Irony Good

Satire is the cure for the intellectual disease and misconceptions that are shown in the 1AC





Irony Bad

**Tactical media is no longer subversive—their performance will be appropriated by the mainstream**

Gene **Ray,** critic and theorist currently living in Berlin, Germany/ Not the Time Cube Guy, **2006**

“Tactical Media and the End of History,” http://www.linksnet.de/artikel.php?id=2723

Second, we can note that this foundaional crisis of TM, triggered by a real return of the repressed, is exactly contemporaneous with TM’s new institutional success. An indication of the latter would be the 2004 exhibition “The Interventionists,” curated by Nato Thompson at MASS MoCA. Without exaggerating or oversimplifying the situation, it seems clear that some kind of corner was turned with this exhibition. Indisputably, TM now enjoys a place and a certain official approval within the art world. The institutionalized art system is still far from being crudely identical with the Empire it serves, as can be seen clearly in the Bush government’s persistence in its legal harassment of CAE member Steve Kurtz; it does so against the opposition of the official and academic art world, which has been unusually united in its response and show of solidarity and support in the face of his indictment.[7] Still, the problem of cooptation has raised its ugly head and has now become an object of discussion among TM practitioners and theorists, including most recently David Garcia, a co-initiator of N5M, and critic and theorist Brian Holmes.[8] One doesn’t need paranoid conspiracy scenarios to note that, from the perspective of the systemic given and its logic, it is now, just as it always was, in the interest of capital and power to block art practices from attaining strategic consciousness and developing capacities for anti-capitalist agency. There are good reasons, in other words, for institutions to reach for TM with their smiling and neutralizing embrace.

No Solvency - The Spectacle of late capitalism overwhelms the plan. The “paradox of incommunicability” causes distraction, co-option, and backlash.

Lani Boyd in 2005 (B.F.A., Louisiana State University, THE YES MEN AND ACTIVISM IN THE INFORMATION AGE, A Thesis submitted May 2005)

Consider the most radical and powerful struggles of the final years of the twentieth century*: the Tiananmen Square events in 1989 . . . the May 1992 revolt in Los Angeles, the uprising in Chiapas that began in 1994 . . . None of these events inspired a cycle of struggles, because the desires and needs they expressed could not be translated into different contexts . . . revolutionaries in other parts of the world did not hear of the events . . . and immediately recognize them as their own struggles. Furthermore,* these struggles not only fail to communicate to other contexts but also lack even a local communication, and thus often have a very brief duration where they are born, burning out in a flash*. This is certainly one of the central and most urgent political paradoxes of our time: in our much celebrated age of communication, struggles have become all but incommunicable.136 Antonio Hardt and Michel Negri Empire* Hardt and Negri’s “**paradox of incommunicability**” is described by Jordan and Taylor as “the fact that, despite the rhetoric of the information age, effective communicating about local struggles is made more difficult by the tendency for such events to jump vertically into the global media’s attention.”137 Such a statement rings true for the Yes Men, whose works as the WTO seem ultimately to be impotent as far as communicating their anti-globalization message. Though the group has gotten a lot of press, even internationally, it fails to make an impact at the most grassroots level because of this paradoxical struggle for attention. The more press they get, the more the group is glossed over, or even worse, the more the group is **co-opted and rendered harmless**. “The paradoxical element of this situation stems from the fact that greater media coverage of an event may actually diminish the ability to communicate about political action in more local or horizontal terms.”138 As Debord’s Society of the Spectacle, our senses are dulled into submission by a barrage of media overload. Due to this, the actions of the Yes Men, though widely reported, end up ultimately futile. Hardt and Negri address the problem of effective communication within the spectacle, saying that the “massness” of the spectacle “makes political action difficult – communications networks turn individuals into audiences . . . Instead of individuals linked to one another, each is linked to the spectacle via the screen.”139 According to the Cult of the Dead Cow, saying something louder than your opponent doesn’t work. “Hacktivism is about using more eloquent arguements – whether code or words – to construct a more perfect system.”140 The Yes Men share this utopian view of creating a “more perfect system,” but their methods seem to be closer to shouting than eloquence, thus they find themselves unable to maintain their visibility in the media. Or perhaps, as seems to be the case with Dow Chemical, the Yes Men may now be biding their time, waiting for the most opportune and fruitful time to strike. **Instead of using the master’s tools to bring down the master’s house, the master’s tools have overpowered their user**.

Turn: Irony and acts of parody rely on an engaged audience that does not exist. The plan will be accepted and no one will get the joke.

Untimely Meditations in 2008 (“fistful of zizek,” April 13, 2008, <http://untimelymediations.wordpress.com/category/resistance/>)

What complicates this as a form of resistance, to my eyes, is that it requires an audience or observer who is capable of recognizing the logic of the satire and irony. That is, it demands an audience who is engaged enough with the issues at hand and the modes of resistance being deployed to see these acts as resistance and not simply just a “prank” or, worse yet, as a viable proposal for resolving economic crises in sub-Saharan Africa. I’m not saying that people are dumb, though I have serious questions about whether such acts could work on a large enough scale to be politically productive when many people might not recognize them as being political acts of resistance. Rather, I am more concerned about the second consequence, that tactics like those of the Yes Men will be taken at face value and that, for example, privatized labor will be enacted by overeager capitalism. In this case, Žižek’s qualms about the ethics of such forms of resistance are of utmost importance. The question that needs to be asked, then, is not just one of how to resist power and capital, but rather how can we use the empty gesture effectively—without allowing for the empty gesture to be taken at face value in ways that would be counterproductive to progressive causes? On one hand, it is tempting to say that no organization, body, or company would be so daft as to accept such a proposal as privatized labor. But . . . it is not a contention I have much faith in. I think it is far more likely that without making plain the emptiness of such empty gestures such proposals as privatized labor could become a reality. What, then, is the cost of such an outcome? If it ultimately leads to greater outcry, resistance, and protest to such practices, can we accept a few thousand (or million) people being enslaved? Or is the cost in human dignity too great?

Capitalism Links – Irony

**The aff’s strategy of subversion is acquiescence in the face of global capitalism—their localizable intervention gives up on the possibility of the type of offensive revolutionary strategies necessary to truly solve the harms.**

Gene **Ray,** critic and theorist currently living in Berlin, Germany/ Not the Time Cube Guy, **2006**

“Tactical Media and the End of History,” http://www.linksnet.de/artikel.php?id=2723

TM is an admirable contemporary mutation of the contestational cultural project of the historical avant-gardes. In some of its foundational assumptions and practices, however, it is clearly and crucially marked by the neo-liberal hegemony that characterized its moment of emergence. Its oppositional political motivation has already been noted: TM was developed to be the kind of anti-authoritarian culture its practitioners believed still to be possible under conditions of “pancapitalism.” Emerging and developing around a series of gatherings and workshops held between 1993 and 1999, TM is exactly contemporaneous with the heyday of triumphalist post-Cold War neo-liberalism, a gloating ideology the tonalities of which are still well evoked in the phrase of the right-liberal Hegelian Francis Fukuyama: with the fall of the Wall and the implosion of capitalism’s dialectical other, we are told, we have finally entered the “end of history.”[3] No more major political conflicts or struggles, no more radical critique or revolution: history has ended, by popular consensus, in the formula “capitalism plus liberal democracy.” And indeed, this ideology held sway through the 1990s. It’s only in retrospect, after Seattle at the end of 1999 and the whole cycle of protests that culminated in massive demonstrations against the G-8 in Genoa in 2001, that we can recognize continuous systemic challenges even in this decade: in the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas; in the general strike launched by South Korean workers in December 1996; or in the DIY anti-capitalism behind the fierce anti-road campaigns in England. As that decade began, however, the contestation and systemic critique of capitalism seemed to have collapsed in confusion and despair. Basically unopposed in the early 1990s, neo-liberals in power were able to organize, through the new institutions of the World Trade Organization and the World Economic Forum, a major intensification of global exploitation along North-South lines. “Privatization,” “structural adjustment,” and the “Washington consensus” were the euphemisms for the coordinated coercions of the global debtors prison, for the pulverization of local labor and environmental protections, and for the breaking open of all markets to the uncontrolled operations of finance capital. Against this grim backdrop, TM emerges as a refusal of political despair and cultural paralysis in the face of the evident defeat, everywhere, of radical aspirations. The diverse practices of TM were animated by a resolve to remain critical of post-Cold War realities and to survive without surrendering the possibility of inventive and playful practices of contestation. In retrospect, however, we can see that in certain of its assumptions, TM ceded too much to the neo-liberal triumphalists. In the absence of a visible anti-systemic movement, TM practitioners tended to accept that radical systemic change - revolution - was no longer a real or desirable possibility. **In doing so, they mistook neo-liberal wish projections for actual historical reality**. One can read this quite legibly in the texts of CAE from this period. They advocate “molecular” interventions because, as the group put it in 1994, “revolution is no longer a viable option.”[4] This text continues: “After two centuries of revolution and near-revolution, one historical lesson continually appears – authoritarian structure cannot be smashed; it can only be resisted.”[5] Giving up the project of radical systemic critique and transformation, of destroying capitalism as a global system of exploitation and control, obviously has enormous consequences for TM practices. Looking at the situation today, especially in light of the current acceptance and even enthusiastic approval of TM by the institutionalized art world, some problems and paradoxes emerge as inescapable. First, it is obvious that triumphalist announcements of the end of history were premature, to put it mildly. Neo-liberal hegemony provoked serious opposition and rebellions that have coalesced into new and global forms - the so-called rhizomes of anti-capitalism. And certain clustered contradictions of neo-liberal globalization exploded spectacularly on September 11, 2001, goading capitalism’s world-enforcer to declare a planetary state of emergency and resort to the dubious coercions of a perpetual, preemptive “war on terror.” This is not to equate global anti-capitalism with al-Qaeda-style jihadism, of course: the performance of this reduction belongs to the strategy of Empire itself.[6] It is undeniable, however, that both contemporary phenomena are responses to a neo-liberal globalism worked out in the 1970s and 80s and recklessly implemented in the 90s. The relevant fact is this: radical systemic critique has returned with a vengeance. The question of capitalism is back on the table, and with it comes again the question of revolution. The revolutionary tradition, critically appropriated, and revolutionary theory, critically rethought, are now enjoying a revival and expansion in much of the world that was unthinkable ten years ago, and we have only begun to glimpse the implications. The implications for TM are profound. The shared assumption that revolution was a dead letter clearly informed and determined the move away from structure and system to the “molecules” of micro-politics. In military discourse, the tactical is the local implementation of a general strategy. But in the case of tactical media – and the quoted example from CAE makes this perfectly clear – there is no strategy behind the tactics, other than the refusal of the strategic as such: “Authoritarian structure can’t be smashed; it can only be resisted.” CAE seems to reflect the tendency - common sense in the 1990s - to extract the maximum possible resignation from post-structuralist theory. Foucault’s conception of power does yield such readings, but it can also be inflected in anti-systemic directions, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri and others have recently shown. And if “molecular” in this context is an invocation of Deleuze and Guattari, then it is a distorting one. These French theorists never repudiated the aim of anti-capitalist revolution and did not deploy their concepts “molecular” and “micropolitics” in order to renounce or avoid the macro-level of global systems. In the 1990s, however, such distortions were well established in the American reception of French theory. So now that we have witnessed the astonishing return of systemic contestation and strategic thinking, where does that leave TM? The short answer is: in crisis. In so far as the tendency described above is central and constitutive of tactical media as a discrete stream, it marks a limitation that subsequent history has thrown into view. If this is right, the historical over-determinations of its foundational moment now appear as a limit in need of an overcoming leap or mutation. Some TM practitioners are legibly struggling with this question, even if there is not yet anything close to a consensual response or emerging position. And given the diverse character of this stream from the beginning, one wonders whether a consensus or common position that jettisons a foundational assumption is at all likely - or is even possible without dissolving the impetus from which tactical media came in the first place.

**now is the key time to rethink the viability of tactical media—unquestioned, their strategies success will be what kills it.**

Gene **Ray,** critic and theorist currently living in Berlin, Germany/ Not the Time Cube Guy, **2006**

“Tactical Media and the End of History,” http://www.linksnet.de/artikel.php?id=2723

To sum up: TM now finds itself in a world that it did not foresee and that directly undoes some of its founding assumptions. Mutations of thought, beyond anything so far produced, are needed to adjust theory and practice to the new realities of global anti-capitalism and permanent war – and to avoid the neutralizations of official approval. This should not be taken as a condemnation of TM: to repeat, it was a hopeful gesture in a basically hopeless historical moment. Moreover in the 1990s I and many others made the same mistake of accepting too quickly the idea that revolution had become unthinkable. The point is that today, given renewed anti-capitalist struggles and the revival of radical systemic critique, this “unthinkability” is itself “no longer viable.” Hindsight sees better, and if in 1994 CAE declared the streets “dead capital” and called for an exodus to cyberspace, well few people were in the streets at that time anyway. However, the current “success” of TM carries the risk of a wave of new imitators wishing to replicate that success without asking any critical questions about what this kind of success can possibly mean. Those who are now taking up TM as a practice should be aware of this tendency and be able to think it, critically and historically, as a limitation. To formulate it most provocatively, either TM now works out its relations to global anti-capitalist strategy and the inherited problems of revolutionary agency, or it ends here, returns to the art system, and goes into the museum-mausoleum. It would be ironic, not to say uninstructive, if TM were “killed by success” (converted to cultural capital) at the very moment popular, global resistance has put history back into motion.

Materialism Kritik

**The postmodern rejection of economic determination and class struggle as explanatory principles for social phenomena (emphasizes/allows for pluralism, relativism and individualism as methodological principles to which) serves as a mask for the bourgeoisie apparatus of domination and exploitation.**

**Resch ‘92** [Robert Paul Resch. Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory. 1992, pg 5-7]

The repression of Marxism has seen a corresponding revival of alternative traditions ranging from neo-liberal rationalism (Rawls, Habermas, Elster), functional pluralism (Annales, Geertz, Turner), and voluntarist irrationalism (Foucault, Deleuze, Baudrillard). 5 Divergent as these tendencies appear at first sight, they share a large common ground. All of them reject economic determination and class struggle as explanatory principles, of course, and all share a hostility to Marxism that is more or less fundamental to their traditions and whose significance can hardly be understated. Moreover, each of these movements subscribes, in varying degrees and sometimes with sharply divergent emphasis, to methodological principles of pluralism, relativism, and individualism—a formidable post-Marxist, postmodern triumvirate whose vulgarization in recent years has occluded the very possibility of explaining why things happen in history.

Pluralism, relativism, and individualism work together and reinforce each other, but for heuristic purposes we may treat them separately. Pluralism signifies causal indeterminacy—an emphasis on the simultaneity of diverse social phenomena as well as their interrelationship and interaction without, however, any regard for their relative efficacy or causal significance. Ultimately such indeterminacy degenerates into vulgar pluralism: everything, somehow, causes everything else and yet no single thing has any determinative power at all. The process of everything causing everything else produces, willy-nilly, something called "culture" and, over time, a cultural condition called "modernity" (and now postmodernity). Relativism embraces a historicist-hermeneutic view of knowledge whereby what we know is relative to our own culture and what we know of history is doubly constrained by a communication gap between cultures. Ultimately this view degenerates into vulgar relativism, a collective solipsism that reduces history to a literary genre or an exercise in translation: knowledge of history exists, if at all, only in fragments and impressions (or agglomerations of the same) whose validity, uncertain in any case, declines precipitously with any attempt to move beyond the struggle for communication to statements of fact aspiring to the status of scientific explanation. Individualism is anthropocentric; it places an autonomous human being at the center of historical explanation and conceptualizes history from the perspective of the consciousness and practice of individuals. Ultimately such ''humanism" degenerates into vulgar individualism: history as a struggle of ''people," undifferentiated in their uniqueness, struggling for fundamental yet amorphous "freedoms" against an oppressive but confoundedly hydra-headed "power."

Although it is no refutation of these principles to point out their historical association with inegalitarian and anti-socialist intellectual movements, their revival, phoenix-like, from the ashes of Hegelian Marxism and the New Left is surely not without significance. Both neo-liberal rationalism and postmodern irrationalism are firmly rooted in distinct traditions of bourgeois meritocracy—economic individualism and romantic individuality respectively. The genealogies of these traditions—on the one hand the "democratic" subordination of political equality to economic inequality in Bentham and J. S. Mill, and on the other the "humanist" subordination of mass mediocrity to an aristocracy of spirit in Goethe and Nietzsche—are sufficient testimony to their profoundly elitist animus. The elitism of functional pluralist tendencies is only slightly more sophisticated. From Saint-Simon and Comte through Durkheim and Parsons, this technocratic tradition has accepted elitism simply by denying its existence, masking domination and exploitation with euphemistic assertions of the cooperative nature of the social division of labor, the organic interdependence of social structures, and the autonomy of culture in relation to political and economic structures. That tacit acceptance of elitism and the ubiquitous evasion of exploitation reveal an underlying complicity beneath the superficial opposition of Left and Right in contemporary social theory—and the real source of its dramatic and general decline in recent years.

**And, the absence of historical-materialist criticism guarantees the existence of U.S. nuclear exceptionalism. The state’s attempt to overcome the contradictions of capitalism results in new forms of imperial violence culminating in extinction.**

**Foster 2k5** [John Bellamy Foster. “Naked Imperialism.” *Monthly Review* 57:4, September 2005.]

From the longer view offered by a historical-materialist critique of capitalism, the direction that would be taken by U.S. imperialism following the fall of the Soviet Union was never in doubt. Capitalism by its very logic is a globally expansive system. The contradiction between its transnational economic aspirations and the fact that politically it remains rooted in particular nation states is insurmountable for the system. Yet, ill-fated attempts by individual states to overcome this contradiction are just as much a part of its fundamental logic. In present world circumstances, when one capitalist state has a virtual monopoly of the means of destruction, the temptation for that state to attempt to seize full-spectrum dominance and to transform itself into the de facto global state governing the world economy is irresistible. As the noted Marxian philosopher István Mészáros observed in Socialism or Barbarism? (2001)-written, significantly, before George W. Bush became president: "[W]hat is at stake today is not the control of a particular part of the planet-no matter how large-putting at a disadvantage but still tolerating the independent actions of some rivals, but the control of its totality by one hegemonic economic and military superpower, with all means-even the most extreme authoritarian and, if needed, violent military ones-at its disposal."The unprecedented dangers of this new global disorder are revealed in the twin cataclysms to which the world is heading at present: nuclear proliferation and hence increased chances of the outbreak of nuclear war, and planetary ecological destruction. These are symbolized by the Bush administration's refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to limit nuclear weapons development and by its failure to sign the Kyoto Protocol as a first step in controlling global warming. As former U.S. Secretary of Defense (in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations) Robert McNamara stated in an article entitled "Apocalypse Soon" in the May-June 2005 issue of Foreign Policy. "The United States has never endorsed the policy of 'no first use,' not during my seven years as secretary or since. We have been and remain prepared to initiate the use of nuclear weapons-by the decision of one person, the president-against either a nuclear or nonnuclear enemy whenever we believe it is in our interest to do so." The nation with the greatest conventional military force and the willingness to use it unilaterally to enlarge its global power is also the nation with the greatest nuclear force and the readiness to use it whenever it sees fit-setting the whole world on edge. The nation that contributes more to carbon dioxide emissions leading to global warming than any other (representing approximately a quarter of the world's total) has become the greatest obstacle to addressing global warming and the world's growing environmental problems-raising the possibility of the collapse of civilization itself if present trends continue.The United States is seeking to exercise sovereign authority over the planet during a time of widening global crisis: economic stagnation, increasing polarization between the global rich and the global poor, weakening U.S. economic hegemony, growing nuclear threats, and deepening ecological decline. The result is a heightening of international instability. Other potential forces are emerging in the world, such as the European Community and China, that could eventually challenge U.S. power, regionally and even globally. Third world revolutions, far from ceasing, are beginning to gain momentum again, symbolized by Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution under Hugo Chávez. U.S. attempts to tighten its imperial grip on the Middle East and its oil have had to cope with a fierce, seemingly unstoppable, Iraqi resistance, generating conditions of imperial overstretch. With the United States brandishing its nuclear arsenal and refusing to support international agreements on the control of such weapons, nuclear proliferation is continuing. New nations, such as North Korea, are entering or can be expected soon to enter the "nuclear club." Terrorist blowback from imperialist wars in the third world is now a well-recognized reality, generating rising fear of further terrorist attacks in New York, London, and elsewhere. Such vast and overlapping historical contradictions, rooted in the combined and uneven development of the global capitalist economy along with the U.S. drive for planetary domination, foreshadow what is potentially the most dangerous period in the history of imperialism. The course on which U.S and world capitalism is now headed points to global barbarism-or worse. Yet it is important to remember that nothing in the development of human history is inevitable. There still remains an alternative path-the global struggle for a humane, egalitarian, democratic, and sustainable society. The classic name for such a society is "socialism." Such a renewed struggle for a world of substantive human equality must begin by addressing the system's weakest link and at the same time the world's most pressing needs by organizing a global resistance movement against the new naked imperialism.

**The alternative is a materialist inquiry into the resolution. This is not just a question about politics. This is a question of competing methodologies. We must understand the existing totality of social relations before we can engage in an effective strategy of resistance to domination and exploitation. Grounding political struggles and knowledge claims outside of human labor guarantees the existence of capitalism with a human face. Any transition requires solidarity against these structural forces.**

**Tumino 2k1** [Stephen Tumino. “What is Orthodox Marxism and Why it Matters Now More Than Ever Before.” *The Red Critique: Marxist Theory and Critique of the Contemporary*. Iss. 13, Spring 2001. http://redcritique.org/spring2001/whatisorthodoxmarxism.htm]

I will argue that to know contemporary society—and to be able to act on such knowledge—one has to first of all know what makes the existing social totality. I will argue that the dominant social totality is based on inequality—not just inequality of power but inequality of economic access (which then determines access to health care, education, housing, diet, transportation, . . . ). This systematic inequality cannot be explained by gender, race, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, or nationality. These are all secondary contradictions and are all determined by the fundamental contradiction of capitalism which is inscribed in the relation of capital and labor. All modes of Marxism now explain social inequalities primarily on the basis of these secondary contradictions and in doing so—and this is my main argument—legitimate capitalism. Why? Because such arguments authorize capitalism without gender, race, discrimination and thus accept economic inequality as an integral part of human societies. They accept a sunny capitalism—a capitalism beyond capitalism. Such a society, based on cultural equality but economic inequality, has always been the not-so-hidden agenda of the bourgeois left—whether it has been called "new left," "postmarxism," or "radical democracy." This is, by the way, the main reason for its popularity in the culture industry—from the academy (Jameson, Harvey, Haraway, Butler,. . . ) to daily politics (Michael Harrington, Ralph Nader, Jesse Jackson,. . . ) to. . . . For all, capitalism is here to stay and the best that can be done is to make its cruelties more tolerable, more humane. This humanization (not eradication) of capitalism is the sole goal of ALL contemporary lefts (marxism, feminism, anti-racism, queeries, . . . ).Such an understanding of social inequality is based on the fundamental understanding that the source of wealth is human knowledge and not human labor. That is, wealth is produced by the human mind and is thus free from the actual objective conditions that shape the historical relations of labor and capital. Only Orthodox Marxism recognizes the historicity of labor and its primacy as the source of all human wealth. In this paper I argue that any emancipatory theory has to be founded on recognition of the priority of Marx's labor theory of value and not repeat the technological determinism of corporate theory ("knowledge work") that masquerades as social theory.

Materialism Link – Genealogy

**Foucault’s genealogical methodology, as a form of postmodern dissidence, rejects any totalizing critique of the political economy. The result is a static concept of power/resistance that fails to generate social change and ends up recreating the effects of multinational capitalism.**

**Resch ‘92** [Robert Paul Resch. Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory. 1992, pg 7-8]

Postmodernism has played a particularly prominent role in the decline of social theory. **6** Postmodern social theory combines a populist aesthetics (based on the autonomy of culture, the abolition of distinctions between art and mass culture, and a presumed affinity between the discontents of a bohemian avant-garde and those of mass consumers serviced by the culture industry) with a neo-anarchist political philosophy (premised on the vitalist "will to power" of Nietzsche and the ontological mysticism of Heideggerian phenomenology). Postmodernism oscillates between two polar extremes, cynical accommodation and libertarian dissidence. The former tendency, perhaps best expressed in the work of Jean Baudrillard, denies the possibility of objective knowledge of social formations and their history not simply by asserting the principle of epistemological relativism but even more radically by moving beyond epistemological relativism to ontological relativism. Baudrillard's "hyperreality" of self-generating signs detached from any real signified (and from the exigencies of the capitalist mode of production as well) abolishes meaningful differences between ideas and objects and dissolves the very distinction between critique and affirmation. Such radicalism in philosophy can produce only passivity in politics. While Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality may have a certain descriptive value, it offers no explanation of contemporary culture. Indeed, Baudrillard's conceptual framework preempts the possibility of such an explanation, and it is difficult to resist the suspicion that this is precisely the source of his appeal. Sooner or later, explicitly or implicitly, by design or default, postmodern cynics conclude that in society, as in theory, anything goes.

In contrast to its fraternal twin, dissident postmodernism revels in the obstreperous rhetoric of political rebellion. Revealing and resisting the spontaneous generation and diffusion of "power" throughout society, dissident postmodernists, such as Michel Foucault, claim to have discovered the only form of radicalism appropriate for defending "freedom" in "post-industrial" society. However, postmodern dissidence purchases its radical credentials at a high cost. By abandoning allegedly "totalitarian" global analysis for fragmentary "genealogies" of particular social phenomena, postmodern rebels end up hypostatizing both the "power" they resist and the "freedom'' they defend. Even less willing to admit the economic taproot of power and domination than were their forerunners in the New Left, dissident postmodernists attempt to resist power on an ad hoc basis—everywhere, in all forms, and all at once. Ultimately such resistance collapses under the magnitude of its task and the futility of its method. At the point of exhaustion, postmodern dissidents capitulate to the greater wisdom of their cynical and accommodating counterparts. In the end, "resist everything'' is merely the flip side of "anything goes." If everything is bad, it is not long before bad begins to look, if not exactly good, at least irresistible.

The domestication of dissident postmodernism in the eighties (the shift of Lyotard and Foucault from *gauchisme* to "Americanism" are only more serious examples of a general phenomenon parodied by the career of Baudrillard) substantiates Fredric Jameson's contention that postmodernism reflects, rather than critiques, "the cultural logic" of multinational capitalism. The short-lived predominance of postmodern dissidence during the seventies deserves further study. I suggest, provisionally, that dissident postmodernism has functioned as the loyal opposition during the birth pangs of multinational capitalism and in this respect has been simply the ideological obverse of the New Right. The anti-Marxist or post-Marxist rhetoric of postmodernism is obviously crucial in this regard. The more blatant the effects of economic determination and class struggle became during the seventies and eighties, the more stubbornly they were denied by postmodern theorists. Indeed, a large part of what is left of the New Left has rationalized its crushing defeat by blaming it on traces of Marxism still at work within the radical movement and its social theory.

Materialism Alternative – General Solvency

**Their argument is self-defeating. The genealogical attempt to reduce the production of knowledge to relations of power and domination precludes any interpretation of historical events, including that of Foucault’s own methodology. Materialism is a preferable alternative because it contextualizes power/knowledge within a social whole determined by economic structures.**

**Resch ‘92** [Robert Paul Resch. *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*. 1992, pg 241-243]

The move away from "theoretical forms" toward a "discursive regime" reactively mirrors Althusser's well-publicized redefinition of philosophy and shift toward the material apparatuses of ideology and the process of interpellation, and once again places Foucault in a position of negative dependence on Structural Marxism. By the time of his important essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971, in Foucault 1977), a new set of differences between Foucault's position and that of Althusser were coming into focus. Lacking anything comparable to Althusser's multifaceted concept of ideology or any general framework for differentiating the existence and function of social practices, Foucault had always conceptualized discursive practice in one-dimensional terms, as either "knowledge" or ''power"; hereafter he simply collapses them into a simple unity, knowledge/power. Foucault explicitly reformulates his idea of discourse in terms of power. The discursive regime becomes a *dispositif*, a system or apparatus (the debt to Althusser could hardly be clearer), signifying that knowledge is now merely an effect of power, that power alone creates structures of thought and constitutes the condition for the possibility of knowledge. In the published summary of his 1971-72 course on penal institutions, Foucault summarized his position this way:

power relations (with the struggles that traverse them or the institutions that maintain them) do not play with respect to knowledge a facilitating or obstructive role; they are not content merely to encourage or stimulate it, to distort or limit it, power and knowledge are not linked together solely by the play of interests or ideologies; the problem is not therefore that of determining how power subjugates knowledge and makes it serve its ends, or how it imprints its mark on knowledge, imposes on it ideological contents and limits. No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communications, records, accumulation and displacement which is in itself a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and functioning, to other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. On this level, there is not knowledge on the one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only the fundamental forms of knowledge/power. (Foucault, quoted in Sheridan 1980, 131)

Foucault has a valid point to make here. It is essential that social theory recognize that the production of knowledge is itself a process of interpellation embedded in an ideological apparatus. However, I suggest that Foucault has bent the stick too far in this direction, promulgating a simplistic reduction of knowledge to domination that extends beyond the history of science (where it has an undeniable, if partial, heuristic value) to the philosophy of science (where it serves as an epistemological category based on a ontological essence, power). Concealed within the conceptual transition from episteme to knowledge/power is a rather ominous shift in Foucault's attitude toward the content of discourse. Knowledge effects are no longer neutral things (*Archaeology of Knowledge*) or even effects of exterior "bad" things (*Madness and Civilization*); knowledge becomes in itself an explicitly oppressive form of domination. Foucault's insight, that knowledge is a process of interpellation, is inscribed within a simple, undifferentiated negativity that distinguishes Foucault's usage of the term knowledge/power from Althusser's concepts of science, philosophy, ideology, and ideological apparatuses. Foucault's conceptualization not only forecloses any attempt to articulate a philosophical defense of its own interpretation of historical events but also pre-empts any attempt to discuss knowledge effects in relation to their theoretical object and the knowledges they produce of that object.In actuality, Foucault's "genealogical method" is a poor alternative to the Althusserian problematic and not much of an improvement over archaeology, whose ad hoc character and bias against totalization it retains without qualification. Aside from a focus on knowledge as an ideological apparatus, all the positive attributes of genealogy derive from the recognition of subjectivity as a social production, an insight taken over completely from Althusser and then impregnated with a Nietzschean-Deleuzean vitalism. The result, far from overcoming the methodological and epistemological problems of archaeology, reproduces them in an intensified form. Whereas structural causality can easily accommodate knowledge/power in terms of an articulation of scientific practice within a social whole that assigns it a place and a function (a social whole determined, in the last instance, by the economy), Foucault can express knowledge/power only as reified and hypostatized fact. Subtracting those materialist elements it borrows from Structural Marxism, Foucault's genealogy is little more than a series of rhetorical flourishes, oscillating between a peculiarly teleological form of historicism and a strident, politicized aestheticism that denies the truth of its own research.

**Genealogical analysis is empty theorizing that does nothing to change the materialist conditions of racism or economic exploitation.**

**Young 2k1** [Robert Young, assistant professor of English at the University of Alabama. “The Linguistic Turn, Materialism and Race: Toward an Aesthetics of Crisis” *Callaloo* 24:1 (2001) pg 334-345]

Finally, in the name of liberation, West acts as crisis manager for the status quo. This is the reason for his immense popularity within the dominant knowledge industry. He is useful to the dominant culture because he calls attention to social problems but proposes solutions, such as "keeping faith," that cost nothing and solve nothing. In effect, West erases the capitalist mode of production as the origin of exploitation and we are left with another "narrative of specificity."The current economic/political crisis and the sharpening of social antagonism have forced issues such as race back into public debates. In response to these pressures and because of his explicit concern with such social issues, West has been anointed as the authority on race. By directing inquiry into a description of various racist social practices, West occludes the more politically urgent inquiry into the enabling economic conditions for social practices (and thus the mechanisms of exploitation continue on without inspection and opposition). Even if we go along with West and "genealogically" disclose the "internal" logic of racist practices, one is left with the facts that African Americans still have no access to (economic) resources and that "Keeping Faith" will not solve this problem.

Materialism Kritik – A2 Permutation

**Materiality precedes genealogy - can’t do both/ can’t make genealogical assessments without materialist assumptions/conditions first**

**Strozier 2k2** [Robert M. Strozier. *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self*. 2002, pg 125-126]

 From the perspective of Foucault’s materialist inclinations, the genealogical aspect of his thought is the most interesting because it is closely related to ancient materialist conceptions of process. This argument allows for, at any given stage of process, a certain fund of material already configured. In atomic materialism, the material is always in motion; hence the given configuration is already potentially unstable and there is the further possibility of the addition to or the subtraction from the fund of material - from the external environment. Localization and contingency are important here: the configured material at any given stage has the potential, with or without external interference, to develop further, to be transformed into a further stage of the process

 Constant process, growth and decay, are the hallmark of materialist systematic, and hence they may easily be adapted to historicist methods, literally or otherwise. Foucault’s more general way of identifying the material substratum, plus the fact that to articulate the material is to configure it, means that the potential at any stage to become a consequent stage or configuration is never measurable. In one way Foucault here comes close to the Hegelian Marxist Irigaray, for whom material is always material-for-representation. Atomism historically takes two paths, toward science and toward history. Marx, in the nineteenth century wanted to take both. Foucault, however, is not in the business of prediction, except to say that there will be a future and that it will be different from the present. In addition, for Foucault the material substratum for a history of sexuality is relatively stable; outside interference is always a configuration or form, not merely an addition of matter. Yet this interference takes on enormous importance in Foucault.

 The stage-to-stage process is central to *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1: the prior stage, both material and configuration, represents the material or potential to be actualized at the subsequent stage, and is itself the actualization of the potential at a prior stage. Foucault is interested primarily in two deployments in this text, but his investment in materialist process always raises further questions: what precedes the deployment of alliance? What caused the economic and political shifts which could not then depend on the deployment of alliance for support (106)? If we follow Foucault, we must be content to enter history at a given stage, or focus on a specific discourse or technique; but we aren’t able to trace these back to their origins (as if there were a point at which process itself began) or even to a prior stage. Without an origin, there is no return to a pure material potential, merely the myth of a presence which cannot be represented - except in a written articulation.

**The permutation of genealogy with materialism obscures the specific social and economic contexts of the alternative. This short-circuits the perm’s solvency and ensures that operations of capital will continue uninterrupted.**

**Young 2k1** [Robert Young, assistant professor of English at the University of Alabama. “The Linguistic Turn, Materialism and Race: Toward an Aesthetics of Crisis” *Callaloo* 24:1 (2001) pg 334-345]

West adopts instead a variant of ludic postmodern theory: Nietzsche-inspired Foucauldian theories of materialism, not as a mode of production, but as "the specificity of difference." West argues, for instance, that the very principles anchoring Marxism require the supercession of Marxism: "the principle of historical specificity and the materiality of structured social practices--the very founding principles of Marx's own discourse--now requires us to be genealogical materialists" (266). Thus West replaces Marxist notions of history, which foreground the class struggle ensuing from exploitative social arrangements, "with Nietzschean notions of genealogy, [and] yet preserves the materiality of multifaceted structured social practices" (265). The material, then, is not understood in relation to the production and extraction of surplus value through the laboring body of the worker, but rather is located in ahistorical notions of the body (266). In West's conjunction of Marxism and Foucault, the specific socioeconomic context is elided, and he effectively reconstitutes Marxism without historically determinate relations and consequently obscures the laws of motion of capital.West's reading of the material is an ideological blocking of historical materialism. He argues that genealogical materialism "should be more materialist than that of the Marxist tradition, to the extent that the privileged material mode of production is not necessarily located in the economic sphere" (266). For West, then, "decisive material modes of production at a given moment may be located in the cultural, political, or even psychic sphere" (266). This view is, of course, precisely what the dominant cultural apparatuses promote as they suppress how African-American oppression and exploitation is located within the material domain, the effect of the relations of production. To posit the psychic domain, even potentially as a decisive "mode of production," erases how this domain is historically constituted and articulated within the prevailing structures of domination.The cultural, political, and psychic spheres are not autonomous domains of the social, but operate ideologically as "domains of support" for prevailing economic structures. Dominant economic practices could not be reproduced without the production of subjectivities, differentially and unevenly, within these domains. Thus, to (re)situate social practices "within the cultural traditions of civilizations" (267) displaces the salient question of why racist practices are part of cultural traditions in the first place. After suppressing this inquiry, West then draws upon existentialism and in so doing situates himself as an ideological agent for the status quo when he argues that, in a frequently quoted formulation: "the major enemy of black survival in America has been and is neither oppression nor exploitation but rather the nihilistic threat--that is the loss of hope and absence of meaning" (see his *Race Matters*). Why is there "loss of hope"? Such a condition is neither a "natural state of affairs" nor a "state of mind," but produced and reproduced by exploitative social arrangements.Racism is not really about the "wrong" ideas in people's heads. Nor is it a category that should be erased because it is without scientific credibility (Appiah) or deconstructed and revealed as arbitrary (Gates). The "experience" of people of color clearly indicates that race has not become obsolete, and, even if arbitrary, we still have to account for the historical adequation between signifier and signified. As I have suggested, a more productive view of race locates it as an economic category that simultaneously designates and legitimates a subordinated positionality within the relations of production, thereby maintaining asymmetrical access to resources. By calling for specificity but erasing global economic structures that inform the local, West participates in narrowing the limits of intelligibility, thus providing a cover for the machinery of exploitation to continue without interrogation.