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Response to the book reviews

The academic public sphere can be traced back to 18th century salons and café gatherings: but it has become, today, strikingly monological. Even face-to-face exchanges, such as conference panels styled as "roundtables," often end up as a series of solipsistic pronouncements. In turn, book reviews are often barely disguised monologues used by reviewers to re-state their own prior views. In this context, the book reviews printed here stand out. Collectively, they constitute proof positive that dialogism is not just a theory of communication developed by Bakhtin but is also a set of practices—ethical and aesthetic as well as linguistic—that can infuse the exchanges that constitute 'the academy' with the intellectual virtues of broad-mindedness and anti-dogmatism but also with the profound pleasures of open-ended conversation.

I would be happy to simply enjoy the (all too rare) feeling of having one's hard work be appreciated. But since the journal asked to comment, let me briefly repay some of the debts (in Derrida's sense) that I have incurred.

I will first address two comments on my use of Bakhtin and then touch on two other, more general, issues. First, Velloso and Sylvestre's review suggests that my focus on chronotopes may prevent us from seeing that the Bakhtinian notions of intertextuality, dialogism, and heteroglossia could be used by socio-legal scholars to great effect as well. They point out that Bakhtin's work contains excellent and thus far too little used tools to document the ways in which certain actors or speakers are excluded or ignored, and they suggest that De Sousa Santos's recent work on *absences* could be given a Bakhtinian turn. That is a very fair comment. In the chapter on 'the honour of the Crown,' for instance, I focus on the legal and political effects of the peculiar mystical spatiotemporality of the Crown's inherent honour but do not go on to explicitly and in detail link this to the exclusion of aboriginal voices from mainstream legal and political discourse. The particular readers who were asked for reviews certainly see how my analyses supplement rather than supplant the critical studies of law's exclusions that Canadian socio-legal scholarship has long produced; but perhaps a more explicit link could have been made, for the benefit of other types of readers.

Secondly, Velloso and Sylvestre criticize the rather binary way in which I contrast my preferred style of theorizing, which draws largely on Foucault, with the dominant genre, which I call "world-scale theory." They point out, quite rightly, that one can use 'big theorists' like Luhmann or Bourdieu in a nuanced manner to support original concrete analyses. This criticism (echoed in other responses to the book I have received) is fair. While I worked hard to make the book as constructive as possible (rather against the grain of my own temperament, which was, unfortunately, forged in the anti-dialogical 'theory wars' of the 1980s), I could not resist a bit of polemical fun at the expense of Canonical Male Theorists who pronounce on the state of the world in general. But I could have made it explicit that 'world-scale theory' merely describes a tendency, and is not a concept with fixed content.

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Sheryl Hamilton's review raises a couple of additional issues. One is that while I point out that Bakhtin's ideas are useful in part because they take both affect and aesthetics seriously, I do not dialogically engage with relevant existing bodies of work in cultural studies and communication. While writing the book, I did wonder whether to reference scholars in the law and literature field who have influenced my thinking (Desmond Manderson, mentioned by Hamilton, being one). In the end, I chose to under-reference, partly because my engagement with cultural studies has been quite minimal over the past decade or so and I did not want to privilege the small sample of that work that I happen to know and like, but more importantly because of a deep concern not to alienate social science-based readers. In general, I struggled with the question of how to acknowledge my own intellectual debts, and chose (wisely or not) to under-reference.

Reading George Pavlich's as well as Hamilton's reviews made me conclude that the Canadian socio-legal community is in dire need of a broader conversation about the *two solitudes* in socio-legal studies (humanities vs. social sciences). In such a conversation, it might be useful to discuss the intellectual and ethical effects of the traditional format for collegial dialogue and debt acknowledgement (the footnote). I have come to think that footnotes are often a substitute for real engagement and that they perform authority more than they seriously acknowledge debts, but I would love to hear other people's views.

Among the many remaining suggestions and criticisms that I am lucky to have received, one that is particularly sharp is Hamilton's complaint that I disavow "case studies" but then refer to specific analyses as "case studies." I plead guilty to contradiction here. I should have explained that I object to "case studies" because that term is generally used so as to suggest that concrete analyses are but mere illustrations of a grand theory. I am not sure whether it is possible to detach the term from conventional scientific epistemology and re-signify it in a Nietzschean direction, in view of the lack of good alternatives. "Concrete analysis of a concrete situation," a term I often use instead of "case study," was invented and promoted by Lenin, an anti-dialogical thinker if there ever was one. And Foucault's attempt to re-signify Nietzschean "genealogy" for similar purposes was less than successful, in my view. So I ended up using "case study"; but that too is problematic.

In conclusion, I must thank the editors and the reviewers for devoting considerable energies to engaging with my work in a manner that (in a classically Canadian understated manner) goes against the grain of the neoliberal academy's c.v.-fetishism. That junior scholars are told to avoid book reviews since "they don't count for tenure" is a grave symptom of the monological disease that afflicts us, and for which Bakhtin's work offers some possible treatments.

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