified consciousness with what he called the ‘technological people’ who would design the train system which delivers people to Auschwitz without a thought for what happens to the victims once they arrive there. To what extent have thousands of American scientists and engineers participated in weapons research without giving much thought to the human cost exacted by the products of that research? We see Adorno’s concern given relevance and urgency by the frank admission of one MIT graduate student speaking to a New York Times reporter in 1969:

What I’m designing may one day be used to kill millions of people. I don’t care. That’s not my responsibility. I’m given an interesting technological problem and I get enjoyment out of solving it.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Hacking, Ian “Weapons Research” from *The Social Construction of What* p.185

<sup>53</sup> Leslie, Stuart W. *The Cold War and American Science* p.238

The influence of militarization on the life of the American university is not limited to the natural sciences. The social sciences, too, have been influenced by state power. The development of various interdisciplinary projects for the American university can be traced to the influence of Washington funding. MIT's Center for International Studies housed sociologists, economists, anthropologists, and political scientists who studied communist societies towards the end of advancing US foreign policy. Similar programs, such as Harvard's Academy for International and Area Studies have been established with similar funding and similar goals. American university interdisciplinary programs of Soviet or Russian studies, Latin American studies, Asian studies, Middle Eastern studies, and those which have narrowed their scope to finer objects from these, trace their genealogy to the Cold War and state power.

It would be tempting to think that rearranging our thoughts and actions away from Hiroshima would be better served by giving social scientists a larger role in policy formation. Ithiel de Sola Pool, an MIT political scientist argued, "The only hope for humane government in the future is through extensive use of the social sciences by the government." I do not disagree with this statement except that it needs qualification. He should have specified that these social sciences must, too, be humane. The values and practices of social scientists, and the incentives offered by those structures within which social scientists perform their work, are not necessarily organized around a principle of humanity. These need to be investigated under a critical lens if they are not going to reproduce and justify more bourgeois coldness. Hence also, 'use' of the social sciences by the government must more so take the form of policy makers being guided by research than that of researchers following the direction of policy makers. History shows us

significantly more of the latter relationship than the former.

Franz Boas' 1919 condemnation of four American archaeologists-turned-spies proved to be an early warning of things to come. The 1976 Church Commission found that the CIA's influence over academics was 'massive'. Funding was channeled towards research and publication which supported security establishment goals. The fields of anthropology and archaeology, with their international scope, were used by intelligence agencies as recruitment grounds for spies. In 1953, Princeton archaeologist conspired with Kermit Roosevelt in Operation Ajax which ousted Mosaddegh and reinstated the Shah. Anthropologist David H. Price has published extensively on the relationship between his discipline and America's national security state. For example, "medical anthropologists working on an OSS project searched for uniquely "Japanese" biological features that could be exploited by a 'race-specific' biological weapon."<sup>54</sup> Price also relates the story of ethnologist Raymond Kennedy who was assassinated while conducting field research in Indonesia. His assassins had taken him to be a CIA spy, which in Price's estimation, was a "likely possibility". Franz Boas' warning that social scientists who turn spy bring danger to their colleagues and disrepute to their profession has proven accurate. Ellen Herman's "Project Camelot and the Career of Cold War Psychology" also sheds light on the reputational damage suffered by American behavioral scientists in the aftermath of the Project Camelot diplomatic scandal; American social scientists in Latin America were thereafter held in great suspicion.

Before drawing this section to a close, I'd like to make a few more points about

---

<sup>54</sup> Price, David H. "How the CIA and Pentagon Harnessed Anthropological Research During the Second World War and Cold War with Little Critical Notice" p. 335

the relationship between the American university and the American security state. First, I'd like to highlight that American university students and faculty have also engaged in acts of non-compliance with the security state. As consciousness of the complicity of the American university with the American war machine grew with resistance to the Vietnam War, many students and professors began to organize and agitate for radical change. Those universities which were closely aligned with the Pentagon also became important sites of protest: MIT, Stanford, and UC Berkeley became centers for anti-war resistance. In time, the student movement, and the tragedy at Kent State, proved to be pivotal for bringing American public consciousness in opposition to the war and US intervention in Vietnam to an end. Following Frederic Jameson, we can think of the university as a cultural institution capable of contributing to either reified or utopian thinking.

As a consequence of the consciousness which developed through the protest movement of the late '60s, the relationship between the American university and the security state began to take a more indirect form. Pentagon funding shifted more towards the private sector, but this did not mean that universities were cut away from the system. Instead, partnerships with private corporations such as Raytheon and Lockheed Martin were sought by universities to compensate for the loss of direct funding. This trend was a part of the general trajectory of the neoliberal paradigm. Public funding of higher education has stagnated, so the American university has been thrown to the mercy of the marketplace. Increasingly, the American university has taken the character of a private corporation instead of a public institution.

This dynamic was exacerbated by the passage of the Bayh-Doyle Act of 1980. This act gives the intellectual property rights resulting from publicly funded research to

the researching institution. In practice, this intensifies the commodification of scientific and technological knowledge. If one also considers the dividends offered by the lucrative market in military hardware and weapons, then incentives for university scientists to participate in militarized research become plain. The American scientist no longer needs a large DoD contract to entice them towards developing weapons of human destruction; the neoliberal economic order offers researchers other motives to profit off of human suffering.

Finally, I've briefly reviewed a few of the ways in which the sciences, natural and social, have been made to serve the interests of the military-industrial-academic complex. It is worth noting that the humanities do not escape with their innocence intact either. Superficially, one might take philosophy, or the study of literature, to be far removed from the militarism which elsewhere exerts a powerful influence over thought and action. Edward Said, perhaps more than any other, has worked to demolish this fantasy. His *Orientalism* relentlessly highlights the manner in which humanities conducted in the West have frequently diminished the ability of Westerners to perceive the humanity of people living in the East. American universities have only recently begun to reflect on the ways in which non-Western people have been relegated to a lesser status in the thoughts and activities of American artists, writers, and philosophers. At the conclusion of this section contextualizing the categorical imperative for the American experience and American education, and against the persistent stain of American exceptionalism, I will leave a few of Said's words to prompt reflection. These gems were published in a new preface for the 2003 edition of *Orientalism*, which sadly, was also the year of Said's passing.

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought by the latest 'mission civilisatrice.'<sup>55</sup>

... education is threatened by nationalist and religious orthodoxies often disseminated by the mass media as they focus ahistorically and sensationally on the distant electronic wars that give viewers the sense of surgical precision but that in fact obscure the terrible suffering and destruction produced by modern 'clean' warfare.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Said *Orientalism* p.xxi

<sup>56</sup> Said *Orientalism* p.xxvi

### III. REIFICATION AND UTOPIA IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The problems at issue in this thesis are that the American state has repeatedly committed atrocities, that the militarization of American society exacerbates the inhumanity of its state, but primarily that the American university contributes to the reproduction of this militarized society. It should be clear by now that we must interrogate the university as a pedagogical and cultural institution and that we should enquire into the values that determine its practices. Following Adorno, we must make a direct link between the new categorical imperative and education. The injunction to arrange our thoughts and actions so that atrocities such as Hiroshima are not repeated is a direct concern for the American university precisely because the university is understood as a key social institution directing thought and action. Similarly, if we are to heed King's call for a radical revolution of values, we must come to terms with the role of the American university in reproducing those beliefs and practices which made My Lai possible. Only after we attain a critical view on institutions of education can we begin to transform them.

#### **The University as Ideological State Apparatus**

Althusser offers a compelling account of how the university functions to maintain the status quo. For Althusser, the university is an *ideological state apparatus*; its function is to work in tandem with the *repressive state apparatus* to reproduce the social system of domination. It is worth unpacking this concept of the ideological state apparatus in order to evaluate the degree to which it describes the American university in its reproductive functions.

Louis Althusser's analysis begins with the social reproduction of labor power. Here, the education system serves a dual function. First, as is readily apparent, schools and universities advance the skills and knowledge necessary for labor in its various forms. General education provides for the basic literacy and numeracy required of the average low-skilled worker. Higher education provides the advanced knowledge for entry into 'professions': law, medicine, education, management and administration, science and engineering, etc. Here, American universities reproduce the class structure of society. Prohibitive tuition fees, especially those demanded by elite universities, serve to ensure that financial means is as much a requirement for admission as is aptitude. Elite universities are so regarded because of the purpose they serve in reproducing a ruling class.

This brings us to Althusser's second reproductive function of the education system: to preserve the relations of production. Althusser tells us that, "children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is 'destined' for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination."<sup>57</sup> These 'rules of behavior' form a large portion of what later critical pedagogists will call 'the hidden curriculum'. One way of conceiving of this function is with the following analogy: in much the same way that the medieval Church served to reconcile subjects to their social order, to bring them into alignment with the traditional

---

<sup>57</sup> Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)" p.132



hierarchy, and to induce them to accept their station, so too does today's education system teach students that their social order is immutable, that the task of the individual is to adapt to the world as it is, that their lives will proceed more smoothly the sooner they learn to accept established authority and practices. The beliefs and practices which constitute the hidden curriculum serve to maintain the social hierarchy by reproducing the dominant ideology.

The contemporary university, as ideological state apparatus, participates in the reproduction of bourgeois coldness. The primary method of achieving this is by reducing the notion of education to an economic function. Many students and faculty, and much of the broader public, perceive that the main value of university education is economic. For the individual it means career preparation and professional certification. The social function is understood in terms of reproducing the professional knowledge and skills required to maintain institutions of law, medicine, engineering, etc. This belief in the primary economic importance of education, further intensified by neoliberalism, contributes to that reified consciousness which ultimately takes its cues from the principle of self-preservation. In its narrowness, however, this economically-centered conception of self-preservation is exemplified by the careerist attitudes of university faculty and students. In a university environment where the highest value is that of career advancement, problems which fall outside of that scope are obscured. Thus, for example, an engineering student may develop the skills necessary for employment, the skills that allow them to design a rail system for transporting people, without also developing the critical, ethical capabilities to question or care about the purpose behind their transportation project.

The American education system, including the American university, compounds the problem of bourgeois coldness on an international scale. What I wish to highlight here is the reproduction of American exceptionalism. In higher education, this ideology is given more implicit than explicit articulation. American exceptionalism informs many assumptions which lie behind much of the research in international studies and international development programs. The social sciences, especially political science and history, are often taught with American exceptionalist assumptions. It should be acknowledged that many good professors in these disciplines do not conform to the prevailing ideology, but insofar as their teaching is in opposition to American exceptionalism they may also meet resistance from students or from other faculty. I do not believe that the university is the main institution responsible for the reproduction of American exceptionalism, but on the other hand, the university is an institution through which American exceptionalism should be critically investigated and dismantled. Just as the American university as a cultural institution has taken up opposition to race-based and gender-based notions of supremacy, it should -but has not yet done so meaningfully- oppose the operating notion of American national supremacy.

Althusser's descriptive theory which covers state power and its exercise through ideological state apparatus does well to explain how the system of education preserves the existing social order. We might call this *reified* education, and borrowing a distinction drawn by Jameson, we might look for theories or models which offer an alternative in the form of *utopian* education. Many educators do not see themselves as participating in the reproduction of the status quo; instead, they believe that their pedagogy can affect a transformation of the social world towards a more humane and

compassionate order. We should proceed cautiously; there is always the possibility that even when we take ourselves as free from ideology it is precisely there where its influence is at its strongest. But we can still take up the issue of ideological reproduction in education as an explicit problem even if we do not make claims to be entirely free from it. This is one of the key issues taken up in the field of critical pedagogy. In conjunction with claims made earlier in this paper, (namely, that reified consciousness has been a condition for the possibility of atrocious acts of American state power, that we are charged with altering our thoughts and actions away from this reified consciousness, and that the university participates in the reproduction of this reified consciousness) I would like to add the claim that Adorno's new categorical imperative makes the development of critical pedagogy an imperative.

### **Dewey's Progressive Education**

For a home-grown theory of education which offers an alternative model to Althusser's, and which is regarded as anticipating the later work performed by theorists of critical pedagogy, the progressive theory of education offered by John Dewey gives us important points of contrast. Dewey's career as a philosopher concerned with social reformation took education as one of its central objects of study, and his *Democracy and Education* survives as a seminal text in the study of social transformation through education. Indeed, many of Dewey's concerns in that text overlap with the concerns of this paper. Dewey offers a similar account to Adorno's regarding the fate of enlightenment morality:

The so-called individualism of the eighteenth-century enlightenment was found to involve the notion of a society as broad as humanity, of whose progress the

individual was to be the organ. But it lacked any agency for securing the development of its ideal as was evidenced in its falling back upon Nature. The institutional idealistic philosophies of the nineteenth century supplied this lack by making the national state the agency, but in so doing narrowed the conception of the social aim to those who were members of the same political unit, and reintroduced the idea of the subordination of the individual to the institution.<sup>58</sup>

Dewey understands his progressive, democratic theory of education as one which fosters desirable democratic social transformation. In order to realize this, the values and interests which inform curricula cannot belong to a narrow class. For Dewey, public (and not elite) interest should inform the aims of democratic education. Here we have one of the basic tenets for educational reform away from atrocity. The occupation of the Philippines, the intervention in Vietnam, and the invasion of Iraq were not consistent with the interest of the American public. Rather, these military adventures served the interests of the ruling class. Consciousness of this reached a peak in the late sixties when students and faculty deliberately inverted the received model. The teach-ins that formed a vital part of the Vietnam War protest movement explicitly put the public interest ahead of elite interest and in conscious opposition to the military-industrial-academic complex.

Because substantive democracy is not fully realized in American society, the aspiration of Dewey's educational philosophy is to bring about a progressive change in the character of social relations towards freer, more democratic forms of association. As well as its emphasis on public interest, Dewey's philosophy of education also offers an important point of departure from Althusser's descriptive theory of the reproductive character of schooling: Dewey's progressive education stresses creative production over reproduction. Althusser's theory describes the manner in which the education system

---

<sup>58</sup> Dewey *Democracy and Education* p.104

maintains the status quo. Dewey's educational theory offers a more student-oriented approach wherein students are encouraged to creatively transform their society rather than uncritically reproduce it as it is. Another way to put this is that Althusser describes an education system which is closed; while marginal and cosmetic alterations may take place, the school essentially conforms its students to society as it is. Dewey envisioned an education system which is much more open; while always and already being informed by past traditions and present circumstances, pedagogy is nonetheless oriented towards actualizing potentialities not yet realized in the present. On Althusser's account, there is little possibility that the education system can serve to arrange thoughts and actions away from the conditions which made Hiroshima possible. In the Deweyan program, such a revolution in values is not just possible, but desirable.

### **Paulo Freire**

Regarded today as one of the chief pioneers of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire developed a theory of education inspired by Dewey's earlier work. Freire's work, importantly, was more concerned to unmask and unravel relations of domination. His field work promoting literacy in underserved, rural areas of Brazil and Chile informed his most celebrated text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. From the beginning of that work, Freire stresses humanization. He understood that his society dehumanized its poor and indigenous populations, and that traditional forms of education exacerbated this dehumanization. The struggle against dehumanization constitutes a central pillar of his theory. This focus on humanizing education serves as a direct counter to the bourgeois coldness perpetuated through traditional schooling. In light of King's observation that

American militarism creates victims both abroad and at home, Freire's particular focus on the oppressed makes his work relevant to the undermining of that militarism.

Freire's problem-solving education is formulated in direct opposition to what he calls the established, banking model of education. Briefly, the banking model of education regards learning in terms of accumulation. The teacher dispenses knowledge, and the students receive it with the expectation that it will eventually prove useful. This expected utility, again, is largely conceived in terms of economic function. Freire charges that the banking model of education "begins with a false understanding of men and women as objects."<sup>59</sup> In other words, the banking model is a product of reified consciousness. Freire's problem-solving theory of education, on the other hand, offers us an account of knowledge and learning which centers authentic human agency.

Freire's concept of *conscientization* corresponds with Adorno's critical consciousness, the rational element of the moral addendum. Conscientization is the process by which learners begin to perceive the social, economic, and political oppression around them and of ways to interrupt, dismantle, and transform those systems which perpetuate that oppression. It is a form of consciousness that begins in material need, works towards amelioration of suffering, and ultimately strives for full, human emancipation. Conscientization takes us in the opposite direction of bourgeois coldness and supplies the conscientious with affective reasons for intervening against oppression. It was conscientization which occurred when Americans learned of the Moro Crater massacre and thereby set themselves in opposition to that occupation. Conscientization occurred when, a year after the event, Americans learned of the human cost of the

---

<sup>59</sup> Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* p.50

bombing of Hiroshima and began to question the wisdom of accumulating more of such indiscriminately homicidal weaponry. Sadly, these moments have been too few. But we can now formulate in another way the central concern of this thesis: that American society has too little conscientiousness for those, especially non-Americans, who have been made victims of the American state, and that this a problem which the American education system must address. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Adorno's "Education after Auschwitz" ought to be required reading for anyone entering the education profession.

### **Nussbaum's *Not for Profit***

As well as interrogating the values and practices which inform our notions of education, I would like to draw attention to the university as a cultural institution. Doing so means taking a more generalized view of the university, one not so much concerned with what is taught and how, but rather asking such questions as: What good is a university education? How does the university contribute to maintenance of the social totality? I will briefly explore two texts from theorists who are active today, the first of these being Martha Nussbaum's *Not for Profit*.

To begin with, I would like to state that *Not for Profit* has much to recommend it. Nussbaum's counterattack directed at neoliberalism's encroachment into the life of the university is well-informed and relevant. That the American university operates more like a corporation than it does as an educational institution is evident, and Nussbaum describes this trend with the acuity of a Deweyan humanist. Indeed, a primary concern of the text is to rescue the humanities from the relative neglect suffered by the university's

privileging of STEM disciplines. Although she does attempt to justify the humanities in terms of how they contribute to a fuller notion of economic growth, this is not an essential point to hang her overall argument on. Her concern is more Deweyan, that the humanities contribute to social well-being by promoting inclusiveness, mutual understanding, cooperation, and other civic virtues. Furthermore, she argues two points which are consistent with our concerns. In describing how universities can serve to promote democratic citizenship, she suggests that they develop capacities: “to see the world from the viewpoint of other people, particularly those whom their society tends to portray as lesser, as ‘mere objects,’”<sup>60</sup> and “for genuine concern for others, both near and distant.”<sup>61</sup>

One of the virtues of *Not for Profit* is its explicit opposition to the reduction of education to economic function. As indicated earlier, reified consciousness envisions that the primary purpose of the university is to serve as a gateway to the professions; students and faculty see in the American university an environment for the pursuit of careerist goals. *Not for Profit* is a direct assault on this pernicious notion. In criticizing the reduction of education to economic ends, Nussbaum is also attacking the bourgeois coldness which attends to that reduction.

However, considering the concerns which have already been raised in this paper, I judge *Not for Profit* to be insufficiently critical. Although Nussbaum criticizes American society and the American university, she also evinces a degree of American exceptionalist thinking. In drawing comparisons between the American university and

---

<sup>60</sup> Nussbaum Martha *Not for Profit* p.45

<sup>61</sup> Nussbaum Martha *Not for Profit* p.45



the Indian or the European university, the American university comes out looking better than the other two. Her argument, which is not without some merit, hinges on the fact that American universities still promote the full liberal arts curriculum whereas most non-American universities do not. She overestimates the effectiveness of the liberal arts curriculum in promoting conscientization and then uses that judgment to condemn European and Indian universities for not being like American universities. My next point will support this criticism just made. *Not for Profit*, for all its bluster about global citizenship, fails to acknowledge the reality of American imperialism. Nowhere does she condemn America for its aggressive wars. If America's universities promote better global citizens than do European or Indian universities, then how is it that American society is directly responsible for more atrocities committed against non-Americans than those others? Recent history shows that many Americans are not much concerned for the lives of Vietnamese, Nicaraguans, or Iraqis. This suggests that the mere fact of having a liberal arts curriculum does not make American university students more conscientious and better global citizens.

Another point of criticism: Nussbaum seems to have departed somewhat from her Deweyan origins. Otherwise, she would, with Dewey, insist that democracy is “primarily a mode of associated living”<sup>62</sup> rather than a formal system of government. Although she does stress the importance of civic virtues for a healthy democracy, she everywhere in that text writes of American society that it is democratic without ever problematizing that notion. For Dewey, the formal system of democratic governance is the correlate for the primary, substantive mode of democratic society. Deweyan democracy is an aspirational

---

<sup>62</sup> Dewey *Democracy and Education* p.91

idea, but Nussbaum's democracy seems as if it has already been largely achieved. In her discussion of the Human Development paradigm for education, she states that "The Human Development model is committed to democracy, since having a voice in the choice of the policies that govern one's life is a key ingredient of a life worthy of human dignity."<sup>63</sup> I do not disagree that "having a voice in the choice of policies that govern one's life" is an essential ingredient for a democracy, but this does not square with Nussbaum's insistence throughout her text that she is writing in defense of a threatened American democracy. The facts on the ground do not support the notion that Americans have much of a voice in choosing those policies which govern their life. Not only are the majority of Americans mostly politically impotent, the majority of Americans are also subject to the dictates of a thoroughly undemocratic economy. Most Americans have no influence over their wages or over the rising cost of living. Some of the most important policies which govern our lives are determined by 'the market'. Many of the policies which govern our livelihoods are not influenceable through democratic decision making, instead we are at the mercy of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', a ghostly metaphor for class power.

Finally, it should be noted that Nussbaum insists on the importance of culture and the humanities for the development of civic virtue – without qualification. *Not for Profit* puts forward a blanket endorsement of culture which is dangerous in its naiveté. Culture, on its own, does not guarantee global citizenship. Culture does not prevent atrocity. If this were so, then German society, which for so long hosted a flowering of European culture, would not have been the site of our last century's most notorious genocide. The

---

<sup>63</sup> Nussbaum *Not for Profit* p.24

“Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” chapter from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* persuasively problematizes Nussbaum’s position. So too do various passages from *Minima Moralia* wherein Adorno explores the totalitarian effects of consumer society. This is not to say that art and culture cannot serve Nussbaum’s aims, but rather, our relationship to that culture is decisive. We must learn how to approach culture critically, not in some supposed immediacy. “If negative dialectics demands the self-reflection of thinking, then this implies in tangible terms, that thinking must, nowadays at any rate, in order to be true, also think against itself. If it does not measure itself by the extremity, which flees from the concept, then it is cast in advance in the same mold as the musical accompaniment, with which the SS was wont to drown out the cries of their victims.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Giroux’s *The University in Chains***

One of critical pedagogy’s most prominent living scholars, Henry A. Giroux, has produced some trenchant critiques of militarized American society. Following from Fulbright’s diagnosis of the military-industrial-academic complex, *The University in Chains* explores many of the same issues as were exposed in Fulbright’s Senate speech. Writing for the post-9/11 world, Giroux argues that the national security state is just as active on American university campuses as it was during the Cold War.

Giroux establishes that DoD and the State Department still hold considerable influence over MIT and other elite universities. The CIA is still actively involved in recruiting and using academics for field work, and CIA officials have assumed

---

<sup>64</sup> Adorno *Negative Dialectics* p.365

administrative positions at American universities. "...Michael Crow, a former agent, is now president of Arizona State University, and Robert Gates, the former director of the CIA, was the president of Texas A&M, ..."65 As with the Cold War, a substantial share of American university faculty are keen to acquire funding and prestige through their cooperation with the security state. Scientists, engineers, linguists, anthropologists – a wide range of academic experts can be enlisted into service of the security state.

Giroux tells us that the tragic events of 9/11 have altered our society such that the collaboration between the American university and the national security state seems even more entrenched. "In a post-9/11 world in which the war on terrorism has exacerbated a domestic culture of fear and abetted the gradual erosion of liberties, the idea of the university as a site of critical dialogue and debate, public service, and socially responsible research appears to have been usurped by a patriotic jingoism and a market-driven fundamentalism that conflates the entrepreneurial spirit with military aggression in the interests of commercial success and geopolitical power."66 It is not for lack of relevance that resistance to the national security state has waned. Other factors, which we must uncover and understand, have contributed to the decline of the university's capacity to resist state power.

To start, the rise of the neoliberal paradigm is accompanied with a trend towards private-public partnerships. Universities now openly compete for grants and contracts from the DoD. As universities seek to promote their brands, an important component of

---

<sup>65</sup> Giroux *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* p.20

<sup>66</sup> Giroux *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* pp.21,22

which is their association with employment opportunity, we see closer relationships between the security industries and the university. Retired Boeing engineers, for example, might take a faculty position at a university from which they help recommend new graduates for employment at Boeing. In their teaching responsibilities, they perpetuate the deference of scientific study to the needs of the security state.

The same dynamic can be observed in the relationship between the social sciences and the security state. Many former State Department officials now hold posts in American universities where they teach political science and international relations. If we understand the role of the State Department in advancing America's aggressive foreign policy objectives, for example America's regime change intervention in Iraq, then such appointments as Condoleezza Rice to the directorship of Stanford University's Hoover Institution, or Colin Powell to CCNY's School for Civic and Global Leadership should be met with protest. By point of contrast, Kissinger's 1977 appointment to a professorship at Columbia University was met with such vociferous disapproval that he was induced to decline the offer.

The situation today is more dire than it was in the late sixties. Anti-war sentiment in the American university is not what it once was. "Rather than being the object of massive individual and collective resistance, the militarization of higher education appears to be endorsed by liberals and conservatives alike." A combination of Cold War triumphalism, post-9/11 fear of terrorist attack, and the allure of securing a share of America's massive defense budget has contributed to the decline in the university's willingness to oppose militarization. When the Obama administration participated in the devastation of Libya, or when it committed to providing material support for the Saudi

campaign in Yemen, what few public protests ensued were initiated by dedicated anti-war organizations with little collaboration from campus-based organizations. These observations suggest that higher education in America has declined in its critical capacities. The utopian moment of the late sixties has faded; today's American university is even more a bastion of reified consciousness than it was a generation ago.

### **Randolph Bourne**

When compared to the campus protests of the late sixties, today's intellectual class shows itself to be much more aligned with the interests of state power. However, the situation we find ourselves in is not unprecedented. Writing over a century ago and in opposition to America's involvement in the First World War, Randolph Bourne, essayist and social critic, reserved some of his most scathing critiques for the intellectual class. Although the military-industrial-academic complex was nowhere near what it would become in the ensuing century of war, Bourne could see the danger which was amassing on the horizon. The American intellectual class had at that time overwhelmingly coalesced in support of the state. The few dissenters who had the courage to oppose America's entry into the war were met with accusations of being unpatriotic, or worse, traitors. Jane Addams, who had by then become a well-known and respected social reformer, was pilloried for her pacifist beliefs. What Bourne called "herd-instinct become herd-intellect"<sup>67</sup> well describes the bellicose fever which swept through American culture. It is also an apt phrase to describe our current intellectual culture's complicity with the security state.

---

<sup>67</sup> Bourne "War and the Intellectuals" p.7

As early as 1917, Bourne could see that the American university had compromised its character as an educational institution. "... the American university has become a financial corporation ..."<sup>68</sup> It is this realization through which he analyzes the Columbia University dismissal of two faculty members<sup>69</sup> who had expressed their opposition to the war. Bourne charges that, "The real offence ... seems to have been not so much that they were unpatriotic as that they had lowered the prestige of the university ...". These professors' stated opposition to the war had made them targets for a jingoist press. Bourne points out that rumors and salacious accusations can damage the values of stocks, even if these are unsubstantiated, and that the logic of the stock exchange had migrated to the university boardroom. Accordingly, Columbia University's trustees felt compelled to protect the 'stock value' of their corporation; they dismissed these professors without investigating whether the rumors which had been peddled about them bore any truth. It was enough that the stories coming out from the nationalist press had damaged the university's reputation. The dismissal of these faculty members was a direct attack on academic freedom carried out in the conformist spirit of a nation at war and under the logic of a market which responds to hearsay with the same force as fact.

In the essay "Twilight of Idols", Bourne pours scorn on his onetime teacher, John Dewey. Bourne contends that Dewey's own commitment to substantive democracy was undermined when he lent his voice to supporting America's entry into the war. Dewey's justifications for this were couched in a valorization of democracy, but his arguments rested on the concept of democracy which Dewey had earlier regarded as grossly

---

<sup>68</sup> Bourne "The Idea of the University" p.152

<sup>69</sup> Professor J. McKeen Cattell and Professor Henry W. L. Dana were dismissed in September of 1917

insufficient – the formal system of governance involving elected representatives.

Bourne's stated concern is that war empowers the state and hypnotizes the nation to the effect of exacting serious damage to development of substantive democracy understood as a mode of associated living. For Bourne, Dewey had forsaken what was best of his own philosophy as he overlooked the real, concrete effects of war making in favor of the imagined, abstract benefits Dewey hoped that a victory would bring. "A philosopher who senses so little the sinister forces of war, who is much more concerned over the excesses of the pacifists than over the excesses of military policy, who can feel only amusement at the idea that any one should try to conscript thought, who assumes that the war-technique can be used without trailing along with it the mob-fanaticism, the injustices and hatreds, that are organically bound up with it, is speaking to another element of the younger intelligentsia than that to which I belong."<sup>70</sup> Bourne finds fault not just with Dewey's personal position, but also in Dewey's philosophy. Bourne's critique of Deweyan pragmatism anticipates Adorno and Horkheimer's later critique of instrumental reason. Bourne explains that Dewey's philosophy always meant to start with values, but that it left the question of how values were created and which values to be guided by largely unexplained. The result is a philosophy which can justify any activity so long as ends are met; what those ends may be are left to some other deciding force. "It is now becoming plain that unless you start with the vividest kind of poetic vision, your instrumentalism is likely to land you just where it has landed this younger intelligentsia which is so happily and busily engaged in the national enterprise of war."<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Bourne "Twilight of Idols" p.54

<sup>71</sup> Bourne "Twilight of Idols" p.61



This insight underscores King's call for revolution of values. The dominant values of American society are responsible for My Lai and for Fallujah; it is up to us today to arrange our thoughts and actions such that these and similar events do not repeat.

Here, it has not been my goal to provide a comprehensive review of reified and utopian theories of education. Such a project deserves at least its own volume. My aim here has been to select a few representative voices and to present them for consideration. We should understand the field of education as a contested one where the stakes are high. We can conceive of higher education as the means to ensure conformity to the existing order, or we can conceive of higher education as the means to bring about a more humane order. We must not lose sight of the fact that the choices we make regarding educative activity have life and death consequences.

**... that Hiroshima not happen again.**

The premier demand upon all American education is that Hiroshima not happen again. The fact that American educators are barely conscious of this priority and have scarcely begun to probe its implications testifies to the fact that Hiroshima is not yet recognized in its full horror. Next to this imperative, all other educational aims appear trivial by comparison. We must learn to see that those conditions which made Hiroshima possible still obtain. We live with the constant danger of its repetition because American society reproduces both the weapons and the reified consciousness which made Hiroshima a real atrocity.

Universities must take up the task of critically examining the organization of American society. Hiroshima cannot be dismissed as an aberration in an otherwise noble

American history. A state which has committed genocide against Native Americans and Filipinos and incinerated thousands from the skies over Dresden, Tokyo, and Hiroshima should be expected to repeat such crimes if the fundamental structure of its society is left unchanged. Nationalism is as potent a force in American society as it was during the nineteenth century drive towards an imagined manifest destiny. It is behind America's unwillingness to acknowledge its own crimes against humanity. Wherever possible, such blind devotion to the state must be criticized and unraveled.

Doing so would mean a departure from established practices. The American university has proven to be more of an accomplice with the state than a critic of it. The student movement of the late sixties is the exception that proves the rule of university collaboration with the national security state. Its spirit of solidarity has not entirely left us, but it suffers severe neglect. The government contract takes a higher place in the order of affective reason. Weapons systems and the cold, technical attitudes required to unleash their destruction are reproduced by this system of higher education. What possibilities might we uncover if the American university were as concerned with the business of peaceful coexistence and cooperation as it is with war-making and inter-state rivalry?

The revolution of values King called for must be developed in the American system of education. Faculty and students need to critically reflect on the aims of educative activity. Education must relearn that its function is not exclusively (or even primarily) economic. Teachers and administrators have a responsibility to reclaim education for humanistic ends. We must reject the conception of the American university that forces the business model onto its operations. As long as the values which animate

the life of the American university are given to it by the cold logic of the marketplace, it will continue to reproduce that bourgeois coldness which turns a blind eye to the suffering of others.

It should be made explicit that the current system of education overwhelmingly reproduces society as it already is. Althusser's theory of the ideological state apparatus describes the present reality too well. The situation is not without hope, however. Higher education harbors 'a secret utopia' beneath its hard shell of reification. The field of critical pedagogy offers us access to education's utopian moments. In particular, the work of Freire survives among conscientious educators who are dedicated to realizing a more humane society. Freire's emphases on conscientization and the interruption of oppression make his thought relevant to American education and compliment the aims of this paper. Development of these themes strengthen our capacity to act from Adorno's moral addendum: to recognize suffering and to intervene against its continuation.

The university must develop its capacity to criticize both itself and the society it reproduces. Here, Bourne serves as a positive model. His passion, courage, and intellectual integrity were directed against an intelligentsia which showed itself to be too willing to serve the interests of the state. He was right to point out that the scourge of war carried with it the compulsion towards "herd-intellect." In the century that has passed since Bourne, America has been party to armed conflict more often than not, and American society has become further militarized.

How should we counter this trend? What can universities do to prevent Hiroshima, or anything similar, from happening again? This paper has been concerned to establish that we should rethink what higher education means; I do not offer a theory of

education, only a call to critical reflection on and by institutions of education with a conscious preference for those theories which humanize. Conversely, the militarization of American education should be systematically dismantled. At the close of this paper, I would like to suggest a few concrete actions which a conscientious university might take. Firstly, universities should devote more resources to peace-making than to war-making. Interdisciplinary centers of study should be established with the goal of promoting a global peace, despite this goal conflicting with the state's immediate interest. These centers for the study of peace would do well to draw from Ken Booth's thesis that the appropriate object of security is not the state but human beings.<sup>72</sup> American university campuses should become loci of resistance to the state's foreign policy. American universities can divest from the arms industry. Many of them participated in the divestment movement targeting South Africa's apartheid government, recently the movement for divestment from fossil fuels has attracted the participation of some universities, but the movement to divest from the arms industry is presently relegated to the extreme margins. Special attention should be given to divest from companies involved in the manufacture and maintenance of nuclear weapons. The university should strongly commit to nuclear disarmament. Associations should be fostered with groups such as Pugwash and the Union of Concerned Scientists. The concrete step of adopting a No First Use policy should become a prominent issue championed by academics with the full support of their institutions. These are just a few suggestions for concrete action, no doubt a community of informed and concerned academics can produce a more robust

---

<sup>72</sup> For more, see Booth, Ken *A Theory of World Security*

program, but first that community must be realized. Nothing of this project is easy. As Adorno tells us, to arrange our thoughts and actions so that Hiroshima does not happen again is to struggle against world-history. However daunting this may sound, if we understand history and what it portends for the future, then we understand that the continuance of humanity is left no choice but to struggle against the course of world-history.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Adorno, Theodor. "Education After Auschwitz." (n.d.). <https://josswinn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/AdornoEducation.pdf>.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia*. New York: Verso, 2005.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1973.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. 127-186.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Bernstein, J.M. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Bourne, Randolph S. *War and the Intellectuals: Collected Essays 1915-1919*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999.
- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.
- Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. Pennsylvania State University, 2016.
- Doyle, Thomas E. II. *The Ethics of Nuclear Weapons Dissemination : Moral Dilemmas of Aspiration, Avoidance and Prevention*. New York: Routledge, 2015.  
<http://libproxy.txstate.edu/login?url=https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/txstate/detail.action?docID=1974216>.
- Doyle, Thomas E. "Moral and Political Necessities for Nuclear Disarmament: An Applied Ethical Analysis." *Strategic Studies Quarterly Vol. 9, No. 2* (Summer 2015): 19-42. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26271073>.
- Edwards, Rob. "US fired depleted uranium at civilian areas in 2003 Iraq war, report finds." *The Guardian* 19 June 2014.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/19/us-depleted-uranium-weapons-civilian-areas-iraq>.
- Francia, Luis H. *A History of the Philippines: From Indos Bravos to Filipinos*. New York: The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc., 2010.
- Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Classics, 1970.
- Fulbright, J William. *36180-36184 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE December 13, 1967*. 13 December 1967.

- Giago, Tim. "The Man Who Called for the Extirmination of the Lakota." *Huffpost* 22 March 2014.
- Giroux, Henry A. *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007.
- Hacking, Ian. "Weapons Research." *The Social Construction of What*. Harvard University Press, 1999. 163-185.
- Hersh, Seymour. "The Massacre at My Lai." *The New Yorker* 14 January 1972.
- Janssen, Scott. "I Work With Dying Veterans. Here's Why I Don't Automatically Thank Them For Their Service." *Huffpost* 22 January 2022.
- Leah, Christine & Lowther, Adam B. "Conventional Arms and Nuclear Peace." *Strategic Studies Quarterly Vol. 11, No. 1* (Spring 2017): 14-24.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26271588>.
- Lee, Steven. "The Morality of Nuclear Deterrence: Hostage Holding and Consequences." *Ethics Vol. 95, No. 3, Special Issue: Symposium on Ethics and Nuclear Deterrence* (1985): 549-566. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2381037>.
- Leslie, Stuart W. *The Cold War and American Science*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Lifton, Robert J. & Mitchell, Greg. *Hiroshima in America: A Half Century of Denial*. Harper Collins, 1996. paperback.
- Maddock, Shane J. *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. [https://doi-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.5149/9780807895849\\_maddock](https://doi-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.5149/9780807895849_maddock).
- Norris, Robert S. & Kristensen, Hans M. "U.S. nuclear threats: Then and now." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists: Nuclear Notebook* September/October 2006: 69-71.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2968/062005016>.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Price, David H. "How the CIA and Pentagon Harnessed Anthropological Research During the Second World War and Cold War with Little Critical Notice." *Journal of Anthropological Research* (Fall 2011): 333-356.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Shuster, Martin. *Autonomy After Auschwitz*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014.
- Simpson, Christopher editor. *Universities and Empire*. New York: The New Press, 1998.

Weber, Max. *The Protest Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

Weiner, Rachel. "Daniel Hale, who leaked information on U.S. drone warfare, sentenced to 45 months in prison." *The Washington Post* 27 July 2021.

Wilson, Jamie. "US admits using white phosphorus in Falluja." *The Guardian* 16 November 2005. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/nov/16/iraq.usa>.