theories and methodologies

Schiz-ability

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THE VISITOR TO KARL MARX'S GRAVE IN LONDON'S HIGHGATE CEMETERY IS CONFRONTED BY A LARGE POLISHED GRANITE PLINTH, ATOP WHICH squats an imposing bronze head and shoulders of Marx.[1] Although the artist Laurence Bradshaw designed the rectangular plinth as a proxy for Marx's body, the effect is still to emphasize the head, the supposed locus of *Geist*, *esprit*, intellect. Marx was a headworker, it is true. Even in the depths of poverty, plagued by bodily ailments, he was never obliged to purvey *körperliche Arbeit* ("body work," "manual labor") in the restricted sense—that is, a *körperliche Arbeit* located in a social split that structurally denies the body worker access to the abstractions of a developed *geistige Arbeit* ("intellectual labor").

In Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, the relation between mind and body remains an enigmatic double bind: "the first difference we perceive materially is sexual difference." Thus, "gender is our first instrument of abstraction . . . in many forms and shapes," writes Spivak near the end of her introduction. This is to say both that gender is a primary tool of headwork and that there is no one way of "computing" (with) it. "Our" way is not the only way. Moreover, as an "abstracting instrument," the thing that enables the first moves of abstraction (the capacity to think generally, to work the head), gender can never be thought fully (30–31). Thought cannot occur without the primary moves of a bodied or "material" difference, but within that system—determined by that differencing—it cannot think a final coding of the difference as such. To make headwork, including imagination, into "reasonable programming" is to sidestep this double bind, and you're already on the road to globalization (32–33). The gender differences do become roughly coded, of course, and the encoding becomes the "loosely held assumptions and presuppositions that English-speaking people have been calling 'culture' for two hundred years," congealing into "belief systems, organized suppositions. Rituals" (31).

For his part, the young Marx narrativized this difference into the story of the division of labor between headwork and body

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work in the following way. The division of labor was "originally nothing but the division of labor in the sexual act" ("die Teilung der Arbeit, die ursprünglich nichts war als die Teilung der Arbeit im Geschlechtsakt"; Marx and Engels, *German Ideology* 44; *Die deutsche Ideologie* 31).[2] Its social institutionalization is thus "a further extension of the natural division of labor existing within the family" ("eine weitere Ausdehnung der in der Familie gegebenen naturwüchsigen Teilung der Arbeit")—a development of "the slavery latent in the family" ("in der Familie latente Sklaverei"), which opened the possibility of slavery involving outsiders (33; 22).

Thus does Marx suggest that the social abstraction of a division of labor emerges from division between the sexes until you have full division between mental and "material" labor. The social institution of the division of labor only comes into its own, writes Marx,

> from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent.) From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world. (44–45)
>
> Die Teilung der Arbeit wird erst wirklich Teilung von dem Augenblicke an, wo eine Teilung der materiellen und geistigen Arbeit eintritt. Von diesem Augenblicke an *kann* sich das Bewußtsein wirklich einbilden, etwas Andres als das Bewußtsein der bestehenden Praxis zu sein, *wirklich* etwas vorzustellen, ohne etwas Wirkliches vorzustellen—von diesem Augenblicke an ist das Bewußtsein imstande, sich von der Welt zu emanzipieren und zur Bildung der "reinen" Theorie, Theologie, Philosophie, Moral etc. überzugehen. (31)

I am not saying this is an empirically verifiable story. I am trying to show that it is how Marx intuited (and also resolved in his way, by narrativizing) an originarily gendered double bind, socially instituted in a split between access to and denial of the right to exercise intellectual abstraction.

In *An Aesthetic Education* education—more specifically, what Spivak calls "aesthetic education"—is the pharmakontic element that can both poison and medicate such a historical-social division: medicate not so as to resolve the double bind between mind and body but so as to teach educator and student to learn to live with it, in it, accountably, while working to change its historical elaboration as an instituted fissure between those holding rights (unacknowledged or greedily guarded) to intellectual abstraction and those not. "[I]nstrumentalize the intellectual," she writes, "in the interest of producing epistemological change, rather than only attending on the ethical, in subaltern and intellectual alike" (3).[3] Intellectual/subaltern: this pair does not map exactly onto the pair *geistige Arbeit* and *körperliche Arbeit*. No chiastic symmetry will fix this double bind once and for all. The intellectual/subaltern fissures are, in different times and places, more overdetermined, overcoded, and ramified than what translates into banal English as a difference between intellectual labor and manual labor, especially if the latter categories are read as code for only the capital(ist) logic of class difference. Even Marx points out that the split between headwork and body work predates capitalism by a long time, and we have already seen how this is part of Spivak's argument.[4] Spivak leaves her readers to figure out this gendered double bind with both Marx and Kant. *Subaltern* can name classed and gendered divisions of far greater historical depth than mere capitalism. To blame capitalism for every modern ill is like claiming that everything today has been successfully, even "happily," globalized (1–2).

Let us revisit Marx's graveside for a moment. The granite plinth is inset with the original marble headstone of the Marx family grave.

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The names of some of the women in Marx's life—Jenny von Westphalen, Helena Demuth, and Eleanor Marx—as well as the grandson Harry Longuet, are encrypted in the granite body of "Marx." Read more sympathetically, perhaps, the Highgate Marx monument dramatizes a dilemma, or a double bind, of the intellectual and the bodily. After all, inspiring words are carved on that granite body. Yet even in acknowledging the body, the memorial plinth covers it in a writing that is doubly monumentalized. Double bind becomes deadlock.

Base and superstructure / superstructure and base: At the base of the plinth, the final sentences of the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach are carved in capital letters: THE PHILOSOPHERS HAVE ONLY INTERPRETED THE WORLD IN VARIOUS WAYS · THE POINT HOWEVER IS TO CHANGE IT. Monumentalized prior to this memorial inscription, these words are a version of the English translation of Engels's redaction of some of Marx's early notes. In 1888 Engels published a short book-length review of K. N. Starcke's *Ludwig Feuerbach*. Engels's book, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, includes as its appendix an edited version of Marx's 1845 jottings that Engels called "Marx über Feuerbach" ("Marx on Feuerbach"). In his preface to the book, Engels refers to these writings as "theses on Feuerbach" that "I found in an old notebook of Marx's" (ii; my trans.). This is not the heading Marx gave them. It is, I believe, from this remark in Engels's preface that the name "Theses on Feuerbach" came. Engels then offers us the bare outlines of an alternative reading protocol for the "theses": "These are notes," he writes, "hurriedly scribbled down for later elaboration, absolutely not intended for publication" ("Es sind Notizen für spätere Ausarbeitung, rasch hingeschrieben, absolut nicht für den Druck bestimmt"; "Preface" 520; *Ludwig Feuerbach* vii). Thus, Engels resists the thesis-izability of these writings even as he turns them into theses. Another double bind for the reader.

This is what appears in Engels's book: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretiert*; es kommt aber darauf an, sie zu *verändern*" (72). A much used English translation, the basis for the tomb inscription, reads as follows: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx, "Theses" 8). And this is from Marx's notebook as printed in the German *Werke*: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretiert*, es kömmt drauf an, sie zu *verändern*" ("Thesen" 7). The standard English translation is "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it" ("Theses" 5).

Engels, copyediting, makes Marx's sentence more grammatically correct by substituting a semicolon for Marx's first comma, uncontracting "drauf," and removing the umlaut from "kömmt." He also adds the adverbial "aber" ("but," "however"), presumably to emphasize the difference between the second clause's suggestion and the merely interpretative activity of the philosophers of the first clause. Elaborate discussions of this thesis, in all its grammatical detail, have already been made, and Spivak has contributed much to them (*In Other Worlds* 128 and *Outside* 107–33).[5] I do not intend to describe them here. There are, however, several links with the frame of *An Aesthetic Education* that I would like to underline.

Thesis-izability: An emblem of the thesis-ization of Marx's notes is the displacement between the "*ad* Feuerbach" of the old notebook (the heading under which Marx made his jottings) and the monumentalized "Theses on Feuerbach," carved in stone as the wisdom of Historical Materialism. Marx's notes perhaps cannot even be called hypotheses (pre- or subtheses, things on the way to becoming theses). They are on the order of notes to oneself, memorandums, Post-it notes, indexes, recording possible directions for future work. And yet this auto-affectivity

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is turned toward the other in the self: *ad* Feuerbach, "at" or "to" or even "toward" Feuerbach. An other that is the *mochlos* ("lever") of the self's othering and that itself must be othered (*verändert*) in order for there to be systemic, worldly change (Derrida, "Mochlos"). I suggested that Engels underlined the double bind (the dilemma) of his act of thesis-ization by reminding his readers where the notes came from. And I want to suggest further that rather than bash Engels we notice that the Engels-to-Marx relation could be interestingly, if only roughly, analogized to the Schiller-to-Kant one described in *An Aesthetic Education*. Spivak discusses the former on pages 192–96 of the book; the latter is elaborated throughout its introduction. Engels as the ideology of Marx? Perhaps so; but like Schiller taming Kant, he is ideological in the sense that he offers an unintendedly "mistaken" reading of Marx that yet draws out something in the Marxian text sanctioning that reading (Spivak, *Aesthetic Education* 19), a reading not strictly wrong but applying patches and glosses at points of productive instability and providing the theses, the theoretical footholds, with which actually existing socialisms of many types would rise and fall. "[T]hese unwitting pre-suppositions become belief systems, organized suppositions. Rituals coalesce" (31). As an instrument more formalized and abstracted than a supposition, the thesis, for better or worse, lends itself to attempted universalization or globalization.

Is a specter haunting this book? The specter of another book between its lines?

The "envoi" of *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* is the book's final word. It contains an invitation. Or is it an imperative? (Double bind between invitation and imperative: "Come!") I quote the envoi in full: "Grounding error, safety from the horror of planetarity, double bind within mere humanism . . . upon this precarious terrain, read the title as an aesthetic education in the era of globalizability" (507).

The envoi summarizes the book's themes in a rarefied, formulaic manner, and then Spivak gives the following instruction/invitation: "read the title as an aesthetic education in the era of globalizability." Depending on your understanding of "reading as," this could be a suggestion to imagine that in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* there lurks a shadow book, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalizability*. In any case, what might be at stake in this final call to move from *-ation* to *-ability*? Spivak has already asked us to "work at the double bind between Introduction and book," where the introduction reconceptualizes the book's previously published but revised chapters in the light of the appropriation of hope by the very forces those chapters had hoped against (3). Now we are called to work at the double binds between envoi and book, globalization and globalizability.

To answer the question adequately, we would have to engage in detail with Samuel Weber's recent work *Benjamin's -abilities*, which develops Walter Benjamin's use of the suffix *-barkeit* ("-ability"). For Weber, Benjamin forms key concepts in terms of their -ability rather than their "actuality as mere facts." The -ability thing is a new way of conceptualizing, of making nouns from verbs. "This mode of conceptualizing 'virtualizes' the process of nominalization" by referring it back to a verb—a *Zeitwort* whose function underlines temporality, open-endedness of process. "*Erkennbarkeit* thus names the virtual condition of *Erkennen*." To "virtualize" in this way is to suggest that the concepts and the events they designate are not once-and-for-all occurrences but rather have the "power or potentiality to be repeated." This is not repetition as the empirical fact of having occurred more than once but, in the Derridean mold of iterability, a "structural possibility" of being repeated (6–7).

While *globalization* is the name of a process, the word is an ideologeme: it asserts a

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world-making force, a universalism, a project on the march. Thus, "the most pernicious presupposition today is that globalization has happily *happened* in every aspect of our lives," whereas it "*takes place* only in capital and data" (Spivak, *Aesthetic Education* 2, 1; emphasis added). The complacent sense of happeningness, achievement, and substantiality that *-ation* conveys is suspended by *-ability*. Note Spivak's change in verbs: from "happily happened" (an ideologeme) to "takes place" (iterates itself, repeats topologically, *a lieu*).

The world is "forever not yet a globe" because just capital and data can put themselves forth as the global; they are universalizable, globalizable, as is *anything*: anything can put itself forward as global by ignoring the fact that nothing is or can be the global (519). The problem, then, is the self-metonymization of a small part of the world as *the* world or globe. It is a continuation of what Spivak sometimes calls "class apartheid." What is especially pernicious is that the globalizing part puts itself forth as the part that will think for the rest of the world: data as the model of hyperrationalized thought and as the medium of capital. Thus, the massive celebrity investment by global civil society in subaltern education (especially of girls) in today's world defines a tool for development, for getting people into employment, for training them in playing by the rules of managerial capitalism and genderization.

How does -ability change this picture? Spivak writes that the "universalizability of the singular" is "the double bind at the heart of democracy, for which an aesthetic education can be an epistemological preparation" (4). Bluntly: democracy is one person, one vote, based on the capacity to judge. Each one a (potential) legislator. Each citizen is placed by society in the position of having the capability to govern (8). Here we must unfold a little Spivak's Derridean/Deleuzian sense of singularity as that which is universalizable. The singular is not the unique or the particular, nor is it generalizable as a collectivity of instances that would thereby constitute a multitude. The singular is that which is repeatable in its difference. It enters a series of repetitions, is repeated in difference *as* singular, and thereby is universali*zable* but never the universal per se.[6]

When Derrida writes of the position of the witness, he clarifies this positional aspect of singularity:

> Even if we have been several to participate in an event, to have been present at a scene, the witness can only testify when he asserts that he was in a unique place and where he could testify to this and that in a here-now . . . that precisely supports this exemplarity. The example is not substitutable; but at the same time the same aporia always remains: this irreplaceability must be exemplary, that is, replaceable. The irreplaceable must allow itself to be replaced on the spot [*sur place*]. In saying: I swear to tell the truth, where I have been the only one to see or hear and where I am the only one who can attest to it, this is true to the extent that anyone who *in my place*, at that instant, would have seen or heard or touched the same thing and could repeat exemplarily, universally, the truth of my testimony. . . . The singular must be universalizable; this is the testimonial condition.
>
> (*Demeure: Fiction* 41; *Demeure: Maurice Blanchot* 47–48)

The witness position can in principle be filled by anyone at that place; it must be universally repeatable, as a positionality, no matter by whom. Position without identity. This is analogous to Spivak's characterization of the "double bind at the heart of democracy." If singularity is a "point" (as both Deleuze and Derrida say), that point partakes in a serial punctuality that is "pre-individual, nonpersonal," and nonidentitarian (Deleuze 52).

An aesthetic education in Spivak's terms seems to be an education that could develop the capacity to, for example, think the universalizable as not the universal. No particular practice of education would necessarily

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be configured in terms of that formula, of course. A "humanist education" would train the learner in detranscendentalizing habits, so that they do not become final codings (universalized, globalized); it would develop the kind of play that allows the epistemological reconstitution of the rules of the game by each player instead of blind obedience to them. It is exactly what the global middle class expects for its children as it sends them to excellent "humanist" educational institutions: that these precious children will be taught to think for themselves, become good and responsible, become leaders and innovators. Why do these humanistically educated groups wreak havoc on others' children down the class scale? The educators must indeed be educated.

In spite of its great legacy of "Doubt" (Spivak, *Aesthetic Education* 1), the Enlightenment seems to have produced a ruling-class confidence, even faith, in particular kinds of rationalizing, abstracting, uniformizing projects. Even the intellectual scrupulousness of the Kantian "as if," acknowledging an internal limit for philosophy, sanctions the architectonics of a world ripe for globalization. Yet, by leaving behind an account of the reasons for the "as if," Kant made a toehold for the ab-use of the Enlightenment: an "education through the aesthetic" will take away guarantees ("protect the rational choice of the political by understanding it as produced by the philosophers' methodological need for maxims rather than the unquestioned conviction of the supremacy of reason"). In this way, the "aesthetic might enlighten to crisis" (16).

Let us return finally to Marx's "Theses," or his *ad*s. I alluded to the third one just above:

> The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing [*Erziehung*] forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator [*Erzieher*] must himself be educated [*erzogen*]. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change [*Selbstveränderung*] can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.
>
> ("Theses" 4; "Thesen" 5–6)

If you gloss over the double bind that the educator needs to be educated, then you can elevate, globalize, yourself into a metonym for the world. You assign yourself a place in the part superior to society, which then stands for it. In Spivak's words, the "task of the aesthetic education we are proposing: at all costs to enter another's text" (*Aesthetic Education* 6). It is advice to the elite, "Euro-U.S. subject" at this point (27). *Selbstveränderung*, self-othering. The play and the raised stakes here come clear in the phrase "at all costs": schizophrenia as figure: self-splitting. Dilemma.

In her published writings, Spivak has often mentioned a certain "hurricane lantern," by the light of which she is regularly to be found writing. It appears in *An Aesthetic Education* a few times (e.g., 253). When the unfolding of Enlightenment logics becomes so dazzling as to blind, giving rise to the "dark times" evoked in the introduction (1), a hurricane lantern might just be a usable resource, a port in a storm.

Notes

1. The memorial was made in 1955 by the communist artist Laurence Bradshaw. The Communist Party of Great Britain had, in the 1950s, raised funds to create a new monument at Marx's gravesite.

2. Note Marx's "ursprünglich" here, which distances us from a secure sense of an empirically locatable origin. The "originary," as it could be translated, is neither a specific historical moment (empirical) nor a transcendental deduction. In her introduction, Spivak makes the philosophically original suggestion that Derrida "puts the trace in the place of transcendental deduction" (*Aesthetic Education* 23). Is the *ursprünglich* also to be related to the trace structure?

3. The reference is to Antonio Gramsci, a foreground figure in the framing of this book. Thus does Spivak

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solicit the reader to "scan" a certain Gramsci "between the lines of the book" (*Aesthetic Education* 2).

4. In *An Aesthetic Education*, Spivak writes, "[R]eproductive heteronormativity is the world thing with which we secure the space between making and need, long before the emergence of capital from that fault" (30). For the rudimentary outline of this, forever undeveloped in Marxism, see in *The German Ideology* a developing language that moves between *geistige* and *materielle Arbeit* and *Tätigkeit* (work and activity), then moves on, in the section focused on division of labor, to more consistently use the noun *Arbeit* and to replace *materielle* with *körperliche*. In his *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit*, Alfred Sohn-Rethel attempted to write a Marxist theory and intellectual history of this division. This fascinating work does not, however, get into the gendered difference hinted at by Marx and developed here by Spivak.

5. I am also indebted to Labica for my understanding of Marx's notes.

6. Deleuze 48–57, 100–08. As John Rajchman glosses it, "[F]or Deleuze a 'singularity' is not something unique or *sui generis*, but, on the contrary, something that can be understood only through the ways it comes to be repeated. It is precisely such 'iterability of the singular' that requires a different logic than that of the generality that subsumes things in classes or the subject in which predicates inhere . . . a singularity is what enters into a 'series.'" (56).

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