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Writing truth as non-violence

S. C. Webb

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Simon Christopher Webb

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Abstract

This thesis explores some of the ways violence can constrain, inform, and otherwise impact upon psychological theory, the ways psychological theory can contribute to various forms of violence, and some of the implications of this reflexive cycle. Arguing for non-violence as a truth criterion of psychological knowledge claims, the thesis sets out to question the conditions of possibility for producing non-violent psychological theory. Drawing upon contemporary theories of language, subjectivity, and power, it discusses technologies of truth production in terms of violence. The work of literary theorist and feminist post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler is discussed in this context. After developing a set of theoretical resources for addressing reflexive epistemological problems of violence, some practice implications of non-violent psychological theory are considered in relation to the specific domain of forensic psychology. Returning to discussion of the broader theoretical issues, the thesis identifies some promising areas of focus for non-violent theory development. A key claim arising from this discussion is that the tradition of validity as representational accuracy or referential truth is closely linked to the prioritisation of power in many Western scientific, economic and other cultural enterprises. In this context psychology can emulate other sciences and produce technologies for more efficient control of subjectivity; but it can also use these technologies reflexively to address the desires embodied in its own pursuit of theoretical power, actively challenging the truth status of violent knowledge claims. The initial commitment to non-violent truth is now articulated as an argument that a commitment to forms of encounter with others that do not objectify those others involves a theoretical commitment to validating knowledge claims in terms of social justice. This calls into question the traditional hierarchy of “hard” and “soft” sciences, in which the truth claims of psychology and other social sciences are positioned as having to conform to the truth claims of natural sciences like physics and chemistry: a social epistemological framework positions psychological theory as a key resource for assessing the truth status of knowledge claims in other sciences. The thesis raises questions around this opportunity, both with respect to some of the details of its possible theoretical forms, and its possible political implications in academic, therapeutic and other contexts.

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Hutia te rito o te harakeke,

Kei hea te kōmako e kō?

Kī mai ki ahau, “He aha te mea nui o tēnei ao?”

Māku e kī atu: “He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata!”

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Non-violence and truth are inseparable and presuppose one another

Mohandas Gandhi¹

Introduction

We know that the following things are likely² to be happening somewhere, at this moment: a woman is slumped against a wall, tasting her own blood and wondering what it was about her comment that met with her husband's disapproval; a child is whimpering, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry", beneath the repeated blows of a guardian who sometimes rapes the child; a civilian captive is screaming and thrashing in agony, under torture in a military prison cell, with technologies arising from centuries of medical and psychological research being carefully and deliberately used to inflict as much suffering as it is possible to inflict upon another human being. These accounts of violence—and the sickening fact that such events occur somewhere in our world thousands of times a day—can compel us to act in a way that dry statements of ethical positions cannot. "Violence should be minimised" is an assumption informing this work from its outset, and this assumption is an attempt to articulate—as well as any rational ethical statement can—the beginnings of a response to the suffering that real experiences of violence have produced; a suffering that compels us to act³.

How is it that with so many of us desiring the minimisation of violence, violence continues to be reproduced in forms of human behaviour? Do we lack the social psychological knowledge of techniques to effect its reduction? Do we lack the political power to implement the necessary techniques? What is the relationship

1 Widely attributed in this form; perhaps an abbreviated paraphrase of the following passage from Gandhi's *Harijan* newspaper (July, 1947, as cited in Gandhi, 2005): "Are not nonviolence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'No.' Nonviolence is embedded in truth and vice versa. Hence it has been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other."

2 Based on data provided by the World Health Organization (2002).

3 Žižek (2008, p. 5) gives "A woman is raped every six seconds in this country" as an example of "the fake sense of urgency that pervades the left-liberal humanitarian discourse on violence" underlying which is "a hypocritical sentiment of moral outrage." He argues that this display of outrage at "irrational" violence is part of what works to make "rational" violence normal and acceptable. The present text shares this concern with the hypocrisy of mainstream problematisations of violence and the reproduction of this hypocrisy in psychological texts. The "sentiment of moral outrage" with which we discuss the "hypocritical sentiment of moral outrage" of the liberal left may involve its own hypocrisies, as discussed in *Deconstructing Good and Evil*, in the present text.

between political power and our technical or theoretical understanding of violence? Are particular ways of theorising violence associated with particular kinds of political power? Do we unconsciously benefit from violence such that our efforts to address it are not as whole-hearted as we imagine them to be? From this place of questioning the relationships between violence and the processes by which we constitute our discourses of “violence” we may ask, “what is the relationship of violence to *truth* in critical inquiry?”. For research that aims to function as critical inquiry into violence, this is an important reflexive question; a question that enables us to examine the way our critical inquiry relates to and impacts upon the behaviour we aim to study.

In the context of psychological research, the phrase “critical inquiry” seldom refers (as it does in Peters, 1996, p. 14) to *torture*, and yet torture—one of the emblematic forms of violence—was for Roman lawyers “the inquiry after truth by means of torment” (Peters, 1996, p. 1). A slave’s testimony was only legally valid if the slave had been made to suffer terribly in its production (Edgerton, 2007; Peters, 1996), for testimony given without violence could not be relied upon to be true. What is the relationship of violence to “truth” in this kind of inquiry, and how do we position our contemporary forms of research with regard to this relationship?

Žižek (2008, p. 37) discusses Harris’s (2004) “ideal” instrument of torture as one that would inflict not only unbearable but also *invisible* suffering so as to “suspend [our] evolutionary conditioned vulnerability to the physical display of others’ suffering”: in other words, to suit our modern sensibilities by inflicting a maximally efficient agony while simultaneously avoiding unsightly and potentially sympathy-inducing *signs* of suffering. The solution: a drug that will paralyse a person to prevent all expression of suffering, while at the same time stimulating pain receptors and so on, so as to chemically produce more agony and terror than any gross mechanical torture could produce without killing the victim. The person to whom such a drug is administered will appear simply to lie down for a “nap” and then after this, willingly confess any secrets rather than endure the torture again.

Harris (2004, p. 197) asks of this scientifically refined and unimaginably cruel technology of violence, “might we not be tempted to call it a ‘truth pill’ in the end?”⁴

These accounts—of “truth” in Roman law, and of the “truth pill”—demonstrate understandings of truth in which it is attained through violence. In an objectivist or essentialist epistemological framework, it can be argued that this is simply the way things are: the facts are what they are, and in some circumstances violence may be necessary if we need to discover them. The American Psychological Association’s reluctance to forbid its members from assisting with the torture of the prisoners of the United States’ “war on terror” (Olson, Soldz & Davis, 2008) suggested this objectivist account of truth, inasmuch as such controversial, ethically dubious practice would hardly have been permitted had it been recognised as part of an epistemologically flawed enterprise; an accumulation of *invalid* knowledge. The *truth* status of the facts obtained via military interrogation are, in the objectivist account, independent of the violence of their production. In this objectivist account, the ethical question can be unravelled from and set aside from the issue of validity, and this theoretical possibility represents an ambivalence towards violence, an opening of space in discourses of truth for violence to be positioned as contributing to valid knowledge.

When medical researchers in the 1980s noticed that important gaps in their research could be filled by data obtained from the experiments carried out by Nazi researchers on human victims, even the objections to this were sometimes tempered by an explicit statement of respect for the value that such knowledge might have, regardless of the means of its production: Post (1991) for example, after arguing against the use of such data on the grounds that the surviving victims would be “violated anew” (p. 43),

4 I have called the “truth pill” *unimaginably* cruel. Whereas (although this already is very debatable) one might be able to imagine what it feels like to be burned alive, crushed to death, crucified and so on, to experience all these at the same time—a mere fraction of the agony a truth pill could potentially inflict—is probably literally unimaginable. To the extent that one’s imagining “cruelty” involves imagining the suffering it inflicts, the truth pill is unimaginably cruel. What is, however, all too easily imagined is the consequence of its becoming technically possible to produce it in our current political and cultural climate: human beings *will* be put to its torture. Our ancestors imagined the forms of suffering they would most fear and then set about inflicting these torments on others; modern science can work calmly and clinically to inflict suffering that actually exceeds imagination.

went on to propose “a remote exception”: “Although this is clearly not the case, we might hypothesise that buried within the Nazi data lies a cure for AIDS or cancer. Then the victims might want to put aside the wickedness and to forgive” (p. 43). In this account even the tortured victims ought perhaps to acknowledge that their agony, terror and humiliation, and the murder of others whom they loved—frozen to death, poisoned, carved open for the wounds to be deliberately infected, and so on (Mellanby, 1947)—constituted valuable research. Indeed, we need only factor in the transience of human bodily suffering and the immense ages of time over which knowledge might endure, and it begins to seem as though the tiniest hint of useful fact might justify the worst extremes of cruelty. Mellanby, the *British Medical Journal’s* observer at Nüremberg, wrote:

The prosecution has further urged that practically no results of any value were obtained in any of the work. This is a point which needs further study. From what we already know of the typhus work it is clear that a useful evaluation of the various vaccines was obtained; some of these results have already been published (Mellanby, 1947, p. 150).

However, lest we imagine that all of this “work” was “useful”, he points out that “generally speaking there is no doubt that most of the work was badly planned and carried out under conditions where scientific thinking was difficult” (p. 150). The implication that more of the work would have been useful if it had been better planned and carried out more scientifically is consistent with the scientific rhetoric of truth (Ibañez, 1991), and its separation of the question of knowledge validity from ethical questions, positioning the value of knowledge as depending more upon empiricist truth criteria than it depends upon whether or not we are engaged in the most abhorrent acts of cruelty.

Empiricist truth criteria are often described in terms of correspondence with objective reality: for mainstream psychology a “measure is said to be valid if it measures what it has been designed to measure” (Goodwin, 2009, p. 131). A knowledge claim is true if it accurately represents a state of affairs in “the real world”. Although the turn to

language in psychology is sometimes misconstrued as a wholesale rejection of this “referential” truth (see Gergen, 2001), Mellanby’s (1947) stereotypically positivist claims about the usefulness of knowledge from human experimentation point towards one of many possible social, discursive or “performative” accounts of the traditional positivist “correspondence with reality” story of truth: empiricist truths are valid to the extent that they offer to increase our *power*. A physicist in possession of (according to the old story) an “accurate account” of matter can level a city: whatever we may think of such knowledge in relation to “truth”, to inform oneself with such knowledge is to become powerful. In this context, like the pursuit of wealth⁵ in a capitalist economy, the pursuit of knowledge in a positivist epistemology can represent the pursuit of power unbridled by ethical constraints. Much is made of *extrinsic* constraints (laws, ethics committees and so on); yet the idea of “knowledge” in positivism and of “money” in capitalism share an *intrinsic* structural advantage to violence: they abstract power from its social contexts, justifying social influence (through wealth) regardless of ethical factors that might call into question the effects of this influence, and knowledge (through science) regardless of ethical factors that might call into question the social implications of this knowledge.

By constituting the “truth” of a knowledge claim as an abstract, asocial property, it becomes rhetorically feasible to treat the results of the Nazi experiments as if they were true. Mostow (1994), in response to more recent debates around the value of data obtained from such research, disagreed with the pragmatic justifications that others were making for using the findings of the Nazi research. He argued that “putting the issue in these terms ... misses the point” (p. 404), and suggested that to treat the data as valid scientific research was, in the words of a surviving victim, “like building on top of Auschwitz” (p. 403). To reject it despite its potential to offer “pragmatic” benefits could function as a symbolic memorial to the victims. Here,

5 To the extent that money enables forms of action upon the actions of others, wealth provides privilege in terms of power: wealth enables people to do things that people with less wealth may be unable to do. This reading of wealth positions a capitalist economy as a set of social conditions within which advantaged groups or persons are able to use their advantage deliberately to increase their advantage, so that it is acceptable—even in many contexts admirable—for someone with enormous wealth to mobilise resources that could significantly improve the well-being of entire communities of thousands of other people towards the accumulation of still more personal wealth, and towards reproducing the violence that is necessary to maintain this disparate social privilege.

attention to the symbolic effects of research (and an argument for the importance of memorial) enables Mostow to challenge the value of violently produced “truths”; yet the assumption that truths produced by violence *can* still be valid—and so the assumption that validity and violence can be measured independently—is not addressed. In an objectivist framework, truth or falsehood is a matter of fact, and matters of fact are independent from and should not be confused with matters of ethics. In an empiricist framework, to conflate the two issues can seem outrageous: some of the Nazi findings are manifestly true, and we are deceiving ourselves if we confuse this fact with issues of the ethical *use* of such knowledge. Yet, to the extent that we ascribe truth to those claims with which we agree, to call things “true” on the grounds that they offer to make us more powerful is to make *power* the goal of these language games. Are there other ways that we could constitute truth, which might not offer as much power to isolate and control the objects in our worlds, and yet which might offer benefits greater than power?

In any of a wide range of loosely related constructionist, postmodern or at least “post-Wittgensteinian⁶” frameworks, we have theoretical resources available to examine the meanings of words in terms of discourse and performative function, and so the inevitability of this independence of violence and truth can be called into question. If the minimisation of violence is our aim, must we *first* agree upon what counts as valid knowledge—allowing the contribution of violence to such knowledge—and defer the minimisation of violence until after this establishment of a framework of understanding within which to address it? Clearly we can claim to do otherwise, as the quotation attributed to Gandhi (on p. 1) demonstrates: here the positioning of violence as antithetical to truth—so that truth can only exist to the degree that violence does not—makes the role of violence a key criterion in determining the truth value of a knowledge claim. Attention to violence is not deferred until the proper way

6 i.e. informed by Wittgenstein’s (1953/2001) analysis of the meaning of a word as its proper use in a “language game”. Although the constructionist social theory informing this thesis has roots in “French semiotics, German critical theory, post-structural literary theory, feminist and neo-colonial critiques, rhetorical theory, Foucauldian power/knowledge analyses, post-Kuhnian history of science and micro-social explorations of science” (Gergen, 2001, p. 430), the focus of this thesis upon knowledge claims as forms of social action rather than as representations of extra-linguistic states of affairs makes Wittgenstein’s formulation of meaning as use a particularly important theoretical resource.

to attend to objects of inquiry has been worked out; rather it is attended to immediately and informs inquiry from the outset. Can this immediate attention to minimising violence be coherent in a contemporary theoretical context, or does it represent an illogical claim to be minimising violence prior to *knowing* it as the thing to be minimised?

With our postmodern “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. xxiv), we try to attend to the multiple interpretive contexts within which our truth claims can be located. Pilate’s famous question⁷ has become for contemporary theorists not so much a quest for ultimate authority as a question about the processes by which we can produce truths that are valid for the people they concern. In this respect, contemporary theory is already explicitly sensitive to the “discursive, epistemological, or hermeneutical violence” (Hanssen, 2000, p. 168) at work in social systems of truth-production; not only the instances of this that are visible to a modern gaze (e.g. the brutal enforcement of totalitarian ideologies) but the insidious violence of any metanarrative that subordinates local narrative to its own terms. This acknowledgement of epistemological ethics is one of the analytical gifts that the linguistic turn—with its focus on discursive performativity—bequeaths to our generation. We inherit a tradition that enables us to ask the question, “what is the *truth* of our truth claims?”⁸, in ways that do justice to the social relevance of the question—such as “how ethical are our truth claims?”—instead of pretending that our behaviour when we “do philosophy” or “do science” is unmotivated, asocial, and devoid of subjectivity.

In this context, Gandhi’s claim—that truth and non-violence are inseparable—can be read as an articulation of an important epistemological principle. It is a claim that epistemology is saturated with ethics, so that evaluating the truth status of our knowledge claims involves assessing the relationship of these claims to the way violence operates in and in relation to the discourses within which they are situated.

7 “What is truth?” (John 18:38, King James Version).

8 This question (which could also be phrased as, “what is it about our truth claims that makes them true?”) is a variant of the basic epistemological question, “what can we know?”, but it foregrounds the word “truth” as a *word* that must, like any other word, acquire its meaning from social agreement in regards to its proper use.

At a simplistic level, applied to interrogation by torture, it is a claim that the truths produced by such investigations are—like the screams that accompany them—effects of violence, and inasmuch as their production is the goal to which violence is directed, their propagation is a furthering of violent ends. This idea can be broadly abstracted and applied to violence in all its subtle and diverse forms, from the brazen cruelty of torture to the invisible presence of structural violence: to reproduce truths authored by violence is to participate in the reproduction of violence.

Acknowledging the inseparability of non-violence and truth does more than acknowledge the inseparability of ethics and epistemology; it can also be read as a presentation in this domain of a specific ethical claim: that we ought not to dignify the effects and the tools of violence with the connotations of a word like “truth”. It is a recognition that knowledge does not stand apart from human life in an abstract “objective” realm of its own; rather the pursuit of truth and the minimisation of violence can be constituted as aspects of the same (truth- or justice-producing) social process, such that one cannot exist without the other. If the minimisation of violence is our goal, then this goal must inform even its own theorisation, in a reflexive self-awareness of the operation of violence in the language we use to research violence.

A recent article in *Theory & Psychology* (Teo, 2008) introduces⁹ the term “epistemological violence” for projects that psychologically theorise others in ways that have harmful consequences for them. The present study will develop this idea that certain approaches to theory do not merely lead to violence, but *are* violent, in ways that can be analysed discursively. While Teo’s (2008) article draws attention to epistemological ethics and suggests that psychologists acknowledge their “interpretative responsibility” (p. 62), it does not provide much detail as to *how* we are to exercise this responsibility. What are the ethical principles that are to inform our epistemological and methodological deliberations, now that “there is no possibility that language games can be unified or totalized in any metadiscourse” (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. 36)? If we take “violence should be minimised” as an ethical principle,

9 It explicitly “introduces” (Teo, 2008, p. 47) the term “epistemological violence” in this context, although the phrase “epistemological violence” has been used before (e.g. Shiva, 1988; or the passage of Hanssen, 2000, cited on p. 7 of the present text).

how specifically do we apply this principle to our research? Given the enormous complexity of contemporary psychological theory—in which even the heartfelt desires of a “free” subject can sometimes be understood as the embodiments of structural violence—where do we even begin to organise this theory into a workable set of techniques for non-violent research and practice?

A traditional starting place for complex projects is that of problem definition. In regards to this particular problem however, we are attempting to theorise reflexively about the production of theory, and so we cannot step back from the problem in order to define it, because problem definition is already an act of theorising. As such it is a process that already engages with discourses that intersect with violence in various ways. To the extent that discourse can represent a structural embodiment of violence, a non-violent psychology must be careful not to theorise violence in ways that unwittingly reproduce it. In this context it can be argued that a well-intentioned effort to *define* violence at this point—so as to inform our strategy for addressing it—could be therefore to *neglect* “the problem”, since the problem of violence is not something that exists in some asocial reality beyond language: rather, the very act of defining it produces it in a recognisable form. Anyone who works with or problematises violence can take it for granted that the problem of violence includes some of the acts that we recognise as violent: yet the means by which we produce that recognition can be overlooked. The *problematization* of violence is the process by which violence comes into being *as violence* (as opposed to “treatment”, “liberation”, “justice”, and so on, all of which are routinely used to talk about actions that others constitute as violence): we should not be surprised if violence continues to be reproduced around and by us, if such a crucial part of its reproduction is left unexamined.

Whether or not the “recognition” of violence can be itself an act of violence, the claim that “we” recognise certain acts as violent involves another important question: “who are *we*?”. Munck (2008) writes: “Perhaps the only sustainable moral stance is to be opposed to all forms of violence? After all, who is to decide who is a ‘terrorist’ and who is a ‘freedom fighter’?” (p. 5). This question of identity is doubly significant; not only in the obvious direction of the constitution of violence (so that different groups may constitute an act as “terrorism” or “heroism” depending on the implications of

the act for those different groups) but also in the less obvious direction of the production of subjectivity (so that one's constitution of an act as terrorism or heroism simultaneously contributes to the constitution of one's social identity; i.e. to constitute an act as an instance of "heroism" rather than "terrorism" can be precisely the kind of thing that produces one's identity as a "terrorist" in some contexts). To ask "who are we?" is not therefore merely to ask questions like, "are we a community of people working in a Western tradition of rational science in order to impose our desires upon indigenous peoples?" (i.e. questions around how our subjectivity structures our understanding of violence), but also to ask questions like, "is it precisely this violence that enables us to position ourselves as rational Western scientists?" (i.e. questions around how particular accounts of violence may structure subjectivity: do we occupy subject positions that *depend upon* particular accounts of violence, so that violence minimisation may be a kind of self-dissolution?).

As Munck (2008, p. 5) notes in relation to the analysis of violence in terms of typologies, a "basic 'realist' taxonomy shows its limitations most clearly where 'criminal' is distinguished from 'noncriminal' violence when this distinction is mainly derived from the socially and politically constructed law of the land." The role of psychological theory in law enforcement will be a focus throughout the present text, in part because such "enforcement" does so clearly foreground the *particular* interests that any "comprehensive" typology of violence inevitably represents. Nevertheless, the system of which Munck (2008) is critical—Galtung's (1969) influential typology of violence—is a rich theoretical resource that made no claim to be "*the*¹⁰ definition, or *the* typology—for there are obviously many types of violence" (Galtung, 1969, p. 168), noting that "social affairs always refuse to be captured in simplistic formulations" (p. 180). Rather it aimed to "indicate theoretically significant dimensions of violence that can lead thinking, research and, potentially, action, towards the most important problems" (p. 168). That "we" can only identify what "the most important problems" are for *us* is no reason not to act: it is a place to start, and—if various forms of violence can support each other in ways that are not always obvious—the degree to which we can "be opposed to *all* [*italics added*] forms of

10 Any italics in direct quotations are in the original texts unless explicitly noted otherwise, in accordance with APA Style guidelines.

violence” (Munck, 2008, p. 5) might have less to do with the quantity of forms of violence that we explicitly identify and address, and more to do with the rigour and conscientiousness with which we address the problems of which we are aware. In this context epistemological violence may have a special importance if it plays a key role in regulating this awareness.

A reflexive focus on the performative functions of “knowledge” is a critical aspect of the production of knowledge in this context of attention to its violence. The first chapter of the present text thus examines violence specifically in terms of the ways it can impact upon its own theorisation. The example of “truth” produced by torture is crude and obvious; so too is the totalitarian truth enforced by fear: at its most simplistic and hyperbolic we might imagine a psychologist writing about violence while a gun is pressed against her head. If the gun is held by an officer of a dictatorial state, then it does not require much critical insight to appreciate that her account of “violence” might be itself an embodiment of violence; not only as an effect of violence but also in terms of its own effects, if it constitutes “violence” in ways that facilitate violence against the dictator’s enemies (“terrorists”, etc.). However crude and obvious such “direct threat” may be (relative to the subtler methods, discussed elsewhere in the first chapter, by which violence may influence its theorisation), the issue of coercion is so important to theories of agency¹¹—and theories of agency are so important to narrative accounts of human behaviour—that this “obvious” impact nevertheless opens up a host of complex questions. To what extent do we hold the direct author of such a violent text accountable for its effects? Does the gun at her head remove or lessen the psychologist’s accountability for her authorship (e.g. by making “there was a gun at my head!” an adequate account), or is she still accountable for “her” theories along with the dictator whose interests they serve? What about the officer holding the gun? If all three are accountable, are they accountable equally or to varying degrees? If the latter, do we have a formula for distributing accountability in such cases? Do we even know how to assess coercion? How far away from the author’s head would the gun have to be before we could treat

11 Confusion between the use of “cause” in language games of social coercion and “cause” in language games of scientific or philosophical causality—and the exploitation of this confusion by violent discourses of agency—is discussed in the section entitled *Alienation*.

the text as “freely” written? In the next room? The next town? What if the author cannot be certain how far away the gun is? And what of the dictator’s desires: is he fully accountable for their violence, or does he also act in a context of violent threat, even if the guns are not visibly at his head? The application of direct threat is one of the most simple and obvious means by which violence can inform its own theorisation¹², and the example given above is a very simplistic scenario of such threat, yet even in this most basic model the issues are more complex than they may at first appear to be.

In our panoptic¹³ societies, causation is extremely complex, and if we consider the problem in terms of discourse rather than in terms of individual psychological agents, then we might say that violence “flows through” or causally interpenetrates multiple actors rather than emerging suddenly in one or another discrete act: in the example above, the violence of the psychologist’s writing *is* the dictator’s violence, and the dictator’s violence *is* the violence of the texts that have informed his subjectivity, and so on. We abhor the “naked” violence of guns pressed against human heads, but this abhorrence of such visible signs of violence carries with it a danger that we will treat the discursive contexts within which such acts are located as if they were less abhorrent; yet it could be argued that discursive violence is the “disease” of which visible acts are the “symptoms”.

Galtung defined “structural violence” in terms of the absence of direct individual agency: “We shall therefore refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as *personal* or *direct*, and to violence where there is no such actor as *structural* or *indirect*” (Galtung, 1969, p. 170). This has been a useful distinction inasmuch as it has contributed to a vocabulary for giving accounts of

12 Direct *physical harm* is arguably simpler and more obvious (shooting the psychologist prevents her theorising violence at all) but I am treating “direct threat” as more obvious, since its very effectiveness as threat depends upon some kind of awareness of its presence—even if this “awareness” is repressed—whereas the damage and destruction of people and resources can have huge effects (on the theorisation of violence) when the people affected have no idea that the murdered theorists or burned books are absent.

13 i.e. societies characterised by Foucault’s (1975/1995) *panopticism*, in which the exercise of state power is disseminated through networks of surveillance and “self”-discipline, so that regulatory functions previously carried out through overt physical force are increasingly “built into” the subjectivities of individual subjects.

violence that might otherwise have been “invisible”, and it has entered into wide usage¹⁴. Applying it to the operation of discourse¹⁵ is in some respects an articulation of a relationship between Galtung’s two types of violence¹⁶, inasmuch as it positions personal violence as operating within a field of possibility—a context of meaning—defined by structural discursive violence.

I agree with Blok (2000, p. 24) that despite the frequent “huffing and puffing” at “senseless violence”, “the one thing [violence] is not is senseless.” The meaning of a social act may be contested—it may even be said to have multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings simultaneously—but it can only be “meaningless” in the sense that the symbols of a foreign script can be “meaningless” to a reader; never in the absolute sense of its being devoid of meaning. This being the case, all “direct” violence—every act of violence committed by an individual agent—is meaningful not only in the sense that it *can* be positioned in relation to discourse, but also in the sense that it *must* be so positioned in the course of producing a useful understanding of the act (i.e. any account of its purpose, causes, means of prevention, etc.). This is the necessary relationship between Galtung’s “structural” and “personal” types of violence: agentic violence takes place in a discursive structural framework, and so however complex and difficult to articulate they may be, relationships between structural and agentic violence do exist. Contemporary understandings of discourse mean that the embodiment of “structural violence” in social institutions and practices can also be regarded as the operation of violence in language, albeit a different kind of operation from that of “hate speech” and other forms of linguistic violence that are more widely recognised.

Why then is violence so often positioned as “senseless”? Žižek’s (2008) argument that our specific outrage at “irrational” violence actually functions to justify “rational” violence may be relevant here. A linguist’s classifying the symbols of a foreign script as objectively “meaningless” can be understood as the linguist’s inability or refusal to

14 A Google search in 2011 for the phrase “structural violence” returns about 179,000 hits.

15 I use the term “discourse” in the Foucaultian sense of a system of ideas *and* their associated practices and social institutions.

16 “Structural” and “personal” violence are two key classifications in Galtung’s (1969) typology, though it consists of more than just these two types.

engage with the community for whom the symbols have meaning. Can the popular media's classification of violent crime as "senseless" be understood as their inability or refusal to engage with the social contexts from which the violence arose and within which it had meaning¹⁷? If these failures of recognition are "refusals", can the refusals themselves be understood as embodiments of structural violence, inasmuch as they function to provoke outrage at the "senseless" violence of those who resist the "rational" violence of the groups who determine what counts as rational or irrational? What if the failures are not so much "refusals" as cases of inability to recognise foreign meaning in the actions of others: can not only certain forms of knowledge, but also certain forms of *ignorance* be violent? These kinds of questions concern the general question, "what is the relationship between violence as it is constituted *in* language, and the violence *of* language?"; a variant of the question concerning the relationship between violence and truth.

Questions of the "violence or non-violence of knowledge" are thus brought into a dialogical relationship with questions of "the knowledge of violence and non-violence" or the issue of how we define violence. For a text like the present one--- conforming as it does to a more or less linear sequence from introduction through to conclusions---it is even something of a paradox, or a "chicken and egg" problem¹⁸, with one task (the production of non-violent knowledge) depending upon the other (the definition of "violence") which in turn depends upon the first (the non-violent production of that definition) and so on in a recursive loop. This is the sense in which Gandhi's epistemological claim can appear logically inconsistent: if we follow the philosophical traditions of modernity and maintain a distinction between the "ethical" issues of violence/non-violence and the "epistemological" issues of falsehood/truth, then a relationship between the two is implicitly constituted as one in which "violence" must first *be* something in its own right before it can impact upon "knowledge", and vice versa. Since in this case we cannot emulate the dubious

17 By the "meaning" of violent crimes I am referring to such things as the assertion of masculinity through acts of dominance, the attempt to establish justice through retaliation, and so forth. By "social contexts" I am referring to the countless articulations and reiterations of such meanings in everything from film and television enactments and the statements of world leaders through to parental interactions and the lessons of the playground.

18 i.e. an attempt to privilege one stage of a continuous cycle as being "first", as with the question, "Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?"

wisdom of Scholasticus who refused to enter the water before learning to swim (we cannot safeguard the outcome of the process by establishing some aspect of the dialogue before entering into it), the loop seems hopelessly closed.

The acknowledgement of social activity in meaning-making, however, dissolves the boundary between ethics and epistemology: in a contemporary theoretical context, the *inseparability* of non-violence and truth is a key to the claim's coherence. Gandhi was not arguing that we must first purge ourselves of violence before we can properly understand what "violence" is. Rather, the (ethical) minimisation of violence and the (epistemological) pursuit of truth are "faces of the same coin" that cannot be addressed independently of each other.¹⁹

Method is theory in disguise

Jonathan Potter²⁰

Methodological questions in a context of violence

Attending to "the rhetoric of critique", Billig (2003) questions the implications of the progress from "critical discourse analysis"—an interdisciplinary approach to critical analyses of the articulation of power in language, including the language of the academy—to "CDA"—an established set of academic practices that fits well enough with existing relations of power to be packaged as another three-letter acronym. In an academic context of staff salaries, course delivery costs and other resources

19 In some accounts (e.g. Feenberg, 2005) the interdependence of fact and value is taken for granted in pre-modern societies (including the West of the ancient Greeks). Until modernity the universe has teleological and aesthetic aspects: arts (e.g. rhetoric) are evaluated in terms of a *logos* or ideal form—incorporating ethical criteria and issues of purpose—so that there is a distinction between a *techné* or "art" that properly attends to *logos* (and so is beautiful through harmony with nature), and a mere "knack" or empirically acquired skill "without an underlying rationale" (Feenberg, 2005, p. 8). Modern technology is thus constituted as an impoverished distortion of pre-modern *techné*: *logos* is forgotten and "knack" becomes more important than "art". In this account, the separation of ethics and epistemology is a reflection of a contempt for aesthetics in our industrial and other technologies, so that our daily activities are increasingly assessed not in terms of justice and beauty, but rather in terms of utility, profit and power.

20 (Potter, 1997, p. 57)

increasingly funded by the fees of students hoping for financial returns on their educational investments, “the success of a critical subdiscipline such as CDA involves capturing some of the resources and markets occupied by the main discipline that is being criticized” (Billig, 2003, p. 41). In this “dilemma of success”, the extent to which a critical project’s “success” is measured in terms of its recognition *within* a discipline as a valid “approach” to shared disciplinary goals can also be read, in some contexts, as a kind of failure:

The movement of success may be from a position that was interdisciplinary, even radically anti-disciplinary, to one that is itself disciplinary. This occurs because academic disciplines are social and institutional practices rather than inherent qualities of academic texts (Billig, 2003, p. 44).

A serious concern here is the potential for a critical tradition to become a new orthodoxy with more stake in defending its claims than in the social interests that those claims (in other contexts) were produced to serve. Theorists can position themselves as participating in an important “paradigm shift” when a social analysis of the *effects* of the “new” theoretical ideas might suggest, instead, “the adoption of a new vocabulary aimed at attaining the same ends as before” (Shotter & Lannamann, 2002, p. 589). Critical accounts of subjugated knowledges can themselves become enlisted into projects of subjugation, through transformations of meaning that do not necessarily correspond to transformations in the explicit wording of knowledge claims: changes in the *uses* of their claims, from subversion of to support for unjust institutional power arrangements. Consider, for example, an account of the injustice of racial exclusion that becomes part of the theory that members of the group in question cannot produce “properly” in order to gain entry into the academy. For the students in question, have things improved when a critical account that challenged the unjust social forces acting upon them is taken up institutionally and acknowledged as legitimate; or has an important element of the “truth” of the account been altered by its movement from the margins toward the interior of the discipline? To the extent that there is a potential for yesterday’s critical discourse to function as a kind of trojan horse for today’s epistemological violence, a critical theoretical or methodological discourse has to make a deliberate reflexive effort to “stay critical”.

If the substantive “content” of its theoretical claims or approved techniques cannot *secure* the critical social function of discourse analysis—its “*raison d’être*” (Billig, 2003, p. 39)—then the appeal to an established tradition of research that identifies itself as “critical” does not necessarily contribute to a critical (let alone non-violent) project. “The label ‘critical’ bears a rhetoric of self-praise, for it is invariably a term that is applied to the self. ‘Uncritical’ or ‘non-critical’ are reserved for others” (Billig, 2003, p. 37). In this context non-violent theory must be reflexive, not by means of a reflexive gesture in a “methodology section” like this one (an act of self-acknowledgement informing a choice of assumptions and methods, followed by adherence to these claims or methods endorsed by theories or theorists “known to be non-violent” or “known to be critical”) but *continually*, with a sustained attention to the violence or non-violence of knowledge claims and their associated social practices. A “non-violent claim” —like the claim of non-violence itself—can become a violent claim at any moment, if its “non-violence” is constituted as something that adheres to the claim, rather than as something that is established contextually through each specific usage.

Methodologies are informed by their epistemological assumptions, which establish the terms that constitute “valid knowledge”, and the terms for putting together a coherent procedure for generating such knowledge. The question of “methodology” is therefore a complex and difficult question when it is *epistemological* violence that the methodology aims to research. To the extent that the assumptions informing the conduct of such research are themselves violent, the methods are likely to reiterate this violence in the knowledge they produce. There is therefore an important requirement that an inquiry into epistemological violence can reflexively impact upon the epistemological assumptions that inform its methods, so that its methods can shift —with these assumptions—towards a set of practices that are less violent.

Foundational or essentialist epistemological frameworks are in some respects methodologically “closed”: their stable truth criteria have already circumscribed the range of all possible truth claims, precisely to the extent that the valid knowledge produced by their methods cannot be “epistemological” knowledge. Biblical literalism is a roughly analogous “closed” epistemological framework in which the argument

that the Bible is the source of validation for truth claims is *itself* validated Biblically. There is nothing unusual about the reflexive “loop” here: any epistemological claims must depend upon their own arguments for their truth status, and in this respect Biblical literalism, logical positivism and social constructionism are all similar. As discourses constituting “truth” itself, they make their arguments while at the same time appealing to these same arguments reflexively to justify their truth.

If someone constitutes truth as that which more accurately represents reality, and we ask “why should we accept that truth is about accurate representation of reality?”, the response will likely be “because that’s what the word ‘truth’ *means*; when you tell the truth you’re saying what *really* happened; when you discover the truth you’re finding out how things *really* are” and so on, all in accordance with the claim that the account of truth *itself* is the account that “best fits the facts”: the account of truth is a *true* account, in its own terms. Similarly, if someone argues that truth is whatever has the best social effects on the people it concerns; and we ask “why we should accept this account?”, the likely reply will be “because that is the account that produces better social effects”; and so on. This epistemological self-justification is inevitable (in any account that aims to withstand criticism in its own terms), and so it is important, because the appeal to authorities *beyond* ourselves can function as a rhetorical denial of this epistemological self-justification (“it’s not circular reasoning at all, because the Holy Spirit guides me and tells me that the Bible is always right...”) and yet to the extent that this “beyond” is *not* reflexive, it cannot be said to depend upon the epistemological claims that it supports, and so it undermines the stability or universality of the truth criteria themselves (“ah, but the Holy Spirit tells *me* that the Bible *isn’t* always right...”).

Gödel’s “incompleteness theorem” (Irvine, 2003) is interesting in this context: a mathematical proof that “the consistency of a formal system cannot be proved by any deduction procedures available in the system itself” (Gödel, 1972/1990, p. 271), can be deployed as a theorem that tells us something about closed formal systems of argumentation, too. In order to “prove” that a theory about truth *itself* “is true”, some appeal must always be made to something *beyond* the formal assumptions of the theory; otherwise, the theory’s arguing that it is “true” in terms of its own account of

“truth” is self-consistent yet also self-justifying, and so structurally a kind of truism; “truth is true”. Escape from this circularity involves openness to external “re-framing” or contextualising: a willingness to question even the epistemological assumptions guiding the practice of questioning. This external orientation or openness to revision keeps the reflexive loop of inquiry into “the truth about truth” from settling into a vicious circle. “Objective reality” functions in the closed modernist sense if it can only call into question claims about *facts*, but not claims about “truth” or the *criteria* of factuality itself: when this closure occurs the scientific spirit (always seeking to be “post-” the understandings of the past) settles into a scientific dogma (the pre-modern “past” drifts further and further away until it becomes a distant historical memory, while the so-called “modern” account of truth drags on for decades or even centuries without substantial revision). In this account it is the *fluidity* of the truth criteria one argues that distinguishes a potentially open and responsive “truth” from a closed self-justifying dogma: if the criteria of truth are themselves amenable to revision, then the circle can spiral out into new terrain, encompassing new *kinds* of claims, rather than endless reiterations of the truths prefigured by the epistemological structure that informs them. Here, the absence of “centre” in poststructuralist epistemology can be read as an absence of closed circularity in the geometry of its reflexivity: its methods can be used to produce truth claims that shift the criteria by which such claims are validated.

Of course this metaphor of geometrical “looping” between truth criteria and truth claims can be taken too seriously, and the practical activities of research are not identical with the formal accounts that are given of the principles that inform them. Empiricist researchers and rational objectivist philosophers *can* find empirical evidence and logical arguments that unsettle their epistemological assumptions, and indeed it is precisely these kinds of “findings”—the consequences for empirical observation of relativity, quantum theory and of Heisenberg’s “uncertainty principle” (Heisenberg, 1928/1930), and the consequences for rational logic of Gödel’s theorem (Irvine, 2003) and of Wittgenstein’s (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001) discussion of the workings of language—that *have* led to new accounts of truth. Similarly the hermeneutic tradition in Biblical scholarship began with efforts to develop a methodology for discovering the truth of the Bible (Gadamer, 2006), and through

these efforts produced new readings of the Bible that argued against literalism and other assumptions that had initially informed these efforts (Barton, 1998). A non-foundationalist epistemology differs from a foundationalist account, however, because it does not establish a stable centre of operations to which research explorations are expected to return until some radical new discovery out at the very limits of the radius of truth inspires a great upheaval and movement to a new centre of operations. Instead, the centre of operations is mobile and is expected to follow the specific questions of its researchers, adapting to the contextual truth requirements of the local circumstances, rather than insisting that researchers subordinate local truth requirements to the dictates of an epistemology established elsewhere. In this account the epistemological “centre” in “all claims can be validated against a single account of Truth” resembles in more ways than one the geopolitical “centre” in “all roads lead to Rome”.

In relation to epistemological violence, then, methodological questions—questions of how best to conduct research in this area—are reflexive questions that need to address the contribution of methodology itself. How do existing methodologies enact particular sets of epistemological assumptions? What kinds of truth claims can be “valid” in a way that matters to social science, while at the same time calling the criteria of validity themselves into question? To what extent are such claims possible, or do the criteria of validity protect themselves by invalidating claims that interrogate them? What kinds of methods do we adopt in order to produce non-violent truth, if we suspect that the methods themselves may be informed by violent assumptions, and may reproduce violence in the form of their knowledge claims?

For the present research into a violence that may be enacted by the methods themselves or the assumptions that inform them, the research is an ongoing engagement with the theory informing its own methods, and so the presentation of a “methodology section” prior to an analysis or “results section” becomes problematic. Since the present research aims not only to contribute to the development of theoretical resources for non-violent psychological research, but also to apply these resources reflexively in order to minimise the epistemological violence of the research itself, a rigid commitment to a fixed set of methods would fail to realise at least one of

these aims. If the initial set of assumptions and intentions articulated in the methodology section were to guide the whole of the research through to its final stages, then the research would either have failed to produce new theoretical resources of use and relevance to psychological research, or alternately—in the event that useful theoretical resources were developed in the research—it would have failed to apply these resources reflexively. The research therefore needs to transgress its own initial methodological commitments, and so the present methodology section is a necessarily inadequate account of the project’s methodology: it aims to locate the initial assumptions and orientation of the research in terms of established epistemological frameworks (and the methods appropriate to them), but it cannot be an adequate account of the principles informing the whole of the research. The entire text aims at producing such an account.

If “method is theory in disguise” (Potter, 1997, p. 57) then the *methods* of traditional positivism may disguise crucial theoretical assumptions of traditional positivism, even when they are claimed as the tools of a more enlightened²¹ “post”-positivism. Here I am attending to the “disguise” in Potter’s claim: a metaphor suggesting that positivist research *methods* may not only reproduce socially harmful theoretical assumptions, but that they may do so in a way that is less explicit and so more resistant to critical debate. If we claim explicitly that we believe the knowledge produced by a privileged community of psychologists *should* be applied to the less privileged communities that supply them with their wealth, this theoretical claim is vulnerable to criticism; yet if we build this assumption into procedures that exist in order to protect or increase the external validity of a finding, a dubious social/political assumption can be dressed up—*disguised*—as a conscientious effort to produce good scientific knowledge.

Whereas Steinmetz has used the term “methodological positivism” in sociology to

21 The “modern” (rather than postmodern) connotations of “enlightenment” are deliberate here: “post-” is an interesting prefix in terms of the rhetoric of postmodernity. Modernity is associated with the “myth of progress” (Von Wright, 1997, p. 12), yet the “postmodern” can reiterate this modern depreciation of the past (as an inferior state that has been transcended) if it positions itself (in a self-congratulatory and also somewhat self-contradictory way) as having progressed beyond modernity’s infatuation with progress. As will be discussed in *Paralogy*, Lyotard’s (1979/1984) account of the postmodern suggests a different reading, a “post-” that can mean simply “coming after” (as Wednesday comes after Tuesday) rather than “superior to by virtue of its coming after”. In this context to position postmodernity as “more enlightened” than modernity can be a counter-subversive foregrounding of the enlightenment idea of progress (and so the discourse of modernity) in the account of the postmodern.

mean “an amalgamation of ... empiricist ontology, positivist epistemology, and scientific naturalism” (Steinmetz, 2004, p. 375), I would prefer to call this “amalgamation” simply “positivism” (referring to the broad scientific tradition that remains so dominant in the social sciences, rather than to the strict “logical positivism” that has fallen out of favour) because I think the idea of “methodological positivism” can be useful inasmuch as it distinguishes a positivism involving explicit claims about epistemology (or ontology) from a “positivism” that may be enacted methodologically, even while the positivist tradition is explicitly rejected as something that has been left behind. Using the term “methodological positivism” in this way makes it easier to articulate some concerns about the “post-positivist” research tradition.

Given that “different people and different societies have different views about what is real” (Phillips, 1990, p. 41), the notion of “objectivity”—which in some accounts of post-positivism remains “a regulative ideal that underlies all inquiry” and without which “it is not sensible to make inquiries at all” (Phillips, 1990, p. 43)—implies a hierarchical ordering (or at the very least, a potential for such ordering) of the knowledge claims of different societies from “most correct” to “most incorrect”. Even if an objectivist realism is claimed only as an inaccessible ideal, so that knowledge is thoroughly conjectural and cannot be grounded in any authoritative foundation (Phillips & Burbules, 2000), the question of how one conjectural truth ascends to the status of “more warranted” in this global free market of truth production obscures the role of violence if it seeks an answer in some quality of the object constituted by the truth claim, rather than in the social processes that do the warranting. Much as commodity fetishism can function to obscure the role of violence in the constitution of market value, objectivism can function to obscure the role of violence in the constitution of truth: we establish it via social processes, yet it is constituted as having some independent basis in “reality”. Or at least, if it is not, then it is astonishing that the social processes so important to the production of scientific truth do not come under much more careful scrutiny in mainstream psychological research.

Yet in post-positivism, as in “old-fashioned” traditional positivism, this does not appear to be the case: the same tradition of quantitative empiricist research persists,

with its asocial, objectivist criteria of validity ensuring that few researchers are likely to ask if their “findings” might be valid and yet at the same time violent; let alone valid and *therefore* at the same time violent, if a validity based on correspondence with “reality” constitutes an active *refusal* of projects of non-violence, in its marginalisation of alternate epistemological accounts attending to the violence sustaining and reproducing the “reality” to which empirical truth conforms. Instead, the traditional methods of positivism continue to be employed as though they *were* the methods we had arrived at after careful attention to ethics and politics. Like soldiers who continue to occupy a territory long after the conditions they used to justify their “peace-keeping” invasion have passed, the methodological techniques of modernity continue to do their political work—and continue to pretend that they are doing something else—long after their justifications have been called into question. In this positivist methodological tradition (and, although the boundaries are blurry, I am including some versions of “post-positivism” in this tradition, for the reasons just discussed) theorists do not need to position their methodological approaches in relation to violence at all, because “the facts” are still treated as though they are in some way derived from something other than social activity.

If we are to address these questions in a contemporary theoretical context that does attend to the social production of theory, then we need to engage with the problems of violence that have been touched upon, and also with a host of related problems, many of which are clustered around the issues of agency and subjectivity.

Individualistic accounts of subjectivity locate agency in the body by theorising a subject somehow cut off from its exterior and even from its own past, so that events emerge spontaneously from within the present subject (a “present” agency constituted both spatially against the “absent” effects of distal objects, and temporally against the “absent” effects of history). Ekstrom (2001) summarises this popular “*internal* story of human agency” (p. 3) as: “my actions follow on my decisions and my decisions follow on my deliberations—which are, it seems to me, directed by me” (p. 3). This isolated individual subject should also, as the cause of its own behaviour, be able to explain the reasons for it, so that an individual who experiences himself or herself as physically “free”—in the sense that no physical compulsion, violence or threats of violence are experienced as constraining his or her activity—is free in an ethically

meaningful sense. The inadequacy of this account has been obvious at least since Freud, and it is certainly inadequate in terms of contemporary understandings of subjectivity.

Whereas early psychoanalytic understandings of subjectivity (e.g. Freud, 1915/1986d) acknowledged that individuals could not fully know—let alone give adequate accounts of—the reasons for their behaviour, post-Foucaultian psychologies (e.g. Butler, 2005) go further by placing even the conscious subject firmly within the field of social power relations: the subject's self-knowledge can be understood—like the rest of the subject's actions—as not only an engagement with but also a product of such power relations. How do we deal with subjects who experience themselves as free to satisfy “their” desires, in situations where it is clear that their desires have been produced in order to satisfy the desires of others? Do we claim there is no violence present when a child is “groomed” to desire sexual contact with an adult? Is the child who is sexually abused by a stranger more or *less* violated than the child whose sexuality is deliberately shaped by a parent so as to desire the parent's sexual touch; or are the different forms of violation utterly incommensurable? A key question here concerns the relationship of violence to distress: in order to *be* violated, do we have to *feel* violated?

What about the girl whose sexuality is shaped—by loving parents and a well-meaning community—so as to *desire* to be the object of male fantasies that subordinate the feminine to the masculine? What about soldiers who are proud to die “for their country” when their country's desire for war has been manufactured by the industries whose interests the war serves? Given the state's power to force a soldier into service, is it less violent when a soldier *desires* to serve, or—as with the abused child—does the desire itself suggest an even greater violence? Such violence does not operate against or upon the will (as for example terror might), but violates it from within. More generally, can we ever determine that a slave's desire to serve a master is *not* an effect of violence, or does the violence of a master/slave relationship make a nonsense of “consent”? Does any of this change when master/slave relationships are obscured by abstract financial calculations? By long traditions (e.g. genders) of prescribed forms of subjectivity and desire?

These questions articulate important and problematic sites of intersection between ethical and psychological theory, and also between “theory” generally and core activities of life—and death—like economics and sexuality: they are sites at which an analysis lacking Foucault’s broad account of “discourse” (as simultaneously linguistic and material) would be inadequate. To the extent that they are sites of contested theory, they are also inevitably sites of political struggle. Are the workers in our modern capitalist societies more or *less* “free” than the subjects of totalitarian societies, when capitalist workers experience the exploitation of their labour as harmonising with “their own” desires (desires that have been carefully produced in them²²)? Does it even matter, if the enslaved souls of modern capitalism are *happier* souls? If a subject’s “happiness” depends upon his or her unconsciousness of violence, do we assess the consciously miserable subject as more or less psychologically “healthy” than the slave or oppressor of slaves for whom ignorance is bliss?

We are so accustomed to speaking and thinking in terms of the traditional, individualistic accounts of agency and subjectivity that it can be difficult to think beyond them, even when such accounts are inconsistent with the basic assumptions about causality that inform our understandings of the rest of the natural world. One of the problematic problematisations of violence upon which the present study will focus—that of its constitution as the activity of evil others—exploits this discursive inertia, building individualistic accounts of agency and subjectivity into violent theories of violence.

I have previously (Webb, 2005) explored elements of this “othering” problematisation in the principal psychological text of New Zealand’s Department of Corrections at that time, Andrews and Bonta’s (2003) *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*. I was concerned that the text made some alliances with vengeful discourse, and argued that “a social psychology that constructs agency in social terms is compatible with a system of punishment that aims to deter, while an individualistic psychology that

22 “Consumption is the ideal place in which to construct cultural hegemony, namely a form of dominion based on consensus and the manipulation of symbolic resources” (Sassatelli, 2007, p. 81). Ever since productive forces outgrew demand and it became more profitable to manufacture such demand through advertising (Ewen, 1976), the production of desire has been big business.

constructs agency in individual terms is compatible with a system of punishment that aims to harm” (Webb, 2005, p. 101).

The distinction is important because—as with some medical procedures—the infliction of suffering is not *necessarily* inconsistent with the ethical principles of care and respect that inform the Code of Ethics (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002) for practising psychologists; but suffering should be avoided insofar as this is possible (we do not usually perform surgery without anaesthetics, for example) and to collude with practices of deliberate infliction of suffering (e.g. many of the practices associated with imprisonment in this country) without strong scientific justification in terms of the positive effects of punishment is clearly unethical. In a forensic context, contemporary theories of agency are better suited to the justification of deterrence than of vindictive harm, inasmuch as they acknowledge that behaviour has causes. The forensic domain’s explicit use of competing accounts of agency (e.g. in the courtroom) make it a useful source of specific examples of epistemological violence, and a domain in which I would like to consider practical discursive techniques for violence minimisation.

These issues and goals suggest a methodological approach resembling Foucaultian discourse analysis, and the present research could perhaps be described as such (a reflexive analysis of psy-discourse around theories of research and of violence), but given the extent to which Judith Butler’s theory informs the work, the adjective “Butlerian” might be more appropriate. Butler’s recent focus on “ethical violence” (e.g. Butler, 2005) brings a large body of contemporary theory to bear upon the issues of violence and subjectivity that concern me, and I will argue that some aspects of her approach to scholarship can serve as a model of non-violent theory that could be appropriate for psychological theorists.

In *Defining Violence* (Bradby, 1996, p. 1), Bradby argues for “the need for a broader definition” of violence, and her volume goes on to present multiple accounts of violence without attempting a synthesis. Here, the “breadth” of the definition consists precisely in the multiplicity of accounts, and my approach to “definition” aims more

for this kind of breadth: an effort to examine the problem from many perspectives rather than a claim to have synthesised all of them into a single “better” perspective. With this aim of “thick description²³” in mind, the first chapter sets out to explore some of the ways violence can inform its own problematisation.

Reflexive Problems of Violence will begin by exploring some of the ways violence as “direct physical harm” and as “direct threat” can impact upon its theorisation. From here we can go on to explore some of the more complex problems that can be examined in a contemporary theoretical context. These include unconsciousness of violence due to repression (such as a presence of “direct threat” that we are unable to admit to consciousness); unconsciousness of violence due to a “foreclosure” or lack of narrative context for its articulation (e.g. social structural violence that is invisible due to its normality); the presence of social dynamics advantaging discourse that furthers the interests of those who benefit from violence (so that even in the absence of direct threat, accounts that challenge violence are difficult to propagate); problematisations that are “violent” in Teo’s (2008) sense (e.g. accounts of violence that constitute it as something “they” do, in order to justify violent “solutions”); and fascist, “social Darwinist” or “supremacist” accounts of violence that problematise the value of its problematisation (e.g. certain readings of Nietzsche that valorise the violent as being true to their position of strength, while heaping contempt upon the weak who whine about the moral injustice of their victimisation instead of having the grace to accept their domination as part of the natural way of things, or—ideally—having the courage to be violent themselves).

After *Reflexive Problems of Violence* has established a background of problems and questions against which a reading of Butler’s texts can be directed, *Judith Butler and Violence* will examine Butler’s work in this context, with a view to the development of non-violent psychological theory. *Legal and Criminal Violence* will develop some of this material in relation to psychological theory around criminal violence, and then

23 Thick description (Geertz, 1973) contrasts the multiple active possibilities opened up by an account that attends to multiple contexts, with the limiting effect or the effort to constrain outcomes that can be produced by a thin description that makes a definitive account out of a single context.

the *Discussion* will engage with all this in terms of new questions we could be asking, or old questions that we could ask in new ways.

In some respects this progression from questioning to questioning can be read as a turn of the “hermeneutic circle” (Packer & Addison, 1989): to the extent that research—or any interpretive activity—assigns meaning to an object of study by constituting it in particular terms, it contributes to a social process of *transforming* that object of study into something else; a new element in an altered discourse with potentially different social functions. Logically, the linear structure of the present text contributes to this constitution of a deferred reflexivity that asks new questions only in retrospect from the final chapter, but methodologically, the text has not been written from start to finish in a single pass without editing, and so the text has been produced via the continuous operation of many reflexive “hermeneutic circles”, including an ongoing revision of methodological principles in accordance with the material produced by the study.

For example the third chapter, *Legal and Criminal Violence* includes an argument for avoiding the constitution of individual subjects as “criminals” or “offenders” in psychological texts. This recommendation was applied retrospectively as a methodological technique in the production of the overall text. Even the positioning of respectful language as a *methodological* technique—rather than “merely” a stylistic matter—depends upon arguments about the relationship of violence to validity that have been introduced already but which are more fully developed throughout the study.

My “methodology section”, then, does not constitute the research as “an example of this methodology” or “an example of that methodology”, but rather as an example of research that *begins* by taking up a set of epistemological and methodological assumptions, and then subordinates all of these to the primary orienting assumption that truth is the product of *non-violent* inquiry. Thus, a focal claim—the inseparability of non-violence and truth—not only suggests a line of inquiry (“how can we produce non-violent psychological theory?”) but also suggests a starting point, or a promising

set of theoretical resources to take up in the service of this inquiry: and yet the same prioritising of non-violent truth that informs the selection of resources at the outset may also inform their modification or replacement at any stage of the process, and I want to avoid commitments to formal methodological procedures that can function as a resistance to this reflexive self-correction.

One reason for this is related to the “methodological positivism” discussed earlier: I would prefer to *maintain* attention to the epistemological issues, so that their operation remains explicit, rather than to embed these assumptions in a set of methodological practices that can then be treated as “having been established” as useful for conducting research. Denzin (2009) discusses the potential dangers of neo-positivist “quality controls” that try to introduce hegemonic notions of research “quality” into qualitative work, effectively trying to silence the interpretive research community unless the knowledge it produces conforms to the methodological positivism informing so much quantitative research. Denzin’s (2009) claim that “we must create our own standards of quality, our own criteria” (p. 58) informs the present work, as it sets out to develop a key criterion of good quality research—its non-violence—that can apply to qualitative (as well as to quantitative) inquiry.

Denzin (2010) says of post-positivist “mixed methods” discourse: “In turning inquiry into a set of procedures, this discourse marginalizes the open-ended, free-flowing, emergent nature of critical inquiry” (p. 420). I agree with this claim, however, I also want to put this criticism into a particular context that attends to the “double participation” (Stam, 2002, p. 574) of academic theorists in the broader social worlds that tend to be described explicitly in theoretical discourse, but also in the professional arena of the debates themselves, in which the meanings of a discourse can be closely related to local issues of professional stake, personal loyalty and so on. I can attempt to establish this context by outlining some of the key theoretical assumptions informing the present research, and discussing their relationship to some of the traditions of qualitative inquiry in psychology.

Perhaps the most important theoretical assumption informing not only the methods of inquiry into non-violent psychological theory but even the possibility of such inquiry is the assumption that language use is a form of social action. This assumption—if it is taken seriously and applied reflexively to, for example, language use involving claims about language—suggests a shift of attention to language as a *practice*, and away from a fetishistic attachment to the “content” of knowledge claims, including epistemological knowledge claims. For example, I am happy to profess a “relativistic relativism”, to the extent that I read “relativism”—with Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995)—as the practice of refusing to dig theoretical trenches along “bottom line” arguments that are simply non-negotiable. Even key terms like “truth” and “violence” *are* negotiable: to exclude people from such negotiations is a linguistic enactment of a violent social practice. An important qualifier (the “relativistic” quality of the relativism) here is the *extent* to which I read “relativism” as the position outlined by Edwards et al. (1995). This is not a reading that I am claiming as somehow “the right” or “the best” reading in *any and all* contexts: I do not assume that every community uses language as I do, and so I do not assume a stable meaning for “relativism” upon which I could build a universally applicable account of it. Since the term “relativism” does not represent “the real relativism” but is a word with specific uses in specific social contexts, relativism can, of course, have other meanings for other theorists.

Because I take the relativity of “meaning” seriously, I acknowledge that in a specific community with specific traditions of usage—perhaps an academic community in which “relativism” meant “refusal to adopt a strong stance on any particular issue”—I might argue against the merits of “relativism” and for the merits of “objectivism” *as the terms were being used in that context*. This is not a softening or weakening of the energies producing my theoretical position; nor (unless the minimisation of violence is constituted as a “weakening”) does it have to be a weakening of the theory’s effects: rather it is an acknowledgement that the meanings of contested terms can be resolved in ways other than by defeating the “enemies” who use the terms differently. I am just as sure that *my reading* of “social constructionism” describes something that can contribute to non-violent theory as I am sure that *my reading* of “fire” describes something that can burn my hand: the critical suspension of “certainty” that my relativism involves is an acknowledgement of *your* readings of these terms. You

probably use the word “fire” much as I am using it, so debates here are unlikely to arise. But “social constructionism”? Faced with your rejection of this tradition, I can assume that your dislike of it has legitimate reasons that I should take into account, and ask about what it means to *you* in *your* community—how it has been used or how you worry that it may be used—and so enter into a potentially constructive dialogue.

Or, I can try to invalidate your criticism by performing a ritual of argumentative humiliation, stoking the “seemingly inexhaustible disagreement” (Stam, 2002, p. 572) of my-arguments-are-better-than-yours refutation by dragging out a (seemingly inexhaustible) series of contexts within which your claims can be shown to be “missing” various important points, “not taking them into account” and so on, all staged in a way that strives rhetorically to position you as either less informed, less intelligent, less ethical, or some combination of all three. In this way an opportunity for constructive dialogue can be turned aside in favour of a kind of competition, in which the success of one theoretical account depends upon the defeat of others.

In this context, I read Gergen’s (Gergen, 2001) and Shotter and Lannamann’s (2002) attention to the rituals of academic debate as an important aspect of the reflexivity invoked by social constructionism’s theorising language as *action*. This crucial assumption about language informs my preference (in the present inquiry) for the theoretical tools of social constructionism; *not* because I imagine that they are—in some objective sense—“better” than those of hermeneutic phenomenology, critical realism, or even objectivist positivism—but simply because they seem better suited to my specific project, inasmuch as their subversion of traditional representational accounts of language enables me to foreground the violence *done* in the process of certain kinds of accounting for “how things are”.

This “relativistic” account of constructionism makes it possible to position my research as “ontologically” constructionist, and in some contexts I would be reasonably happy to play along with this language game and argue for the assumption that language informs even what “really is” (i.e. to argue against the idea of an objective “extra-linguistic” reality); but the game of ontology is dangerous, because

the form of the argument and the metaphor of reality “beyond” language function to distract us from what we are *doing* (am I using this discourse of “ontology” and so on to invite excluded communities into the debates, or to shore up their exclusion?) by the familiar trick of claiming that our language represents, accurately or inaccurately, “how things really are” (that there is *really* an objective world beyond language, or there *really* isn’t, regardless of the specific social effects of one or the other claim in the context of its articulation). It can also lead to the confusing situation in which critics of, for example, Gergen’s constructionist texts claim that they “deny referentiality” (Gergen, 2001, p. 421) rather than, as I read them, that they acknowledge and theorise these referential linguistic practices *as* practices. The problem with discourses of language as representation cannot simply be summarised as “that’s not how language really works” without deploying the very discursive practice that is being called into question. Rather, the problem involves the knowledge/power implications of the “reality” so constituted, and in particular the way talk of dispassionate “observation” can function to deny the social and political stake in such accounts.

To the extent that discourses of “ontology” can be implicated in these problematic discourses of language as representation (by constituting “being” or “existence” as having a nature beyond the nature that we are constituting for it in the ontological account itself) I prefer not to reproduce such discourse by framing the debates in its terms: for the present inquiry, questions of “the truth about truth” are questions about the effects of our account of truth; not questions about a “real nature” of truth that we might (by a traditionally “rigorous” analysis of rational propositions and/or empirical data) “discover”.

In summary then, this research addresses methodology as part of its inquiry into the relationships between violence and truth, and so the question of methodology is too important to “close” in this section: instead, the entire text aims to provide an adequate account of the methodological principles informing the research. At the outset, focal and closely related epistemological assumptions include the assumption that language is a social practice that *does* things, even when it constitutes itself as reflecting rather than contributing to reality; and that “truth” is therefore a discursive

enactment or embodiment of social and political activity, rather than a property that knowledge claims objectively do or do not possess. I also assume that discourse exceeds the words on the page and the spoken words to which “language” typically refers, and is embodied not only in these texts but in such “texts” as the dark suit worn by a politician, the dark skin colour of the workers collecting the town’s rubbish, or the dark music playing in the background while a documentary discusses a serial killer. The “open question” of methodology is no less important for its being left open, nor any less urgent for its requiring the full account of the text in order to address it. We can begin to address it now, with an exploration of some of the ways that violence may infix itself into the processes by which we theorise it.

**A vulnerability must be perceived and recognised
in order to come into play in an ethical encounter ...
But when a vulnerability *is* recognised, that recognition has the power
to change the meaning and structure of the vulnerability itself**

Judith Butler²⁴

Reflexive Problems of Violence

I have suggested that psychological research be treated as “valid” research to the extent that it is non-violent, because ethics cannot be cleanly excised from epistemology: issues of knowledge and truth always involve issues of value. Some of the epistemological implications of this claim are foregrounded by the claim that violence can contribute to its own theorisation. In the context of psychological interventions into violence this is a crucial issue: the “facts” about violence are produced socially, and they have social effects, so that the act of constituting violence in a particular set of theoretical terms can be itself an act of violence in the terms of another theory.

Careful attention to the contribution of violence to its own theorisation is therefore an important element of a scientific approach to psychological interventions around violence: not in the positivist sense that it can somehow give us insight into an objective or universal “violence”, but in the contemporary sense of integrity and theoretical rigour. Examining this issue can help us to avoid hypocrisy by ensuring that our practice is consistent with our particular account of violence, and with our project of its minimisation. Having discussed some of the methodological issues relevant to such examination, it is now time to consider some of the specific means by which violence may contribute to the accounts we make of it.

24 (Butler, 2004a, p. 43). Watkins (2008) uses this quotation to argue that for Butler, “the contingency of vulnerability consists in the question of its recognition” (p. 194). “Unrecognised” violence can represent unrecognised vulnerability, so the operation of violence in the discursive constitution of violence can be simultaneously a violent refusal to recognise a vulnerability.

Direct physical harm

Perhaps the most simple and direct means by which violence can impact upon the process of its theorisation is by physically damaging or destroying some aspect of the process. Returning to the illustration of a psychological theorist with a gun pressed to her head, violence intervenes into its own theorisation by means of direct physical harm when the trigger is pulled. Clearly the action can serve as a direct or indirect *threat* (pp. 42-49) too—inasmuch as it can function to suggest that other theorists must collude with violence or suffer the fate of the murdered theorist—but its immediate effect is to remove a theorist from the language community, thus potentially removing a source of criticism that could be disruptive to violence. The killing of theorists is a widespread and well-known practice: US-backed assassinations of socialist activists, preachers and educators in South America (Blum, 2003; McSherry, 2002) and assassinations of Islamic religious scholars by Islamic fundamentalists (Moustafa, 2000) are some recent examples, with academics in Iraq at risk of being murdered today²⁵; but the burning of heretics and other examples of murders that have specifically targeted people making particular theoretical claims is documented as far back through Western history as we care to read, with the execution of Socrates²⁶ for example taking place around 399 years BC (Tamas, 1991).

Jesus is also said to have been killed specifically for making blasphemous claims—claims with implications for violence, some of which were spelled out explicitly—rather than for committing offences against Roman law (Roberts, 1995), and so his

25 “Al-Rawi, a geologist at Baghdad University and head of the Association of University Lecturers, says about 300 academics and university administrators have been assassinated in a mysterious wave of murders since the American occupation of Iraq began in 2003” (Crain, 2005, January 17, ¶ 3).

26 Socrates was “charged with impiety, accused of ignoring the community’s traditional gods, introducing gods of his own, and subverting the young” (Millett, 2005, p. 24). Found guilty, he was sentenced to death by poisoning. Interestingly, in discussing the veracity of Plato’s account of the trial, Millett argues that the “apparently plausible argument” (p. 25) that its having been written a decade after events witnessed by hundreds means that it could not be misrepresenting events (or Plato might have been called a liar) “may misapprehend ancient Greek views of ‘the truth’. Whereas our own conception of truth tends to privilege qualities of accuracy, authenticity and even completeness ... the Greek construction of ‘truth’ may have been more open-textured” (p. 25).

execution too can be constituted as the silencing of a theorist of violence through direct physical harm.

In the case of Jesus the threatening image of the tortured theorist has been reproduced so abundantly in contexts of violent conquest like the Crusades (Hillenbrand, 2000), brutal regimes of enforcement such as the Inquisition (Given, 1997) and colonisation (Fennell, 2007; Kosambi, 1998; Osterhammel, 2005; Pels, 1997) that its function as a threat seems obvious²⁷: stunningly, viscerally effective in the graphic delivery of its message, “this is what you get if you challenge our violence”, and yet at the same time plausibly deniable as a threat simply by claiming to be worshipping the shattered body rather than the violent power that penetrated it²⁸. It is also likely that many more such killings have not been publicly disclosed, since it may be politically important for the assassination of a theorist to be done secretly. In such cases it can be argued that the function of direct harm is independent of, or at least takes precedence over any threatening function. Nevertheless, there is so much overlap between the functions of direct physical harm and direct or indirect threat that it is much easier to find examples of violent harm that can also be read as threats than it is to find cases of “pure” instrumental bodily harm. Clamping a critical woman’s tongue in her mouth with a “scold’s bridle” (Boose, 1991; Dobash & Dobash, 1981) obviously functions as a direct physical means of silencing her criticism—as does strapping her to a chair and dunking her body underwater (Boose, 1991; Dobash & Dobash, 1981) so that all she can do when she opens her mouth is gasp for air—but the public spectacles associated

27 Yet, as with so many things, perhaps its normality renders this “obvious” image invisible.

Glazyrina (Glazyrina, 2004) examines a saga written in Iceland around the beginning of the 13th century; a text that positioned its heroes as Christian missionaries fighting “heathen”, perhaps because “crusaders’ stories reached Iceland and contributed to the transformation of a Viking tale of Yngvar into the saga of Yngvar, ‘a Christian missionary’” (Glazyrina, 2004, p. 13). There is a remarkable passage in this text, in which the Christian heroes—armed and ready for battle—see that the heathen “bore a bloodstained man before them as their banner” (Glazyrina, 2004, p. 11). Consulting with their bishop about “this menacing sign” (p. 11), the heroes are told, “bear before you the victory sign of Our Christ the Crucified and call upon his name—that will bring us victory, and death to the heathen” (p. 11). “When the bishop had spoken these rousing words, they took the crucifix and image of Our Lord, and bore it as a banner before the army” (p. 11). Despite the symmetry of the two accounts of armies bearing images of bloody men as banners, the priest’s reading the “heathen” banner as a “corpse” (p. 11) and his own banner as “Our Christ the Crucified” (p. 11) works to constitute the *Christian* experience of seeing a crowd armed with vicious weapons under the sign of a bloody body as somehow very different from the *heathen* experience of seeing a crowd armed with vicious weapons under the sign of a bloody body.

28 Particular rhetorical functions are served by selecting the scene of death as the key event and the instrument of torture as the defining symbol of the religion, when countless other images were available. Popular images of Gandhi do not show him with three bullet holes in his chest.

with these humiliations seem to demonstrate that their purpose was primarily to threaten rather than to silence directly. When tongues are cut out (Lindorfer, 2003) the silencing is more effective, but so too is the threat to others who might voice the same ideas. Even in the case of “secret” killings of rebellious theorists, it is worth remembering that these murders were known at least to the people involved in carrying them out: an act of direct physical harm can function as a threat *against the person committing the act*, to the extent that the person fears being a target of similar violence. Thus an effective means of threatening a soldier never to challenge his masters may be to employ him as the covert executioner of citizens who have done so: the murder may be kept secret from those who might be outraged at its violence, while simultaneously functioning as a brazen threat to those for whom “outrage” is no longer an option²⁹.

Bodily damage is not limited to individual theorists: an entire city or nation from which violence-disruptive theory might arise can be bombed, or an effort can be made to wipe out a whole language community by means of genocide. The examples of direct harm discussed so far involve forms of constraint, damage or destruction of *bodies* involved in the theorisation of violence. “Direct physical harm” can however be applied to other resources as well. The burning of books is one such approach that has often been implemented, and censorship through forcibly removing material from websites could be regarded as a modern equivalent (“burning cyberbooks” or “burning library books without creating smoke”, according to Semitsu, 2000³⁰, p. 509). Here we have moved from the damage or destruction of theorists’ bodies to the damage or destruction of resources that are obviously and specifically relevant to theorisation, but there are many other resources—including food and shelter—that play no less important a role. In fact, since almost anything *can* function as an important part of the process of theory production, almost any violent damage or destruction can function as an intervention into such theorisation.

29 Compare also the “self-traumatised perpetrator” (p. 193 of the present text).

30 Semitsu uses these phrases to describe the removal of *access* to offending websites via Internet filtering software; deletion of offending material from web servers has more in common with physical book burning inasmuch as it makes the text unavailable to anyone.

This kind of disruption is important because it is an example of a dynamic—one of many such examples that will be discussed over the course of this chapter—whereby one’s ability to influence the theorisation of violence may be inversely proportional to the extent of one’s victimisation. Clearly it is harder for a woman to debate and theorise violence if she is dead, or in hospital with broken bones; is it not also harder for her to do so if her husband has smashed her telephone? Similar questions can be asked in relation to indigenous populations and other groups who are subject to high levels of destructive physical violence. Whether by its application to human bodies or to the academic, economic and other resources that contribute to theorisation, violence can impact upon its theorisation by means of direct physical harm, and an effect of these accumulated impacts may be a limitation of the ability of victims of violence to contribute to the production of theories of violence.

Indirect physical harm

I have already noted that directly destructive interventions of violence into processes of understanding violence can overlap with threatening functions (discussed on pp. 42-49), either as secondary effects (e.g. when a theorist’s computer is confiscated primarily in order to prevent her from communicating her ideas, but also in order to remind her that the violence she challenges can act upon her environment and potentially upon her body), or even as the principal effects next to which the direct physical harm is secondary (e.g. when a political activist is tortured partly to silence him for a few weeks while he recovers in hospital, but primarily to terrify other activists or potential activists). Before moving on to consider some of the theoretical issues around violence as threat, it is worth examining briefly the possibility of *indirect* physical harm, where violence that is not directed specifically at theorists can nevertheless function to impact upon its theorisation; for example, by diverting resources that might be used to theorise violence into activities around dealing with its effects.

A man who attempts to control his wife's behaviour with beatings and intimidation may support this behaviour discursively by theorising his violence in terms of his lack of emotional control in an environment of overwhelming external factors (O'Neill, 1998; O'Neill & Morgan, 2001³¹). In this context, the woman's opportunities to resist this pro-violent theoretical framework are improved if he has to leave her alone for extended periods of time while working and so on. Were she free to use this time for herself, she could potentially develop or obtain access to resources enabling her to theorise his violence as unjust political control rather than as inevitable natural emotional response. This possibility can be minimised by keeping her busy dealing with problems and stressors arising from destructive violence: the children must be fed despite his having eaten all the food and taken all the money; their toys that he sold must be replaced; likewise the things he smashed in his last fit of rage; the urine from his last drinking binge must be washed out of the furniture; the mess from the latest party cleaned up; and so on. In the midst of all this damage control, there are the other people's problems to deal with too: the daughters whose partners have beaten them; the sons who have hurt their partners or others so badly that they have landed in prison; the neighbours arriving in tears with similar problems, and so on. In this way (and in many other contexts, e.g. the unofficial endorsement of rape and other brutality in prisons; Dumond, 2003; Man & Cronan, 2001) destructive physical harm can be effective at reducing the capacity of victims of violence to theorise the violence they are subjected to; not necessarily by directly damaging or destroying the physical resources necessary for such theorisation, nor by direct or even indirect threats or intimidation, but simply by keeping them so busy dealing with the effects of violence—or protecting themselves from its immediate presence—that they have little time or energy for anything else. As with direct violence, indirect violence may reproduce the dynamic whereby those who suffer the effects of violence are less likely to have the opportunity to contribute to psychological theories of violence.

It could be argued that "indirect" physical harm is not substantially different from the *direct* destruction of bodies or other physical resources involved in violence theorisation: after all, time is a necessary resource for theorising violence, and like the

31 "The Romantic discourse of violence as *expressive of inner tension* ... is apparent in a common sense understanding of violence" (O'Neill & Morgan, 2001, p. 269).

space we need in which to move, is it not a physical resource of sorts? Like any other term, the boundaries of “physical” can be contested and may vary in different contexts. Galtung (1969) distinguished between physical violence³² and “psychological violence” (p. 169), reproducing the traditional division of person into body and mind. Questionable as this division is, the bracketing of “psychological violence” as a special form may be useful; for example, in the context of enabling victims to talk about their experiences by providing them with narrative resources for speaking of previously unnameable experiences.

On the other hand, there are aspects of the notion of psychological violence that are problematic. Discourse does not merely determine whether or not something is nameable as violence at all; it also positions the various kinds of violence in terms of relative seriousness, and it may be useful to examine this positioning. A familiar but under-theorised aspect of this in mainstream psychological literature is the issue of psychological violence or emotional abuse and its relationship to other forms of violence: victims of physical, sexual and psychological abuse often name psychological abuse as the *worst* form of abuse (Logan & Raphael, 2007; O’Leary & Maiuro, 2001), and there are empirical studies (e.g. Wijma, Samelius, Wimgren & Wijma, 2007) demonstrating that, for example, the correlation between psychological abuse and physical health problems is at least as high as it is for sexual or physical violence³³. Yet which example of abuse would be more likely to result in a criminal conviction: a single physical or sexual assault, or ten years of systematic emotional violence and merciless psychological degradation?

If the courts seldom prosecute for “psychological violence” despite victims’ claims that it can be more harmful than the forms of violence that do concern the courts, can

32 He further divided “physical” violence into “biological violence” that harmed the body, and “physical violence as such” (p. 169); the latter category encompassing such diverse forms of physical violence as imprisonment and bondage, and even “when access to transportation is very unevenly distributed, keeping large segments of the population at the same place with mobility a monopoly of the selected few” (p. 169).

33 Unfortunately there are contexts in which the accounts of victims do not carry much weight unless they are verified by empirical research to ensure that their claims can be generalised. My mention of empirical verification is not meant to imply that it is necessary for the argument I am making, nor to justify positivist truth criteria by constructing an argument in their terms: it is merely intended to demonstrate that the argument still makes sense in such contexts.

this be read as the law's positioning psychological violence as falling within the range of "normal" behaviour against which criminal behaviour is contrasted? Does *psychology* reflect this by normalising psychological violence in a similar way? Plenty of emotionally violent behaviours (e.g. the practice of calling another person "useless" or an "idiot") do not get a lot of attention in "abnormal psychology" texts, presumably because they are such common forms of unhealthy behaviour that they do not qualify as "abnormal": the DSM (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) explicitly notes that a mental disorder "must not be merely an expectable and culturally sanctioned response" (p. xxxi). In the terms of this definition, violence is only a "disorder" if it is not "culturally sanctioned": if a community are all doing it, it is not only "normal" but explicitly does not qualify as "disordered", which suggests an assumption (based on a physical medical model) that normality is equivalent to "healthy".

In any case, our foregrounding something as abnormal can serve to normalise and justify the background against which we contrast it, and an investigation that addresses violence in familiar terms runs the risk of reproducing the familiar discourses within which violence so obviously thrives. Setting "psychological violence" apart from "physical violence" may be useful in some contexts but it may also be a destructive practice if the "psychological" is treated as less important than the "physical".

Consider the psychological violence of a lie, for example, in *physical* terms: the brain is arguably the most vital of physical organs, and the intricate arrangements of synaptic networks are physically altered by such environmental factors as speech. A lie can kill almost instantly ("it's OK, that wire's not live") and lies about a person's identity and important social relationships can cause intense and prolonged suffering, not only to the person whose physical organ has been altered directly by the lie, but also to many others affected by the person's behaviour. A knife plunged into someone's abdomen disrupts the healthy function of bodily organs, causing suffering and possibly death: how does this differ from some forms of "psychological" violence? Certainly it differs in terms of its visibility and the seriousness with which it is treated, but the harmful or destructive effects of psychological violence may be in principle quite similar to those of "physical" violence.

The blurred boundaries of the psychological and the physical are a good place from which to move on to an examination of *threat*. As action upon the action of another, threat can represent a simple example of Foucaultian power³⁴ (Foucault, 1982); yet despite its “psychological” form, the power of the threat is often grounded in our fear that violence will be done to our bodies: direct physical harm casts its shadow over many of the other processes and activities we acknowledge as violence.

Direct threat

While direct physical *harm* is arguably the simplest means by which violence can impact upon its theorisation, direct *threat*—whereby a theorist is influenced by the threat of personal harm—is probably the most obvious. The account of a theorist writing with a gun to her head provided a simple illustration of this. Many of the questions raised earlier in relation to this example concerned issues of agency and accountability, and were offered to demonstrate that even a “direct” threat is never a straightforward manipulation of a victim by a threatening agent, but is always embedded in complex networks of power relations that may include such threats. Another important complication is the issue of *consciousness*, and while it will be addressed more thoroughly later (e.g. on pp. 49-56), I want to introduce the issue here as another aspect of threat that needs to be examined carefully if a rich account of violence’s impact on theory is to be constructed.

For example, is the threat diminished if the psychologist with the gun to her head says to the soldier, “the gun is unnecessary: I firmly agree with our dictator’s views on

34 “The exercise of power is ... a way in which certain actions modify others.” (Foucault, 1982, p. 788). “It acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future” (p. 789). Foucault, in this passage, is actually *contrasting* his account of “power” with his account of “violence” as something that “acts upon a body or upon things” (p. 789). This account of power as action upon action is extremely useful as it contributes to a social and interactive rather than an individualistic account of agency, and so Foucault’s defining violence as action “upon things” (rather than actions) is also useful in this specific context, helping as it does to untangle the account of “power” from other familiar discourse. However, if one acts upon the action of another so as to produce Foucault’s kind of “violence” (e.g. by forcing one person at gunpoint to stab a third person), I would prefer to call that (an action upon action producing violence) a *violent* action, and so to allow the notion of “violence” to encompass certain uses of “power”; including for example its epistemological enactments.

violence, and so you're not coercing me as I'd be writing this, gun or no gun, for the good of the people", and really *believes* what she says? Or, perhaps she is speaking about violence for a live radio broadcast, and the soldier is merely standing in the room, not conscious of the impact of his violence upon the discussion of violence, believing himself only to be "standing guard" to protect listeners from the evil lies of terrorists, and thus posing no threat at all to the psychologist, nor exerting any influence upon her speech (unless she is a terrorist): must we conclude that the threat is not present if nobody is conscious of it?

If these hypothetical scenarios seem so far-fetched as to be irrelevant, consider that theorists in modern Germany can be imprisoned for challenging official accounts of the Holocaust. In regards to this, Lasson (2007) quotes a remarkable passage from Germany's Federal Supreme Court: "No one who denies the historic fact of the murder of the Jews ... can invoke the guarantee of freedom of opinion ... no one has a protected interest to publicize untrue allegations" (p. 253). But if "untrue" opinion is not protected, what kind of "freedom of opinion" is the liberty to voice any opinion so long as it is "true"? To position such censorship—because we happen to agree with the official accounts—as "protecting the public from harmful lies" rather than "constraining theory by means of violent threat" is simply to argue as any dictator enforcing such constraints would be likely to argue, since it is seldom socially advantageous to position one's motives as selfish or evil. If freedom means that one can say anything so long as the authorities agree with it, what are the conditions in which speech is not free? Of course the issues around "tolerance of intolerance" are extremely complex, but it is important to acknowledge a violent constraint upon theory *as violence*, and not to pervert Gandhi's claim by arguing that it is not violence because it is "defending truth" (Lasson, 2007), as though an equivalence of truth and non-violence could make the role of *prisons* in maintaining this "truth" unproblematic.

Thus not only totalitarian dictatorships but also modern Western democracies may constrain theory by means of direct threat, and it is likely that many theorists in these contexts are *not* conscious of any violence "threatening" them, because they identify with the "reputable historians" rather than the "neo-fascist revisionists" or whatever out-group is the target of the threat. Nevertheless, when *any* group is prevented from

voicing their opinions by direct threat, how can we know that the others who “would speak the truth regardless” really *would* speak the enforced truth, were the threat not present?

To outside observers it may seem ridiculous to be using a Nazi policy in order to allegedly guard vigilantly against the return of Nazism, but clearly there are many in Germany at least who feel strongly that this is the right thing to do: better a little preventative, pre-emptive restriction of academic freedom than the far worse restrictions that could result from the spread of the forbidden ideas. Is this a pragmatic issue, or can the action of violence evade our attention in such cases because our ideal of “truth” is a positivist ideal: the reputable historians are *right* and the revisionists are *wrong* and so the violence is necessary in order to uphold the truth?

A non-violent epistemological framework challenges this separation of methodology and epistemology in relation to truth: the reputable historians may have many of their facts straight, but they have others wrong if they collude with violence in propagating their theories. The very *truth* of their claims is compromised by the threat of violence against any who challenge the claims, because no “fact” can be indexed against an objective reality devoid of subjectivity. Claims of fact stand in relation to social processes, and if these processes are violent then the claims are false: to call them true is to accept the violent conditions upon which their truth depends. The “fact” stripped of any social context is an objectivist tool that easily lends itself to violent uses, because threats and other violent practices that operate in the social context are conveniently pushed out of the field of conscious debate.

A direct threat can operate “below consciousness”—or beyond the reach of articulation—in many different settings. Men who inflict physical violence on their partners often monitor and restrict their partners’ access to social relationships (O’Leary & Maiuro, 2001; Stark, 2007). There is, of course, much more to social support than discursive enrichment, but people who can talk with each other are clearly in a better position to theorise than people who are kept isolated from others. I

have already asked if part of the violent husband's reasons for limiting his wife's access to other people could be understood as an effort to keep her from resources that would enable her to theorise³⁵ "violence" in a way that constitutes his behaviour toward her as unjustifiable. If so, the threat of violent consequences should the woman socialise in the husband's absence is an example of violence impacting upon its theorisation by means of direct threat, even if—in the immediate circumstances of a husband's glare as a woman discusses a social invitation on the telephone—neither party is *conscious* of the operation of violence, let alone able to articulate the nature or purpose of the threat.

The "directness" of a threat does not consist of the theorist's being able to say to herself consciously, "I am going to consider violence in a particular way because I am terrified of the consequences if I constitute it differently"; nor in the ability of the person who might carry out the threatened violence to say, "I am using my capacity to inflict harm as a means of influencing how this person understands violence". Rather—whether conscious or unconscious—its directness consists of the violent actor's doing something to suggest that the theorist of violence may come to harm should "violence" be constituted in ways that do not meet with the violent actor's approval.

Indirect threat

The problem of *indirect threat* occurs when a threat functions to influence theorists who are not the explicit or direct target of the threat. The German law in regards to histories of the Holocaust has already been mentioned: here there is a *direct* threat of the form, "if you dispute official accounts of what was done to Jewish people here during the Second World War, we will put you in prison," with the obvious target of the threat being theorists who want to dispute such accounts. Suppose however that you are an historian with a radical new theory about some other, related aspect of the war. You do not wish to dispute any of the specific facts to which the direct threat

35 I prefer not to limit the meaning of "theory" to the formal theory of academic disciplines, but even if we limit theorisation in this way, it seems reasonable to assume that the woman's problematising "violence" in a domestic context might contribute to her eventual participation in the formal development of academic theory.

pertains; but, nevertheless, you have serious doubts about some closely related account of events, and would like to publish your doubts. Is it possible that the threat directed at *other* historians will nevertheless influence your willingness to publish? Even if it does not prevent you from publishing your theory altogether, might it not subtly influence your choice of words when you do? Perhaps something that might have been theorised as “violence” receives a milder name, less likely to cause offence to those who imprison offensive theorists?

Threats can be considerably less direct than this. In a broad sense, any public or witnessed act of violence can function as an indirect threat inasmuch as it demonstrates, if nothing else, that the violent actors will in *some* circumstances resort to violence: potential victims are responsible for figuring out what those circumstances are if they want to avoid them. This is obvious in some situations: for example, a household in which a parent viciously assaults a disobedient older child, and the younger children experience this as an indirect threat, even if the parent never directly and explicitly informs them that their disobedience will be punished with violence. In other cases it may be less obvious: violent “heroes” may represent such a case. The warrior whose violence is directed at “the enemy” in *defence* of his family is celebrated rather than feared; yet this “good” violence can still function as a demonstration of what the warrior is prepared to do to those who cross him: if his enemies are treated brutally, does this not suggest that one had better remain his friend? If an intruder broke into my house one night and I beat him almost to death in front of my family, I might claim to be protecting them, but could I not also be indirectly threatening them with such a display of violence? Again, nobody need be *conscious* of the threat for it to function: it achieves its effect if anyone who witnesses the direct harm or direct threat is influenced by their awareness of the potential for such violence to be directed at them.

Could the field of “unconscious” interactions be where *most* threats are made? Certainly it is a safer way to threaten, as it achieves its effect without obliging the threateners to justify what they are doing. I have already mentioned the spectacle of the crucifixion as an example of unconscious indirect threat: were it acknowledged as a threat might it not be less effective, in much the same way that the spectre of “hell”

becomes less threatening when it is identified *as* a threat? If someone carries around a tiny replica of an instrument of torture and says, “this is to remind you how badly we can hurt you if you challenge us,” the conscious, explicit threat makes room for a conscious, explicit response, which may take into account the long term consequences of submission to violence. On the other hand, if the same person carries the same symbol of torture but says, “this is to remind you how much God loves you: that’s His own Son there being tortured, instead of you,” the threat can still achieve its effect (“look: God, who is so much more powerful than you, did *this!*”), but there is less opportunity for the kind of rational, explicit acknowledgement and refusal of a threat that can enable conscious resistance. As with the hero whose violence towards enemies may indirectly bully his friends, the spectacle of violence *per se*—regardless of the narrative positionings of its protagonists—can function to intimidate those who are relatively more vulnerable to violence, and so to subtly elevate the social power and status of those who are relatively more capable of inflicting it.

One very important implication of this is that the privileged gender in a patriarchal society have a vested interest in *maintaining* violence in order to maintain their privilege: a society in which violence were as socially unacceptable as, for example, defecating on a table in a restaurant, would be a society in which male bodies would be stripped of a huge amount of their political power in relation to female bodies. A society in which “heroes” hunt and capture villains, punch them when they cause offence, kill them when they *really* infuriate, and so on, is a society in which larger and more muscular bodies have a significant political advantage over smaller, less muscular bodies. Such a privilege can be protected by positioning it as “natural”; and yet, just as we regulate the natural urge to defecate, and manage not to go on the couch or in the car, could we not also regulate the “natural” urge to smash each other with our fists? If the answer were “yes”, the subordination of half the world’s population to the other half would be substantially undermined: so, of course, masculine violence remains “natural”, and our fists remain far more difficult to control than our bowels. The notion of indirect threat can implicate even male violence against other men with the practice of violence against women: the violence directed at one group, or reminders of that violence, can function to indirectly threaten another group.

This could be an important issue in regards to epistemological non-violence or violence minimisation: the present text, for example, uses many deliberately unsettling accounts of violence ostensibly in order to motivate action against it; however, could these accounts of violence constitute an unconscious indirect threat to readers? If so, what are the criteria for determining when an account of violence is useful for challenging violence (as I hope the accounts in the present text to be) as opposed to useful for the threatening function of violence? The issue is complicated by the fact that texts operate in the contexts of their use rather than under the authority of those who write them; so that the same account of violence—e.g. the torture and execution of Damiens at the start of Foucault’s (1975/1995) *Discipline and Punish*—that inspires some to challenge violence may frighten others into a more profound submission³⁶. Raising this issue explicitly and checking how readers experience their responses to the accounts is one way that I have tried to address the potential for unconscious threat in these circumstances.

Media accounts of violent crime may achieve this unconscious indirect threatening effect as well; a horrific rape implying, “don’t travel without male supervision or this may happen to you,” and so on. Some of this can also be theorised as structural violence: it establishes a context of social power relations in which certain groups are privileged by the effects of violence even when the individual members of those groups do not personally behave in ways that we constitute as being violent. Can every opening up of a space of possibility for serious interpersonal violence—every discourse or context in which such action can “make sense”—function as an indirect threat? Does a background of potential for violence distribute privilege across the society in proportion to each person’s capacity to inflict violence, and inversely in proportion to each person’s vulnerability to violence? If these threatening interactions are indeed taking place in a field of *unconscious* activity, does this unconsciousness

36 The reverse is also possible: even if we read the crucifixion as a threat in some contexts—indeed even if some priests were so cynical as to be using this symbol quite consciously and deliberately as a threat in order to maintain their social and political advantages—none of this prevents people from reading it as a symbol of protest *against* violence. A body with nails hammered through it is not a symbol of anything—“courage”, “love”, “violence”, or anything else—without an interpretive context to establish its meaning. Just as every element of discourse “against violence” can potentially be put to violent ends, so every threat that violence makes can potentially backfire, for example if the fear it inspires leads not to submission but to disobedience or revolt.

depend largely upon the indirectness of the threats, or are other factors preventing us from attending to them consciously?

Repression

When Freud (1915/1986d) established the idea of the “unconscious” in formal psychological discourse, he wrote: “Everything that is repressed must remain unconscious; but let us state at the very outset that the repressed does not cover everything that is unconscious. The unconscious has the wider compass: the repressed is a part of the unconscious” (p. 142). The classical account of “repression” has it that “the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious” (Freud, 1986c, p. 524).

A vivid account of this process is given by Alice Miller (1979/1997) in relation to a patient’s terror of his mother. As a young child the patient was afraid of his mother, but to experience this fear was to display it (at that age, at least) and so to be punished for it; if not explicitly, then at least in terms of the consequences of his mother’s emotional response to his obvious fear of her. In order not to be punished for this fear, he had to stop *experiencing* it: it was only possible to hide it from his mother by hiding it from himself. Freud (1905/1986a, p. 370) is careful to point out that when experiences “are submitted to the process of repression”, this “it must be insisted, is not equivalent to their being abolished.” The terror has not *gone*; it has become unconscious.

The metaphor Miller’s client used was one of living in a body that was a “glass house” (Miller, 1979/1997, p. 18) into which his mother could look. The only way to hide his negative emotions toward her was to bury them, hiding them from himself in order to hide them from others. These “buried” experiences continue to exert their psychological effects, but not in the dangerously recognisable form of conscious feelings or articulable ideas. This idea of hiding material from one’s own awareness in order to hide it from others is illustrated by the Quaid/Hauser character in the Paul

Verhoeven science fiction film *Total Recall*—based on a short story by Philip K. Dick entitled *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* (Parker, 1996)—who deliberately erases his memory in order to be a better undercover agent (i.e. an agent who will be utterly convincing because he does not know himself that his assumed identity is false): when he discovers the “truth” he is so shocked by the realities that he has hidden from himself that he disavows his “true” identity and instead identifies more with the assumed identity that he created for himself as a ruse, accepting aspects of the deliberately constructed “false” identity into his new “self”, and so thwarting his former self. In the case of psychoanalytic therapy for “repression”, an aim of therapy is to integrate the repressed material with consciousness in conditions of safety (Sampson, 1990), rather than to have one part of the self vanquish another.

That this thought experiment in unconsciousness and identity takes place in a Hollywood movie reminds me also of Žižek’s (1997) account of repression in *The Plague of Fantasies* (not because this particular example has anything to do with Hollywood, but simply because Žižek’s examples so often do). Writing about Soviet architecture in the 1930s, he describes the tendency to “put on top of a flat multistorey office building a gigantic statue of the idealized New Man”, and how over time “the tendency to flatten the office building (the actual workplace for living people) more and more became clearly discernible, so that it changed increasingly into a mere pedestal for the larger-than-life statue” (p. 3). His point is that “had anyone in the Soviet Union of the 1930s said openly that the vision of the Socialist New Man was an ideological monster squashing actual people, they would have been arrested immediately” (p. 4). As with Alice Miller’s patient, a violent repression prevents the conscious articulation of certain experiences, yet they still exist in some form despite their remaining unconscious, and sometimes—whether by reading psychopathological symptoms or by reading architectural “symptoms”—we can make them conscious, and discuss them.

That there is a pattern whereby violence tends to make it more difficult for victims of violence to theorise violence has already been mentioned in the context of some of the other means by which violence can impact upon its theorisation. The idea of repression is important because it can be constituted as the supreme achievement of

violent threat: it is one thing to threaten *public* acknowledgement of the threat so that everyone must act as though the violence is not present; but to achieve a silencing of *private* criticism is to bring about a far more stable environment in which violence can operate. Is an adult whose terror of childhood beatings can be consciously acknowledged more or less likely to deal out such beatings to his or her own children, than an adult who claims “it never did me any harm” and genuinely believes this? The possibility that being conditioned to physically assault small children counts as “harm” is repressed by the denial that one’s own experience included being the victim of terrifying assaults: repression in this case not only prevents the victims of violence from identifying it as violence in the immediacy of their victimisation; it so deeply impacts upon their understanding of the events that they will not even recognise, let alone advocate for other victims, even when they are (as adults) no longer themselves physically threatened by that particular violent practice.

In this way, victims whose opportunities to theorise violence have not been reduced by violent destruction of (or limitation of access to) resources, nor by direct or indirect threats—conscious or otherwise—may still have reduced opportunities to theorise violence as a result of violent repressions that keep the violence outside the field of conscious debate. The difference between this and *unconscious indirect threat* is that in the latter case, the violence behind the “threat” is still recognisable as such, even if the threat is not: for example, the theorist speaking on the radio with the armed soldier nearby may be unconscious of the *threat* of being shot for sedition, but the physical violence upon which the threat depends—the act of pointing a purpose-built killing tool at another human being and smashing a piece of metal through that person’s body—is probably recognisable as a violent act. Repression goes further than this, forcing one to witness such an act without witnessing the violence of the act, but merely a routine, mundane event that stands in its place: shooting people becomes no more monstrous than telling people to be quiet, or handing them pieces of paper. Through repression we are not “assaulting” our child; we are merely “disciplining” him, motivated by the same care and love that motivates our feeding him and so on. If we are the child, repression may soothe our fear of a parent’s violence: we become guiltily afraid of our own naughtiness and its “consequences”. Clearly the alternate terms—assault or discipline; fear or guilt—position events differently, and as such

they may be both symptomatic of and instrumental to repression. In other words, it is not merely that a child's repressed terror of violent assault leads her eventually to call such assault "correction": her having been presented with the word "correction" as a term for the assaults is part of the process that achieves the repression, by establishing her giving of accounts in a particular narrative context—in which the violence is not acknowledged—as part of the range of "good behaviour" that she must take care to demonstrate if she is to avoid the violence she unconsciously fears.

Foreclosure

That an experience can be "submitted to the process of repression" (Freud, 1905/1986a, p. 370) implies that there is, prior to the repression, a phenomenological experience of some sort—at least a fleeting or nascent experience or desire—that has not yet been transformed by the process. For example, a complex anxiety about the wickedness of one's desires can be constituted as symptomatic of a repressed fear of the searing pain of a rod striking one's flesh; a fear grounded in lived experience. Whilst this movement from "direct" to repressed experience can involve a shift of narrative context (e.g. from one of power relations in which the beating is a form of control to one of morality in which the beating is a form of correction) we need not assume that this "shift" will take place in the language use of a particular individual. Even if we allow for some form of conscious experience of violence prior to its repression, what kind of "consciousness" can there be in the absence of a language to structure, contextualise and give meaning to experience?

"Freud distinguishes between repression and foreclosure, suggesting that a repressed desire might once have lived apart from its prohibition, but that foreclosed desire is rigorously barred, constituting the subject through a certain kind of preemptive loss" (Butler, 1997b, p. 23). If—rather than imagining the repression to be embodied tidily within the skull of a neurotic person—we understand the repression to be embodied in the language structuring the interactions of the individual with others in her or his environment, we can constitute the "prior" experience of "pre-repression" phenomena as having occurred before the individual was even born.

In this way people born into a language community and learning its forms of thought and behaviour may encounter violence for the first time in a narrative context that has already repressed it. A girl who is raped by her husband need not ever consciously experience the rape *as violence* prior to a repression of this experience: on the contrary, the norms of her culture may have been at work for many years ensuring that the narrative resources for articulating such an act as violence (e.g. if it were the lawful intercourse of a man with his wife on their wedding night) would not be available to her at the time of its commission. Here, violence constrains its theorisation without even betraying its presence. If we are only able to think of a repression that occurs at some particular time, then it is as though the violence of the future act were repressed before the event: the victim encounters the violence for the first time as something other than violence, because an anticipatory repression has already been achieved.

It may be more useful however to acknowledge the limitations of the notion of “repression” and consider the possibility that there need be no prior consciousness of violence before its unconsciousness due to lack of narrative context for its articulation; nor, conversely, need there be any prior repression before we use language to reposition a traditional practice as violence. In an essentialist reality there is a violence independent of language that slips beneath consciousness or emerges from unconsciousness and into rational debate: in a contemporary anti-essentialist theoretical framework however, an adult’s beating a child with a stick is not an essentially or objectively violent act that we recognise or discover as such when we position it as such discursively. When I call such behaviour “violence” I am positioning it in relation to my own desire that such behaviour should cease. Similarly if I observe a parent beating a child and then both parties say to me, “this is not violence, this is love”, I may talk about “repression” as a means of articulating the factors informing my desire which persist despite the protagonists’ both claiming to be happy with the status quo.

This context of desire and rhetoric is inevitable: those who “discover” repressed forms of violence (e.g. the sociologists who “overlooked and then discovered family violence”, Gelles, 1985, p. 348) can perhaps also be said to be *inventing new forms of*

violence; not as one might “invent a new crime” by hurting someone in an original way, but rather as one might “invent a new crime” by making a formerly legal act illegal. Describing this as developing new *accounts* of violence is less ambiguous in some respects; but it preserves the possibility of a reading in which the violence exists (or does not), and we then give an account of it.

Having indicated that this is not the intended reading, an anti-essentialist theoretical stance shifts the scientific project of studying violence from one of passively learning about a violence that already exists, to one of actively creating new accounts of violence precisely in order to resist them. The role of *creativity* is important because—in the contexts of discourse, narrative and consciousness that have been discussed in this section—any significant challenge to violent discourses is likely to involve the development of *new* ways of thinking and talking about the problems. When we offer victims a narrative or discursive context in which they can position the violence done to them *as* violence, we do not necessarily have to understand this in the traditional enlightenment sense of “exposing” an already existing oppression. We can instead theorise the development of new theoretical resources in terms of *empowerment*.

This narrative or discursive empowerment can be positioned as more useful than the traditional emancipatory approach. The notion of emancipation from a pre-existing violence suggests a limit in the form of the “freedom” that is its explicit aim. If I am violently oppressed then discourses of emancipation set this oppressed, violated state in a relationship of binary opposition to a liberated state of freedom from abuse. Discourses of enlightenment put the keys to my chains in the revelation of this binary of oppression and freedom: I perceive the violence that oppresses me, and in contrast to this I perceive the possibility of my freedom from this violence, and inspired by this vision I struggle to move towards the revealed possibility of freedom. This is a hopeful vision—and no doubt it has been important for many positive movements of social reform—but it may be doubly problematic, both in terms of its casting the realisable goal as “freedom”, and in terms of its casting the present as a state of “oppression”. To win the freedom to vote is a great achievement and a worthwhile aim; but did this freedom to vote move women closer to a general “freedom”—so that the accumulation of such achievements can be regarded as a kind of linear progress—

or can new forms of freedom give rise to new forms of subjugation, so that the linear progress is illusory? Given the polymorphous complexity of violence, to what extent can freedom from any one particular form of violence be usefully constituted as “freedom from oppression”?

If the binary’s establishing an illusory “freedom” in the presence of continual violence could be problematic, so could its opposite implication: that we are surrounded by people who oppress and abuse us. Certainly I do not want to support the justifications for violence that position it as “natural”, nor undermine emancipatory discourses that offer the hope of freedom from violence as a motive to work against it; but I wonder, is constituting ourselves as violated and oppressed the best way to work against the forces of violence and oppression? The invention of machines for flying required the desire for flight; did it also require an experience of misery while not flying? Can we develop narratives of progress that position our work against violence as ongoing creative achievement, rather than as a struggle for a potential good in the context of a present evil? Pain is a great motivator—that usually seems to be its function—but a life pursuing pleasure and fulfilment seems more inhabitable than a life escaping pain and suffering, and this may be relevant to discourses of emancipation that story our experience along the latter lines. Could alternate accounts that position the development of new discursive technologies for dismantling violence as an enjoyable practice be more useful?

Working “against violence” is already a reflection of the emancipatory account I am discussing here: our aim of “peace” is usually defined negatively, in terms of the absence of violence. “Virtually all Western language definitions emphasize the *absence* [italics added] of war and other forms of overt violence as a key component of peace” (Anderson, 2004, p. 102). How does violence come to occupy the privileged “presence” in this binary, with peace being merely the *absence* of violence? Theorists of peace write of the importance of “positive peace” in addition to “negative peace”, often referring to Galtung’s (1969) account when they do this (e.g. Fischer & Hanke, 2009; Goodhand & Hulme, 1999; Roberts, 2008); yet this “positive” peace turns out to be an amplified account of the “negative”: according to Galtung (1969), “*an extended concept of violence leads to an extended concept of peace*” (p. 2), so

that while “*negative peace*” refers only to “*absence of personal violence*”, “*positive peace*” refers to “*absence of structural violence*” (p. 2). Thus Roberts (2008, p. 538) writes of “a deeper, positive peace, understood as both the absence of war (direct violence) and the absence of social injustice (indirect violence)”. This “positive peace” is a great improvement over the “negative peace” so defined, and yet it remains negative, inasmuch as it is constituted as an *absence* of structural violence or social injustice. What is going on when our “deeper” account of “positive peace” involves an even greater absence; a more earnest and fervent elimination of violence? Is this constitution of “justice” as “the absence of injustice” a useful *via negativa* sustaining an active process of critique—one that might calcify and cease to function if it settled on a positive account of justice or peace—or is it simply a triumph of positive and thinkable violence over absent, unthinkable peace; peace as a mere absence? Could theorising “violence”, with all the best intentions, work subtly to tighten its grip on the positive, present end of the binary, leaving “peace” as its absent negative?

The “present” in the present/absent dichotomy has much in common with the “present” in present/future that was mentioned earlier: if emancipatory discourses constitute violence as present, and a potential, absent peace in terms of “freedom from” this presence, then some of their effects may work against—or at least not be helpful for—a project of violence minimisation. In any case, an empowerment that involves not only the power to resist established forms of domination, but also the power to articulate new desires for new freedoms—whether or not these are constituted as freedoms from hitherto unspoken forms of domination—seems to have the potential to offer more than traditional accounts of struggle for freedom.

One aspect of our questioning these accounts that discuss violence “positively” (i.e. as presence rather than lack) in terms of histories of oppression, is that this questioning may open up a space for avoiding an antisocial “othering” that positions certain groups as oppressors or otherwise casts them in evil roles in narratives of good versus evil. This strategy of associating evil with “them” is yet another means by which violence can impact upon its own theorisation, and its relevance to the area of forensic psychology and theories of criminal violence will make this antisocial “othering” strategy a focal issue in later sections of the present text.

Epistemological terrorism

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard defines “terror” as “the efficiency gained by eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him. He is silenced or consents, not because he has been refuted, but because his ability to participate has been threatened” (Lyotard, 1979/1984, pp. 63-64). Various harming and threatening processes have already been discussed in relation to the theorisation of violence, as means by which violence can be used to reproduce conditions favourable to its continued or increased use. Sometimes these threats can be treated as representing Foucaultian power—“action upon an action” (Foucault, 1982, p. 789)—in a fairly uncomplicated way: a particular kind of action is proscribed, and a particular consequence for any actors is established. In these circumstances a subject understands herself or himself to be a potential target of violence based upon his or her action: the action—potentially in the field of violence theorisation—is modified according to familiar behavioural principles. In other cases however, the subject itself is constituted or positioned in a violent way as part of a larger project of aggression that will be discussed here in terms of terrorism.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century “terror” and “terrorism” were associated with the French revolution (Hoffman, 2006) and so with the *state’s* use of violence (Merrari, 1993): “Hence, unlike terrorism as it is commonly understood today, to mean a *revolutionary* or antigovernment activity” (Hoffman, 2006, p. 3), the meaning of “terrorism” has almost been effectively *reversed*, so that whereas the fight “against terror” might once have described violent resistance to state violence, now the state violence itself claims to fight against terror. Today it remains a contested term with many definitions (Chomsky, 2007; Fletcher, 2006; Teichman, 1989). Fletcher (2006) writes that terrorism is “a kind of super-crime” (p. 900); a claim that makes sense in terms of its discursive function. Altheide (2006) argues that the function of “terrorism” in media accounts and other popular discourse is related to that of crime in crime discourse, inasmuch as it produces what Giroux (2003) has referred to as “emergency time”: a state of perceived danger in which the careful consideration of issues that might be appropriate in “normal” political conditions is positioned as a

potentially fatal indecisiveness in the face of an urgent threat. In this context, and without contradicting any of the definitions of terrorism that I have seen³⁷, some key themes of “terrorism” as it is constituted in these accounts are violence (terrorism involves serious acts of violence), fear (terrorism is carried out in order to terrorise those who *witness* it; this production of fear in a third party is its primary aim, rather than the destruction of its victims), and a political agenda (terrorists have demands: the Columbine High School shootings are not usually treated as “terrorism”, for example, because the violence was not intended to influence political decisions).

This account of terrorism can be used with Lyotard’s (1979/1984) epistemological “terror”—the silencing of potential contributors to the production of a theory—to produce a list of features we could require an action to have before bestowing upon it the emotive term “epistemological terrorism”. The action must be *violent* (a form of epistemological violence); the violence it does to its victims must be done in order to produce *fear* in a third party; and the violence must be politically motivated. What kind of specifically *epistemological* violence silences its victims and produces fear in a third party in order to achieve its political ends?

The dynamic whereby victims of violence can tend to be excluded from the social practice of theorising violence has already been discussed. From the standpoint of a group desiring to violently exploit or oppress another group, the exclusion or marginalisation of its victims presents a problem in the context of a community that condemns “violence”: not only does the silencing of victims risk potentially visible violence that could be condemned by the wider community, but this practice of violent silencing can function to provoke interest in what the silenced victims were wanting to say, and so to draw attention to the violence about which they wanted to speak. So, how can a democracy violently exclude people (e.g. its poorest citizens, or an indigenous community) without making obvious the injustice of this exclusion?

37 With the possible exception of Robespierre’s original (1794) linking of terrorism to justice and virtue: “Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue” (as cited in Bunch, 2009, p. 111). This constitutes it more as a direct act of justice than as something aiming for justice by means of fear; however, this difference can be understood in terms of the change in meaning that I have discussed, from a “terror” that meant state violence to a “terror” that means criminal violence.

A solution to these problems is to so rigidly pin the term “violent” to the group in question that their victimisation is no longer visible, even when it occurs in full public view, because their identity rather than their actions places them at the violent end of the abuser/victim dichotomy. There are plenty of examples of this in popular media accounts of crime and public responses to such accounts. New Zealand like many other capitalist Western democracies has a “victims’ rights” movement that ostensibly defends the interests of victims (Barker, 2007; Dubber, 2002). A few years ago in New Zealand, media accounts described the brutal victimisation of John Gillies, who was tortured over an extended period of time, with no criminal sanctions brought against the multiple abusers (Daniels & Cumming, 2000). In other circumstances one might expect the “victims’ rights” groups to champion this person’s cause: instead these groups strenuously opposed the victim’s receiving any form of compensation. How can a group that positions itself as caring for victims boldly declare itself the strongest opponent of a torture victim’s receiving compensation for abuse? Simply by establishing “offender” and “victim” as classes of person rather than contextual positions that depend upon who is abusing whom. The victim in this case had already been classified as an offender in another context: by positioning the individual as “an offender”, his identity as a victim was foreclosed; permanently and very effectively, judging by the popular response.

In the aftermath of public outrage at the payment of compensation to Gillies and other abused prisoners, the New Zealand government has changed the law, introducing a new Act so that “if compensation [for prisoners] must be awarded, the Act allows victims of the prisoner to claim against it, before the prisoner can get access to it” (Power, 2010, April 22, ¶4). This is a step towards another bill the government will introduce later in the year: “That bill will mean that when any compensation is awarded, anything remaining after the victim has claimed against it [note that “the victim” here is not the victim to whom compensation is being awarded, but any prior victims of that person] will be redirected to the Victims’ Services Appropriation. It will then be used to fund additional services and entitlements for victims of crime generally” (Power, 2010, April 22, ¶7). In other words, the law will ensure that when serious violent crimes are committed by government employees against people in prisons, any compensation awarded to victims will not be awarded to them, but

instead “be used to fund additional services and entitlements for victims of crime generally”. In the familiar terms of the “war on crime” as it is produced in media accounts, “what could be more pointless than trying to find a notion of victims’ rights apart from a war on offenders’ rights?” (Dubber, 2002, p. 2). An offender is a different *kind of person* from a victim: the prominent “victims’ rights” group *The Sensible Sentencing Trust* made submissions informing the new law, arguing for example that “these particular individuals have largely brought their mistreatment upon themselves” (Jenkins, 2005, February 1, ¶1.4.1). This implies that for “these individuals”, not only legal state punishment but even *illicit* or criminal violence (“mistreatment”) are a kind of justice; just desserts for their own “misbehaviour” (Jenkins, 2005, February 1, ¶1.4.1), otherwise why is the “misbehaviour” of the torturers so easily overlooked? In this popular “victims’ rights” discourse, offenders cannot be victims.

We do not have to be forensic psychologists to assemble a “profile” of the “offender” in New Zealand society: he (he is male) is likely to be Māori (Tauri & Morris, 2003)—just as he is likely to be a member of a colonised or formerly enslaved people in other Western nations (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Chowdhry & Beeman, 2007; Tauri & Morris, 2003)—and he is likely to be poor (Pratt & Cullen, 2005). These facts are spectacularly visible on the evening news programmes and the front pages of our newspapers; even more so on television programmes that deal specifically with crime and policing: the spectacle of a white police officer chasing down a brown offender is all too familiar. In an alternate narrative framework (e.g. an account of the capture of slaves) the act of tackling someone to the ground and putting him in chains is an act of violence; one that would position the brown individual as the victim, the white as the offender.

However, in the powerfully established and endlessly repeated framework structuring popular media accounts, the individual with the brown skin and the tattoos and the other stereotypical markers of criminality is already identified as a particular kind of subject—he is one of “them”; an offender—and so his experience is constituted in terms of this account. A victim is victimised, an offender offends: in the terms of this account, even an experience of screaming in pain while being tortured in a concrete

cell cannot be recognised as an experience of victimisation, if the subject is not a “proper victim”³⁸.

Lazar and Lazar (2004) have analysed terrorism discourse in terms of a “macro-strategy” that they call *out-casting*: a strategy of establishing a binary separation between “us” and “them” involving four distinct micro-strategies. First, a process of “enemy-construction” (Lazar & Lazar, 2004, p. 227) constitutes an out-group as a threat to “our” values (which are themselves constituted in relation to the opposed values of “them”). Lazar and Lazar (2004) give many examples of this: one is the claim of President Bush, in relation to “terrorists”, that “they have attacked America because we are freedom’s home and defender” (p. 228). In New Zealand, a *Law and Order Referendum* website—originally launched to support a petition that successfully initiated a national referendum³⁹—provides a good example of the enemy-construction of “gangs” as a threat: “They walk the streets, intimidating honest hard working people ... they wield a reign of terror in some parts of the country” (Law and Order Referendum, n.d., ¶12). “They are a malignant and powerful force beyond the ability of our under resourced and legally constrained police force to deal with without assistance” (¶13). “The obvious solution is to make use of our armed forces ... meanwhile we have watched gangs grow, until they now constitute the greatest internal threat to National Security we have ever faced, and still nothing is being done” (¶15). “With full armed forces backup the Police could effectively clean up the gang filth, imprisoning most of the members, and defusing the threat” (¶16).

38 Butler (2004a), writing about the refusal of the *San Francisco Chronicle* to print an obituary notice submitted by a Palestinian citizen of the United States for families who had been killed by Israeli troops, because “the newspaper did not wish to offend anyone” (Butler, 2004a, p. 35), asks: “What is the relation between the violence by which these ungrievable lives were lost and the prohibition on their public grievability? Are the violence and the prohibition both permutations of the same violence?” (p. 36). Public grieving for victims who have been killed and public support of compensation for victims who have been tortured can both, when they are withheld, constitute a person or class of persons as ineligible for recognition as victims.

39 The referendum, held with the general election of 2009, conflated a question about the needs of victims with a question about harsher punishment, offering New Zealand’s voters the following single question: “Should there be a reform of our justice system placing greater emphasis on the needs of victims, providing restitution and compensation for them and imposing minimum sentences and hard labour for all serious violent offences?”. The “Yes” vote was 91.8% (Elections New Zealand, 2009).

Next, a strategy of “criminalization” (p. 230) makes a clear distinction between the legitimacy of our activity and the illegitimacy of the activity of the enemy (a strategy that is much easier when the enemy’s activities are officially defined as illegal by a system of laws). Thirdly, Lazar and Lazar (2004) describe “orientalization” (p. 234) as a strategy specific to terrorism discourse in which the terrorist is constructed as a culturally foreign threat to a Western order. Finally—and, I will argue, most importantly—Lazar and Lazar (2004) coin the term *(e)vilification* (p. 236) to account for the role “in all of these discursive strategies” of “a process of vilifying an opponent” (p. 236). This is “a particular and powerful kind of vilification, one based upon the spiritual/religious dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘evil’” (p. 236).

Lazar and Lazar’s (2004) “out-casting” is a useful account of the “othering” that is so crucial to epistemological terrorism: the micro-strategy of “orientalization” (p. 234) is quite specific, but the strategies of enemy construction, criminalization and *(e)vilification*⁴⁰ that Lazar & Lazar (2004) describe in relation to terrorism discourse can be as relevant to the discourses of *crime* that Altheide (2006) links to terrorism discourse as part of a broader discourse of emergency and fear. Whereas “othering” in any context may be a cause for concern—that “we create Others in order to define ourselves and do so in terms of who We are *not*” (Traustadóttir, 2001, p. 13) suggests a tendency to inscribe upon the Other whatever we want to expel from our own identity—the specifically fear-oriented othering of “out-casting” is closely related to the task of constituting violence as tied to an out-group rather than as a collective problem. One of the reasons this strategy of out-casting may be so effective in the forensic domain is that its basis in condemnation of a specific violence—the “offender” has often been constituted as such after inflicting appalling harm upon other people—makes it easier to position the new violence as somehow “anti-violence”: to keep human beings in cages might arouse the protests of those opposed to violence; but to do so “because we are so opposed to their violence” seems to enable the violence to continue substantially unchallenged.

40 Hereafter simply “evilification”. Lazar & Lazar’s parenthetical “e” retains the familiar “vilification” while noting its dependence upon the concept of “evil”: I am happy to dispense with the parentheses and their visual separation of the old and new meanings, and write “evilification” as a term that constitutes vilification as necessarily incorporating evil.

This practice not only functions to obscure violence as it transpires in the present: it can also function to obscure the historical violence that might otherwise contribute to explanations for the present violence. Thus an understanding of violence in terms of forms of behaviour and relationship—rather than identity and personality—might position colonised peoples as victims of violence, and examine the high incidence of criminal violence among colonised peoples in those terms. Even at the level of individual life histories, there are well-established correlations between childhood experiences of abuse and later offending behaviour (Fagan, 2005; Siegfried, Ko & Kelley, 2004; Smith & Ecob, 2007; Wilson, Stover & Berkowitz, 2009). Problematised in this way, violence is the problem; problematised in terms of identity, certain people are the problem, and violence may form part of the solution.

In the context of communities that enjoy various forms of privilege over the peoples they colonised or once enslaved, this strategy of out-casting people by constituting them as a threat to “us” is important because it absolves the privileged groups of responsibility for the tragedies they witness: another underprivileged Māori child has been beaten to death, but it’s not *our* fault that these children who live under our violently imposed social order die so horribly. It’s *their* fault, we affirm in our courts; another one of *those* families, who think it’s acceptable to inflict years of suffering upon the vulnerable people in their custody. The irony that we follow up this moralistic aggression by emulating the behaviour of which we claim to disapprove--- that is, when we take the defendants into custody in order to inflict years of suffering upon them—seems often to elude media accounts of these events.

The relationship of these accounts to “hate speech” will be discussed later. It is possible to argue that many of them *are* “hate speech”, even if they ostensibly target offensive individuals rather than the groups (Māori, Muslims, etc.) of which the offenders are members, and against which derogatory remarks and calls for aggression would be more readily acknowledged as hate speech. Much as the boundary between “psychological” and “physical” violence can be questioned, so can the line between “inciting violence” or “enabling violence” and simply “being violent”. Teo’s (2008) *epistemological violence* is an acknowledgement of this: to position someone in terms of psychological theory in a way that leads to their harm *is* violent. Similarly, to

position someone in terms of popular discourse in a way that leads to their harm is violent.

Lazar and Lazar's (2004) "out-casting" already meets most of the criteria suggested earlier as markers of epistemological terrorism: it is epistemologically *violent*; it produces *fear* in a third party (the direct function is not so much the violation of the victims as the production of fear in the readers or listeners who are addressed as "us", and made to fear "them"); and it furthers a political agenda (whatever is advantaged by arousing fear in the population constituted as "us"; often the dropping of bombs on brown people overseas, or the building of cages for brown people at home). While out-casting is already in its own right a means by which violence can impact upon its own theorisation, I want to emphasise specifically Lyotard's "terrorist" (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. 63) activity that involves "eliminating ... a player from the language game" (p. 63)—and so potentially altering the theorisation of violence by excluding the contributions of the terrorised group. These are *different* usages of terror and terrorism: in the account of out-casting, a group is evilified in order to terrorise "decent folk" and justify violence against the evil enemy. In Lyotard's account, terrorism performs roughly the functions of "direct threat" or "indirect threat" that I discussed earlier: it is a strategy of *silencing* potential theorists. By configuring these as the poles of a unitary "epistemological terrorism", I am calling attention to the way that the terror produced in "us" by the process of out-casting produces a reciprocal terror in "them": they cannot safely occupy the subject position of the "evil enemy", and so they cannot safely participate in the language games out of which such enemies are constructed. We are all familiar with the cycles of retaliatory and even "pre-emptive" violence associated with groups that position each other as the evil enemy. This epistemological analysis suggests that the seriousness of terrorist reproductions of violence can be understood as a product of a powerful efficiency: violence operates in multiple directions, terrorising different groups in different ways, and ensuring that violent barriers are constructed in the face of potentially collaborative communications.

The epistemological violence and the exclusion from epistemological language games are aspects of the same process: if we are concerned about bodily harm then we may

be more concerned about how the constitution of others as “terrorists” justifies the destruction of their bodies; if we are concerned about collaborative political practices then we may be more concerned about how the constitution of others as “terrorists” justifies our dismissing their account of the political issues as unworthy of serious consideration. The same issues can be considered in relation to terms like “nigger”, “faggot” and so on: the othering of such discourse terrorises both in Lyotard’s sense of silencing, and in the popular sense of inspiring fear of bodily harm. Where out-casting is involved and the other is constituted not only as inferior or perverse, but as dangerous and evil, an epistemological terrorism works aggressively to promote violence and to silence dissenting voices. Whether a particular out-group is being “out-cast” or merely “othered” is a contextual issue: a derogatory constitution of homosexuality in a popular account could be “othering”, whereas the account in a conservative religious community or a hyper-masculine gang culture could be “out-casting”, and epistemologically terrorist.

In this sense, to position someone as a “terrorist” in today’s political climate can be an example *of* terrorism in Lyotard’s account: it is to deploy a form of epistemological violence—“the exercise of terror” in Lyotard’s terms (1979/1984, p. 64)—to foreclose the possibility of the “terrorist” being treated as a human being with a legitimate voice. Furthermore it is an example of epistemological terrorism inasmuch as it silences the “terrorist” specifically by strategies of out-casting. By calling this process “epistemological terrorism”, we can remind ourselves of Lyotard’s usage of “terror” and its epistemological implications; also, by means of this word play we can subvert an instance *of* epistemological terrorism by associating the increasingly used (Altheide, 2006) word “terrorist” with a specific account of terrorism that foregrounds the violence of out-casting a group of people, rather than endorsing the popular account in which violence is located *within* a particular group, and so can be destroyed with that group’s destruction.

If it seems melodramatic to appropriate such an emotive term in this way, consider the similarities and differences between the popular and suggested usages. Terrorism in the currently popular account can involve jarring, visceral fear: whether or not it succeeds in its stated aims of altering political relationships, it may involve terrible

violence, suffering and death. Similarly, the epistemological terrorism of identities like “faggot” and “nigger” may involve jarring, visceral fear, suffering and death, whether or not the terrorism succeeds in excluding the targeted groups from effective social participation. An important difference is that while the popular account might constitute a relatively powerless group’s use of home-made explosives against a powerful military group as “terrorism”—and the more powerful group’s better-resourced military violence as a warfare *against* terrorism—the usage suggested here attends primarily to the violent exclusion of others from the political discussion; relative access to power is likely to be important, but the term “terrorism” does not depend upon it. A more obvious difference is the constitution of epistemological terrorism as deploying narratives and discourse rather than soldiers and explosives.

Of the various reflexive problems of violence that have been discussed so far, there is perhaps something particularly antisocial about theorising violence in a way that inscribes it upon the identity of a particular group or person. It is not merely the historical account—in which this constitution of violence as “the evil that *they* represent” has fuelled so many wars, feuds, and individual acts of violence—that suggests a special antisociality in the aggression of epistemological terrorism, but also the compatibility of this discursive strategy with strategies of blame that reproduce violence in repeating cycles of aggression. Inasmuch as the question “who is to blame?” suggests that *someone* should be identified as blameworthy, the act of blaming can present the blamed party with few options beyond either accepting the blame and suffering harm, or pointing the finger at someone else. These conditions do not seem likely to encourage any group’s accepting responsibility for their own contribution to the events in question: instead of collaborative efforts to understand and address problems, blame supports adversarial efforts to “address” violence by reproducing it in new configurations of aggressor and victim.

Supremacist accounts

The methods so far discussed by which violence can influence its theorisation support violence in a wide variety of ways, most of which involve some form of concealment

or obfuscation of what violence is doing. They function to make it harder to speak about violence: whether by damaging the apparatus of speech, by frightening the speaker into silence, by restricting access to terms and forms of meaning that enable accounts of violence, or by some combination of these approaches, violence is able to function unchallenged by discourses that identify it *as* violence.

A much bolder approach is to accept this identification and respond, “so what?”. The accounts that I am grouping under the heading “supremacist” are those that readily acknowledge violence as being *violent* (i.e. they do not constitute it as “justice”, “peacekeeping”, “correction” or some other process that is positioned as addressing rather than reproducing violence, but allow the term “violence” with its connotations of abuse, suffering, exploitation and horror), challenging instead the assumption that this violence is undesirable; either by positioning it as natural and unavoidable, or even by glamorising violence as the noble behaviour of the strong.

Nietzsche’s (1996) constituting Christian values as a kind of resentful “slave morality” (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 25) that undermines the noble will to power is perhaps the best known articulation of this general form of argument, but the argument is at least as old as Plato’s *Gorgias* (trans. 1892b), in which the supremacist position is taken up by Callicles in opposition to the ethical teachings of Socrates. The gist of Callicles’ argument—penned well over 2,000 years ago—sounds in some ways quite contemporary with its tone of scepticism about the universality of Socrates’ claims: Callicles argues that the “justice” which Socrates positions as good for *everyone* is really only good for particular groups. Specifically, it benefits the weak: the strong have no need of compassion or mercy as the weak are unable to harm them; they have no need of sharing or charity as they can take what they like from the weak; and so on. In a related argument that Nietzsche would take up and rework many centuries later, he goes on to say that the justice espoused by Socrates is actually *worse* for society as a whole, because it subordinates the interests of the strongest, most successful and admirable specimens of humanity to those of the weakest, most defective and contemptible. Callicles positions “justice” as “a mere special interest of the weak” (Feenberg, 2005, p. 9) and Plato’s *refutation* of this claim that “might make[s] right” is “the basis of rational ethical thought in the West” (Feenberg, 2005,

p. 9). Whether or not we conclude from this that supremacism represents a basic threat to Western civilisation (and whether or not we would position such a threat as an undesirable thing), there are many reasons why supremacist argument may represent one of the most serious threats to work against violence, in terms of its impact upon the theorisation of violence.

Most obviously, it functions to dismiss all those criticisms of violence that depend upon the assumption that we do *not* want to see others suffer, and that we *do* desire a peaceful community. For example, most of the methods discussed so far by means of which violence can impact upon its own theorisation can also function as ethical criticism: they explicitly say, “this is how violence constrains its theorisation” but they *implicitly* say also, “this is not a good thing: people are being hurt by this process and so we should challenge it.” In the context of supremacism the implied criticism is dismissed: “Yes, the victim is not even conscious of her victimisation as violence...and? Are we supposed to be troubled by this state of affairs?”, or even “yes, that’s much more effective, we need to do more of that kind of violence”, and so on.

It is also, paradoxically, a *subtle* strategy: it seems the least subtle and most brazen approach inasmuch as it makes no effort to deny the status of violence *as* violence; yet in some respects this is a subtle move because it concedes the explicit meanings of the term—meanings that can be argued rationally—while going to work on the implicit assumptions that are perhaps more often encountered emotionally than rationally. It invites us to embrace suffering as a pleasure for the victor who inflicts it: to perhaps experience even our own suffering as an inverted (as defeat) taste of the joy (in triumph) that *could* be ours, were we only to attain⁴¹ that noble status of victor. It can say to the slave not only, “stop complaining: you are my slave and I don’t care what you have to say,” but more subtly, “stop complaining: the conditions that make your slavery possible are also the conditions by which some day you might enjoy slaves of your own.” It is of course possible—and probably in some contexts necessary—to construct rational arguments against this approach, but the contrast of compassion/sadism is not one that fits comfortably with contests of philosophical

41 or *remember*, as for example in Mussolini’s fascist account of the *romanità* (“romanness”, Nelis, 2007, p. 391)—the self-understanding as victorious Romans—that Italians had “forgotten”.

standpoint (e.g. relativism/realism) or political persuasion (anarchist/monarchist): it seems to fit better into an account of *emotional* tendencies—forms of *desire* in relation to various social situations—and we may be less accustomed to defending our desires on their own terms (“I want peace”) rather than in terms of ideas and ideals (“peace is right”).

Feenberg (2005) also claims, disturbingly, “The modern Callicles is in power” (p. 15). The remnants of our religious and ethical belief systems may function to convince us otherwise, but the infrastructural activities of our lives—the economic and political systems that organise and orient the daily activities to which we apply our personal energies—seem very much Calliclesian rather than Socratic: we are secular, *capitalist* societies, worshipping no God or gods but simply the pursuit of wealth. In this context, supremacist discourse around violence may be especially worrying because it coheres so well with the implicit assumptions underlying contemporary institutional practices. We see this at the level of national superpowers, where the international community can condemn a military invasion as ethically wrong, a superpower can say, “we don’t care: we want to do it, we can do it, and so we *will* do it”, and then while the blood is still flowing and the corpses have not yet been buried, already we are demonstrating our unaltered relationship with the aggressor.

The flip-side of the argument—that justice is the preoccupation of the weak—also is spelled out for us, for example in the rhetoric around “getting tough on crime” with its implication that violent retaliation is the heroic response of the strong, while anything else is the cowardly response of the weak. Compassion in this supremacist account is not grounded in love (“I forgive you because I love you”), nor even empathy (“I forgive you because I understand; I can imagine myself in your shoes”) but rather in fear (“I forgive you because I don’t have the courage or the power to destroy you as I would really like to”). In directly attacking the key assumptions around which work against violence is organised, supremacist rhetoric could perhaps represent the most destructive of the approaches so far discussed in this chapter; particularly if it is remembered that elements of this rhetoric may contribute to the operation of the other approaches. In this context in which “fascism”, as the iconic modern form of supremacism, stands in direct opposition to our project, the work

against violence can be positioned as “the tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives” (Foucault, 1972/1983, p. xiv).

Catalysts for violence

Not only supremacist accounts, but all of these approaches to controlling the theorisation of violence can interact and support each other in various ways. Sometimes this has been discussed—as where the possibility for direct harm to function also as a threat was mentioned—but in every case there is a potential for different forms of violence to use different means of constraining theorisation or helping it in a desired direction: these different means may support each other as part of a deliberately organised strategy (e.g. when fascist propaganda supports programmes of harm and threat), or simply because they happen to work towards similar interests (e.g. when an “othering” problematisation of violence in an ethnic minority population also works to support a lack of narrative context for articulating their experiences of victimisation, foreclosing such experiences). All of these processes working together can establish conditions in which discourses that support violence can tend to be effective for those who make use of them—and so can tend to be widely reproduced—while discourses that challenge violence can encounter obstacles of many kinds. In this context a set of practices—for example, those around the advertising industry and its sponsorship of mass media programming—can be catalysts for violence even when they may not be “violent” in and of themselves: they involve discourses that enable other reproductions of violence to occur.

Capitalist economies are based upon violence in principle: this can be demonstrated through an analysis of the market’s “invisible hand”. The well known claim that “it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest” (Smith, 1776/2009, p. 15) identifies “self-interest” rather than “benevolence” as the driving energy of capitalist social exchange: added to this, the even more famous and mythologically important “invisible hand” (Smith, 1776/2009, p. 319) is explicitly theorised as a side-effect of

self-interest; *not* a benevolent force, but a force of self-interest that is said to produce positive social outcomes. Thus the hand is invisible for good reason: when it is made “visible” by theorising its actual operation—rather than by imagining the metaphor of the “hand” (of God) to “explain” its benevolence—its benevolence turns out to be (like that of the butcher the brewer, or the baker) merely self-interest. Smith’s own account of social motives can be used to trace the contours of the invisible hand: if it is not “benevolence” but “self-interest” that prevents the poor butcher, brewer, and baker from taking the rich man’s vast hoard of personal wealth by force, then what large weapon must the invisible hand be holding, that their own self-interest depends upon their keeping their hands off the rich man’s wealth?

If the fact that no capitalist state exists where the “invisible” hand guiding the social order is *not* embodied in the visible hands of thousands of police and soldiers carrying weapons does not “demonstrate empirically” that capitalism is based upon violence, a very simple thought experiment can demonstrate it “rationally”. Does anyone seriously believe that if the overt violence of fists, batons and guns were suddenly to vanish in a puff of enlightenment, the masses would *not* rather quickly redistribute the hoards of wealth amongst themselves, but instead would continue to labour for their economic overlords, for some self-interest other than the interest in protecting themselves from their overlords’ violence? No doubt many could be convinced that their self-interest really did depend (as in Smith’s account of the “invisible hand”) upon the services they provided for others more capable of securing communal benefits (e.g. they might bake for a brewer whose fine beverages brought trade benefits to them as well); but as never before they would have to actually *agree* to such relations (the absence of violence would make it, for the first time, a *free* market), and so of course a very large number of workers would likely down tools (or put them to different use breaking windows) and help themselves to whatever was at hand. Such disorganised, selfish behaviour is not “human nature”: but it is a “nature” produced by capitalism and other violence-dependent social orders, and the existence of law for repressing it testifies to its reality. In this context, efforts to minimise violence are restricting themselves only to the easiest and least important targets if they aim for the visible hands of the “robber” who takes from the pile, and ignore the invisible hands that gathered the pile in one place, against the “self-interest”

of—in the most extreme cases—*millions* of others whose lives could be significantly improved by its redistribution.

It is therefore very difficult to challenge “violence” in any broad sense without also implicitly criticising the livelihoods of many in our communities whose work focuses upon the accumulation of wealth. These conditions are violence-catalytic in the sense that they enlist personal (and not in themselves violent) desires to live and to enjoy life, implicating these with structural violence until it is difficult to challenge such violence without meeting with understandable resistance from many who experience their lives as depending upon it. Herman & Chomsky (1994) produced an analysis of how the media can function systematically—yet without any central guidance—to exclude challenges to the capitalist status quo and to promote consumerist values and ideals. This system also functions to exclude challenges to violence, due to the interdependence of violence and capitalism: the same profit orientation that marginalises criticism of exploitative economic policies must—in order to achieve this marginalisation of economic criticism—also marginalise criticism of the violence upon which this exploitation depends. Not only the media and other mass communications industries, but almost any set of social practices that engages with capitalist economic relations can therefore tend, by serving interests that are not necessarily violent (like material well-being, or mass communication), to favour *systematically* another set of interests that are.

This possibility can be treated as a reflexive problem of violence, because conditions that function as catalysts for the reproduction of violence (e.g. by contesting discourse that challenges violence) allow violence to “exit” the field of conditions that we constitute as “structural violence”, and then “re-enter” as violence somewhere else. As catalysts they can therefore be read as “the other reflexive problems of violence that we have not yet theorised”: their constitution as a substantive “problem” functions to make the list open-ended. It is a reminder that the list itself—perhaps more by its exclusions than its inclusions—can be an example of theory through which violence can be reproduced.

Hegemonic patriarchy is an obvious example of a violent social institution in which a group with slightly greater physical capacity to inflict violence can transform this into a cultural hegemony in which nearly all of the “great leaders”, “great thinkers”, “great artists”, “great spiritual leaders”, and so on happen to be members of the violence-advantaged group. The accounts of these “great men” can then function as a context within which discourses that reproduce or challenge violence must operate: a philosophical argument that “fails to take into account” the canon of great (male) philosophers is, in this context, less convincing than an argument that takes up the canon and attempts to redeploy its discourse; yet in taking up and using the language of violent patriarchy, the epistemological violence that established its dominance can be reproduced. Again, if the social possibility of physical violence were to vanish in a puff of enlightenment, there would be immediate and substantial changes in the dynamics of discourse reproduction in family homes, public spaces and many other settings where the presence of large male bodies can exert effects upon the communicative practices nearby: yet these changes could be minuscule in relation to the conditions that have been established after thousands of years during which the possibility of physical violence has informed the development of language. These are the kinds of issues that can be foregrounded by an open-ended treatment of violence in which even those practices or conditions that we have positioned as “not violence” can be constituted as “catalysts for violence” so that their relationships with violence can be theorised, rather than ignored.

We can identify a specific act of abuse as an instance of “violence” without making any pretentious “universal” ethical or epistemological claims: we can simply acknowledge the identification as a rhetorical effort to censure the act. In this relatively straightforward context of rhetoric and disapproval, our classifying a child’s being beaten by a parent as “violence” can be discussed in terms of our desire to mobilise social energies towards the prevention of such beatings. Our desires in this respect may be extremely complex, and it would be naïve to reduce the issue even to something as complex as “what is in the best interests of the child”, as though our children’s interests were truly identical with our own. I may for example desire to be esteemed by my community as a fine parent, and if I notice that my parenting differs from that of my peers inasmuch as there is no physical hitting involved in mine, then

my condemnation of smacking may be motivated as much by a desire to elevate my own status (by positioning myself as a good parent) as by my desire to protect my child from harm. Similarly, parents who smack their children may condemn my parenting as “permissive”, “neglectful” or whatever, not only due to a genuine concern for my child’s well-being, but also due to a very reasonable desire not to have their own behaviours classified as forms of abuse, and so themselves positioned as abusers.

This issue of personal stake in relation to ethical debates is inevitable and means that a “straightforward” rhetorical analysis can be as complicated as we like: there are always more contexts of desire and personal stake within which to explore an ethical question. One advantage of this approach is that it avoids objectivist or essentialist debates around what violence “is”. Engaging with such debates on their own terms involves a division of behaviours into ostensibly objective—or at least, in a post-positivist framework, “more warranted”—categories of violence and non-violence, and to do this can be to endow specific accounts of violence with a privilege that can work to silence less privileged accounts. Policing the boundaries of the term “violence” is one way to ensure that violence (as defined by its victims) can continue without being acknowledged as such: it is much easier to do this when this practice of policing terminological boundaries locates *itself* beyond the boundaries of the term. A rhetorical account of violence that foregrounds the performative social functions of the term also foregrounds the social practices around how it is defined, and in this context not only a positivist but also a contemporary theoretical account can be violent. As I write about “policing” the boundaries of the term, am I demonstrating this practice myself, by positioning those who define it in certain ways as a menace to psychology? I hope that to ask this question is already a movement away from pretensions of authority and towards inclusive debate: the same epistemological framework that enables me to position myself as a “good theorist” (one who doesn’t use violence to impose my terms) undermines me as soon as I try to turn “good theorist” into “better theorist than that *bad* theorist over there who *does* use violence”, and this seems to me an important advantage of a focus on rhetoric or linguistic performativity.

The constitution of violence by problematising specific manifestations of multiple strategies needs to be carefully distinguished from efforts to establish an essential violence that can be revealed through scientific study of its subtypes as we might discover elementary particles by studying chemical reactions. It is tempting to do this: we could for example define violence as the objectification of another's subjectivity, or the humiliation of another's divinity, or the practice of privileging one's desire over another's rather than taking them both seriously and working to harmonise them; and then we could show—without too much trouble—how every particular account of violence represents an example of our general account. It is tempting because the advantage is clear: it foregrounds the kinds of predictable patterns upon which we depend in order to control our environment. When burning and breathing are thought to be two completely different processes, the pattern whereby people trapped in airtight spaces die more quickly if they burn things for light or warmth might be missed. When they are both understood as different varieties of a single abstract process of “oxygenation”, their common relationship to oxygen makes the pattern strikingly obvious.

In a similar vein, relationships between emotional or sexual abuse of a child and the child's physically violent behaviour in later life (Siegfried, Ko & Kelley, 2004) might be missed if emotional and physical violence are thought to be two completely different processes: when they are both understood as different varieties of a single abstract “violence”, the pattern is strikingly obvious. Instead of asking, “how does this behaviour of gentle sexual touch lead to this completely different behaviour of savage beating?” (or vice versa), we might regard the child's being treated as an object in one context as a potential contributor to the child's treating others as objects in other contexts, and ask questions around what we can do to prevent this from happening. For all the advantages—in terms of understanding and control—that this abstraction of general principles from specific cases appears to offer, it is important to reflexively theorise the process of abstraction itself, given the issues that have been discussed in relation to the penetration of violence into its own theorisation. If we theorise this abstraction as a “discovery” of an underlying violence that manifests itself in various specific ways, are we not also establishing criteria by which *any* act can be defined as violent or non-violent in relation to our underlying structure? Whereas the non-

essentialist alternative has “sexual violence” and “emotional violence” both as examples of violence because their victims account for them as such, an essentialist violence can imply that they are both examples of violence *because* they match up to the abstracted criteria.

If violence *is* what we have “discovered” it to be, then our relationship with a new victim is one of *assessment*: does the violence s/he speaks of (say, the violence of pornography) count, or is it not really violence at all? On the other hand, if our abstraction of “violence” represents not a discovery of essential truth, but rather a social agreement around a widely useful truth, then the relationship with the new victim is not one of assessment but one of *listening* as part of a dialogue: we are not judging “was this person really victimised?” but rather asking, “is there some way that we can bring your experience of victimisation together with our experiences so that our shared understandings benefit all of us?”. This recalls the issue of “the nature of argumentation itself” (Gergen, 2001, p. 431) that was raised earlier in relation to academic debates around social constructionism (and other theoretical “movements” or “camps”). To the extent that language is social action rather than merely representation, *theories* can be less important than *theorising* or “doing theory”: the reflexivity of the linguistic turn suggests not only a new kind of attention to theoretical “content”, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a new kind of attention to the “delivery” or the ways in which particular theoretical claims are used in practice. This in turn suggests that the practice of writing psychological theory might be informed by traditions outside the discipline; not only traditions that have something to say about theory “content” (sociology, history, epistemology and so on) but also disciplines like literary theory and rhetoric that may inform techniques or technologies of theory production in ways that are not limited by the traditional (for psychology) accounts of theories as sets of related propositions.

Judith Butler has not only worked for years with the problematic issues of agency and subjectivity that concern me—and has done so with explicit attention to violence—but is also a literary theorist and rhetorician whose (controversial) writing *practice* may have something to offer psychology, in addition to the theoretical resources that her texts provide. Her work addresses psychological issues around the project of

engaging with violent discourse as a target of intervention and, inevitably, as discourse that is implicated in the practices by which we intervene. By shifting the terms of political debate from identity politics and discourses of individual rights to linguistic politics and discourses of subjectivity, she “shifts the terms from right to *desire* [italics added], from the freedom to decide on one’s life and being to the motive for self-critical dissent from a violence in which we are always already implicated” (Mattessich, 2008, p. 308). In relation to the norm, “this implies that it is through the encounter with one’s own social nature, and at the most immediate levels of desire and decision, that its resignification can take place” (Mattessich, 2008, p. 309). Importantly, in terms of the potential for violence to constrain its own theorisation by closing off key avenues of inquiry, “Butler’s account ... leaves the possibility of the subject radically open-ended” (Stam, 2003, p. 97). It is to Butler’s open-ended account of the subject, and of our practices of theorising the subject, that I turn now.

The very terms by which the violation is explained *enact* the violation

Judith Butler⁴²

Judith Butler and Violence

Questioning accounts of violence in terms of their political aims and effects has been one of the focal concerns of Judith Butler's writing in recent years. Butler, "the single most cited feminist theorist of the 1990s" (Segal, 1999, p. 57), is so often cited and so well known in other disciplines that she is something of a "celebrity" academic (Hey, 2006); but her work has had little obvious impact on the discipline of psychology. Much of this impact has been in the area of research around gender: a *PsycINFO* database keyword search (in September 2011) for "Judith Butler" returns about two hundred and sixty hits, with gender a recurring theme. Butler is probably best known for her early book, *Gender Trouble* (1990), but "in looking only to *Gender Trouble* teachers and scholars take Butler to be a 'theorist of gender'—a label she has consistently and vigorously refused—as if that area were separate from politics or only played a marginal role (that is, when one deals specifically with 'gender issues')" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 5). Butler is neither a theorist only of gender nor a theorist whose magnum opus was completed in the late 20th century: on the contrary, "Butler is a crucially important political theorist in her own right" and "Butler's time may have just arrived" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 6).

Gender Trouble (Butler, 1990) treats gender as performance, unsettling the traditional account—in which gender is a culturally mediated expression of "natural" or biological sex—by demonstrating how the discursive enactment of gender can produce the very categories of "natural" sex that are usually claimed as its basis, in order to reproduce a set of social power relations. This anti-essentialist or "postmodern" treatment of gender has been criticised in other feminist literature (Fraser, 1995), and often this criticism has been rhetorically similar to criticism of constructionist or poststructuralist moves in psychology: a criticism that positions itself "as a warning against an impending nihilism" and has a tone of "paternalistic

42 (Butler, 1994, p. 170)

disdain toward that which is youthful and irrational” (Butler, 1994, p. 153). This paternalistic warning tries “to shore up the primary premises, to establish in advance that any theory of politics requires a subject, needs from the start to presume its subject, the referentiality of language, the integrity of the institutional descriptions it provides” (Butler, 1994, p. 153).

However, Butler asks the rhetorical question, “I place the terms ‘violence’ and ‘sex’ under quotation marks: is this a sign of a certain deconstruction, the end to politics?” and answers, “the quotation marks do not place into question the urgency or credibility of sex or violence as political issues, but, rather, show that the way their very materiality is circumscribed is fully political” (Butler, 1994, p. 170). By attending to the performativity of our accounts of violence, Butler asks, “can this kind of poststructural analysis tell us anything about violence and suffering? Is it perhaps that forms of violence are to be understood as more pervasive, more constitutive, and more insidious than prior models have allowed us to see?” (Butler, 1994, p. 169). Here she links the epistemological assumptions informing analyses of violence both to their effectiveness at “allowing us to see” particular kinds of violence, but also to the purposeful, political aspects of this allowing: in this metaphor of “seeing” violence, traditional accounts cast violence that is *antagonistic* to them in the spotlight, whilst other more convenient forms of violence are allowed to remain in a theoretical darkness. Attending to violence as a reflexive epistemological problem, we can ask if these covert forms of violence might achieve, among other things, the maintenance and reproduction of the bodies of theory and forms of analysis that provide the conditions of possibility for their own operation.

Butler’s anti-essentialist approach, then, with its refusal to accept uncritically whatever problematisations of violence have been produced out of existing (and *violent*) social conditions, is the first of several aspects of Judith Butler’s theoretical work that can be important in the context of non-violent theory development. It is informed by the active, creative account of language that has already been discussed in terms of performativity: a language that does not stand apart from reality in some abstract realm of description, but which moves within it as an energetic process, arising from reality and operating as part of it. As a resource for reflexive, non-violent

theory development, Butler's work demonstrates, to begin with, a set of assumptions about language and theory that reiterate the possibility of violence *enacted by* an account of violence, opening up a theoretical space for addressing this violence that can otherwise elude theorisation by insinuating itself into the processes of theory development. My reading of Butler constitutes performativity and reflexivity as two dimensions of this theoretical space, within which "the claim of non-violence" (Butler, 2009, p. 165) can take different shapes. Without a reflexive rhetorical analysis, our claims of non-violence may subject people to a violence enacted by the discursive effects of the claims.

That we can be *subjected to*—and subjected by—such claims is another important theme in Butler's texts. With respect to the claim of non-violence, Butler writes:

The capacity to respond to the claim has everything to do with how the claim is formed and framed, but also with the disposition of the senses, or the conditions of receptivity itself. Indeed, the one who responds is crafted forcibly by norms that often do a certain kind of violence, and may well dispose that subject towards a certain kind of violence as well (Butler, 2009, p. 165).

As with the textual, linguistic or epistemological shift from objectivist discussion of "violence" to a reflexive discussion of the *problematization* of violence, here Butler effects an important shift of emphasis and attends to a different process or a different aspect of the process—a different kind of violence—by distinguishing "a certain kind of violence" that subjects *do* from "a certain kind of violence" that informs and produces subjectivity itself. Yet at the same time, she links these different kinds of violence through the idea of a disposition; a discursively constituted disposition, and so not one of the traditional attitudes, temperaments or "traits" of popular and mainstream psychology; but a disposition of another kind: a conduit for the reproduction of violence; or perhaps a piece of psychological machinery for the transformation of one kind of violence into another. If psychology has traditionally obscured these social processes by individualising such dispositions, Butler's account of a disposition to do violence that is also *produced by* violence is firmly situated in a

theoretical context of discursive subjection. It suggests the possibility of a psychological “disposition” produced by violence as a means of reproducing itself.

So for example a patriarchal privilege that depends upon the violence that can be inflicted by muscular force will diminish as the patriarch’s body ages, and becomes less powerful in relation to the bodies of young women. Yet, if that privilege can be inscribed upon a masculine subjectivity for the patriarch’s sons to inherit, then *their* muscles can exert the physical violence necessary to maintain the older patriarch’s privilege too, as one of the privileged subjects. In this way a violent social relationship can be reproduced through subjectivity: personal “dispositions” to behave in particular ways can be theorised as both the products and instruments of violence; as sites of its reproduction and potentially of its transformation over time.

One of the hallmarks of Butler’s work is a strong scepticism towards the timeless or “natural” categories that are positioned in discourse as lying beyond the scope of possibility for change (Lloyd, 2007). “As Butler theorises it, one of the ways in which discourse works is to construct an element as outside of—or prior to—culture. This element is then presented as natural or incontrovertible, when in actuality it is neither” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 53). *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) developed the feminist⁴³ idea of “gender” (as a social category reproducing social power relations, rather than a natural category arising from biology) by challenging the assumption that gender is sexed (i.e. that biological sex exists as a prior natural category to which gender is attached) and arguing instead that sex is gendered⁴⁴ (i.e. that even bodily differences may be produced by a Foucaultian process of normative discipline based upon gender norms). If Butler is right, and gender is constituted as “natural” partly in order to place gendered violence beyond the scope of psychological intervention, then we might expect to see mainstream psychology ignoring even strong empirical correlations between masculinity and violence. This is, of course, precisely what we

43 “Gender is a concept developed to contest the naturalization of sexual difference in multiple arenas of struggle.” (Haraway, 1991).

44 I am inverting the traditional assumption to illustrate the radical significance of Butler’s critique: however, while she demonstrates scepticism towards any pre-linguistic “reality” that a term like “sex” is imagined to represent, and clearly contests the idea that gender is grounded in sex, she does not claim anything like a simple inverted relationship of sex grounded in gender, and in fact does more to interrogate and unsettle the established relationships between gender, sex and sexuality than to argue for their being established in some new order.

do see: among people who have committed violent crimes, being *male* is a strikingly common factor—one that has persisted for centuries despite changes in overall violent crime rates (Eisner, 2003), and one that becomes more striking as the crimes become more violent, with the gender gap increasing with the severity of the offence (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996)—yet the refusal by mainstream forensic psychology to take masculinity seriously as a possible causal factor is just as striking⁴⁵. “Violence” can be carefully abstracted from its gendered context, so that the violence of countless men can be addressed as something other than a *masculine* violence: that the great majority of people using this gender-neutral “violence” happen to be male does not seem to be enough for the importance of the correlation to be acknowledged.

When I studied forensic psychology a few years ago, the text book (Andrews & Bonta, 2003)—which was also the “Bible” for psychologists in New Zealand’s Department of Corrections (Webb, 2005)—listed the number one risk factor for spousal abuse as “marital stress” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 401). Whether “marital stress” could sometimes be a euphemism for “disobedient women” was not discussed. The idea that such violence could be gendered was mentioned but explicitly dismissed. “The first lesson from a PCC [Psychology of Criminal Conduct] is that we must begin with differentiating men in terms of their risk to abuse their partners” (p. 400). That “we must begin” in this way suggests that it is more important for us to understand and address the factors determining *which* men will offend, rather than to understand and address the problem that so many do. This is roughly analogous to a car manufacturer’s spending most of its research budget on technologies for detecting *which* of its cars will fall apart on the road, rather than finding out why so many of its cars fall apart: it would be absurd, unless it seemed highly unlikely that research into the cause of the faults could be successful. Since very few researchers seem to regard a neglect of “why men?” in order to focus on “which men?” as absurd, perhaps it seems to many researchers that addressing the question of “why men?” would not make a substantial difference to violence rates. Perhaps its being constituted as “natural” (rather than cultural) has effectively rendered it theoretically invisible: men’s violence, like their Y-chromosomes, is part of the natural environment to which culture must respond, rather than part of the social environment that culture produces.

45 The situation is not the same in criminological literature, where the masculinity of violence is widely discussed, even if it is theorised in very different ways (Connell, 2002).

Despite the evidence of our senses that violence is a predominantly masculine activity from the toy aisles to the trenches, an empiricist psychology seems unable to “see” masculinity as contributing to violence. In this traditional empiricist framework, the abnormality of violent men establishes the unproblematic normality of masculinity itself (Cowbum, 2005). That violent women are so much more abnormal in relation to feminine norms is no more interesting to developers of psychological interventions than the fact that women seldom sing below the baritone range: it’s assumed to be a product of biology rather than a social norm. No doubt there can be many other reasons for the theoretical invisibility of gender as a *problem* in mainstream forensic psychology; nevertheless, the situation is consistent with what we might expect if Butler is right that our constituting gender as springing from nature has the effect of steering interventions away from “gender” as a social performance, making it easier for such performance to be violent.

In these kinds of contexts, where it seems at least possible that objectivist discourse has social effects that are conservative of violent traditions, Butler’s concern with “naturalising” discourse can be justified. If subjectivity is produced discursively, then it makes sense to ask *why* (for what rhetorical purposes?) do some discourses work to deny this by grounding the subject in a “nature” distinct from culture? Violence is a possible answer: one’s enslavement of another is likely to be easier if the slave can be convinced that there are natural categories of master and slave, rather than contingent realities of domination and submission. Subjection can therefore involve a violence more effective than one that acts merely *upon* subjects; a violence that *subjects* in the sense of producing particular forms of subjectivity and experience.

In feminist literature, an important consequence of Butler’s writing around these issues has been an increased awareness of the shortcomings of identity politics (Lloyd, 2007). Informed by this theory we are able to ask, for example, if traditional “first wave” and “second wave” feminist projects—by championing the rights of women—already concede the most important grounds from the outset by rallying under an identity of “woman” that exists precisely in order to reproduce oppressive power relations. These kinds of questions suggest another dimension to the theoretical space opened up by Butler’s theory, in addition to the dimensions of performativity and

reflexivity that are involved by attending to language as rhetoric or performance. Not only can we ask new questions about the possibility of violence in our theories of violence; we can ask new questions about the possibility of violence in ourselves.

Coming to terms with the operation of epistemological violence—not only in the discourses that subjects can take up and employ in order to achieve things, but also in the structures of subjectivity and the things that subjects desire to achieve—requires a careful engagement with these interrelated issues of reflexivity and subjectivity. For Butler, language—including theory—acts: this implies that a theory should account for *its own* action as it theorises violence, by attending explicitly to the relationships between what it is doing and what violence does. For Butler, subjects are produced discursively: this implies that sometimes (as for example with gender) the most important political actions—and the most important social violence—can be achieved by means of this discursive production of subjectivity, and not merely by means of the *actions* of the subjects so produced.

Subjectivity can be a key concern for discourse analysis due to the importance of subject positions in discourse (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Parker, 1990); it is particularly relevant to the issue of reflexivity in discourses of violence, because bodies may be targets of violence to the extent that they are identified with particular subject positions. The physical properties of a human body (its need for a steady supply of oxygen, the vulnerability of its skin to penetration, and so on) may render it vulnerable to violence; but it is not so much these properties as its socially constituted identities (“gang member”, “sexy woman”, “disobedient child”, “gay man”, “dangerous predator”, and so on) that render a body vulnerable to violent human behaviour. For this reason a useful account of epistemological violence needs to be able to come to terms with the role of violence in the production and management of these subject positions.

Due to its importance to the way epistemological violence constitutes or otherwise acts upon subjects, subjectivity is also crucial to the issue of reflexivity: my own subjectivity as a theorist of violence is a site upon which the reflexive problems of

violence can exert their influence. The more I attend to rich theoretical accounts of subjectivity—the many accounts that theorise personal desire as an effect of social power relations, including accounts in the psychoanalytic tradition (e.g. Freud, 1933/1986g; Lacan, 2001b; Parker, 2008; Žižek, 1989) and the Foucaultian tradition (Foucault, 1975/1995; Rose, 1998)—the more likely it is that I will be able to articulate some of the ways that violence might be impacting upon my writing.

One of the important differences between traditional individualistic accounts of subjectivity and the more sophisticated contemporary accounts is the way that *agency* is theorised (e.g. compare Van Inwagen, 1975, with Butler, 1993). As a theorist informed by traditional accounts of subjectivity, I might experience my desires as being “mine” in the autonomous sense of their originating within myself. This could make the “freedom” of my writing seem quite unproblematic in cases where I am unaware of coercion or constraint. Such an individualistic account of desire limits my ability to attend reflexively to the impact of violence upon my writing, because it restricts the influence of “external” factors to those factors I experience subjectively as being external to myself—a direct threat, for example—and ignores the influence of the many “external” factors contributing to my personal desires or “will”; those aspects of my psyche that I experience subjectively as being “internal” to myself.

Reflexive attention to one’s writing involves more than attention to its “content”: to understand language as social action is to acknowledge that issues of form and style are also important, inasmuch as these are selected precisely in order to achieve different social effects. In this context it can be useful to consider “form as meaning” (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251). One of the things that first attracted me to Butler’s theory was her non-confrontational writing *style* that positions theoretical ideas as resources the reader is invited to take up, rather than as findings with which the reader is required to come to terms.

One reason I may have been grateful for Butler’s not accosting me with essential truths that I needed to acknowledge is that Butler’s texts can be somewhat difficult to come to terms with: as Chambers & Carver (2008) noted, she does not really have a

fach or specific disciplinary focus, and so reading her involves at least an indirect engagement with a wide range of interdisciplinary texts. While best known as a pioneer of poststructuralist or “third wave” feminism (Heede, 2008, asks of the arrival of third wave feminism in his country, “did the Butler do it?”), she is currently a professor of rhetoric and comparative literature (University of California, Berkeley, Department of Rhetoric, n.d.), and her PhD (submitted in 1984) was in philosophy (Butler, 1999). While the scope of this literature presents some challenges to the task of applying it to psychological issues, I also consider it to be an advantage in terms of providing us with the theoretical richness or “thick description” (Geertz, 1973)⁴⁶ more likely to provide a useful account of the theoretical issues around epistemological violence. Before discussing her treatment of performativity, subjectivity and reflexivity, I will try to contextualise or frame some of the complexity of Butler’s work with a very brief account of her doctoral thesis on Hegel, *Subjects of Desire*, regarding which Butler wrote in 1999 (p. xiv): “In a sense, all of my work remains within the orbit of a certain set of Hegelian questions”.

Even the negation of desire is always only another one of its modalities

Judith Butler⁴⁷

Butler’s Hegel

Butler’s (1999) doctoral thesis begins what can be read as a long literary engagement with challenges that Hegel posed to traditional Western accounts of the “subject” or desiring agent in relation to the “objects” (including, most importantly, *other* “subjects”) in the desiring agent’s world. Butler suggests that far from totalising history and providing a universal framework for understanding human experience (Long, 2003), Hegel can radically destabilise any such history by providing resources for theorising how “the constitution of the subject entails a radical and constitutive relation to alterity” (Butler, 1999, p. xiv). By calling attention both to the historical aspects of subjectivity (the way subjects are produced in time, in and through social

⁴⁶ Attention to context is important for theoretical as well as for ethnographic accounts.

⁴⁷ Butler, 1999, p. 2

relationships) and to historicity itself (the “becoming” or dialectical “overcoming” by means of which literally inconceivable futures transcend not only the material conditions but also the frameworks of *meaning* that structure their past) Hegel’s account can position even itself as a thesis that will inevitably be overcome; not merely in the simplistic sense of being “rejected” for a superior antithetical alternative, but in the more radical sense that Hegel’s ideas and the questions they address must eventually take on entirely *new meanings* in a radically different historical moment. By writing about how theorists like Lacan (1948/2001a), Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) and Foucault (1976/1990) have developed or responded to Hegel’s ideas, Butler’s dissertation⁴⁸ highlights an extremely radical⁴⁹ potential in the work of this theorist.

I think her own work in the area of gender demonstrates that there is indeed an important potential for radical social change in Hegel’s thought (if the social impact of Marx—probably the most well-known borrower of Hegel’s ideas—were not evidence enough of this). Poststructuralism, the “linguistic turn”, and other contemporary strands of radical or potentially radical thought can all be said to share an appreciation of the contingency of history and the enormous potential for things to be different from how they are: even (perhaps especially) *inconceivably* different. If we have been steeped in violence—and loudly lamenting it—while at the same time endlessly reproducing it, for thousands of years, then it seems likely that violence and related social conditions (e.g. those associated with patriarchy) have become deeply entrenched in our culture, language and psychology. In this sense violence—like gender—could be something we have *done* for so long that we have come to take it for granted as part of the natural world: a reality to which we must respond, rather than a contingency that we can change. If this is so, can anything other than extremely radical social change—radical enough to mark a significant departure from thousands of years of history—achieve a minimisation of violence?

48 Butler calls it her “dissertation” (Butler, 1999, p. vii); what we call a doctoral thesis in New Zealand is a dissertation in the United States.

49 By “radical” I mean enabling, suggesting or relating to a significant break from one state of affairs, to a markedly different other.

If, in the West, a violent tradition like that of the adversarial and punitive Roman justice system can survive the death of the Roman gods and the transition to Christendom, and then the death of the Christian God and the transition to secular modernity, then it seems possible that changes from one violent patriarchy to another—however radical they may seem—are not radical enough, or, at least, they do not represent the kind of social change that might challenge the tradition of using violence to maintain the social order. To the extent that violence is not some external foe, but a problem *within* our culture and ourselves, prioritising violence minimisation entails radical social change. Unless, of course, we intend to settle for whatever reduction in violence is possible without substantially changing our social relationships, which amounts to a decision *not* to prioritise the minimisation of violence, but rather to prioritise the conservation of the existing social order. In this context Butler’s willingness to examine our oldest and most taken-for-granted ideas about ourselves (e.g. our division of society into two basic gender categories, with their different privileges and social performance requirements)—and her development of theory for examining such ideas—is a promising theoretical resource.

Whether Hegel intended to provide us with a set of theoretical tools for transcending history or whether he regarded the perfection of the Absolute Idea as having been “nearly, if not quite, realized in the Prussian state” (Russell, 1961, p. 705), Butler’s Hegel—or the use to which Butler puts Hegel’s theory in her own work—is a crucial theorist of *difference*: both of the radical “alterity” that the subject faces, and of the possibility of radical *change* over time, rather than a mere reconfiguration of that which already exists. According to Butler, this movement toward difference is a key feature of subjectivity in Kojève’s reading of Hegel.

Kojève’s account of the struggle for recognition and its collapse into a master/slave dichotomy was my own first introduction to Hegel’s theory of “recognition”, and Kojève’s reading has become “the ‘standard interpretation’, the contemporary ‘dogma’ about Hegel” (Williams, 1997, p. 10). It is a crucially important interpretation in the context of epistemological violence—perhaps even a violent interpretation—because there is so much potential for violence in this account of a

“fight to the death” (Kojève, 1947/1980, p. 12)⁵⁰ as the basic or primordial form of encounter between two human beings. Read in this way, it can function as a sophisticated philosophical justification for nearly any form of social violence: if the choice is, fundamentally, to kill or be killed, who can blame us for killing? As we might imagine Callicles asking—or Nietzsche—why blame the fittest for surviving? Would you rather see the fittest die out, and the *least* fit inherit the earth? However as Williams (Williams, 1997) argues, Hegel *can* be read as presenting the master/slave dialectic as “an important first phase of unequal recognition that *must* and *can* be transcended. It is not the final, but merely a transitional, inherently unstable, configuration of intersubjectivity” (p. 10). This transcendence or movement towards difference is emphasised by Butler in her own reading of Kojève: “The project of subjectivity is to overcome all positivity that includes the ‘inner nature’ or apparently fixed features of consciousness itself” (Butler, 1999, p. 71). The alterity of the “other” is one important aspect of this constitutive difference: in her “post-Hegelian” (Butler, 2005, p. 26) account of recognition, she writes: “one finds that the only way to know oneself is through a mediation that takes place outside of oneself, exterior to oneself, by virtue of a convention or a norm that one did not make, in which one cannot discern oneself as an author or an agent of one’s own making” (p. 28).

The importance of radical otherness for Butler’s theory of subjectivity is reiterated in her ethics, for example in terms of her treatment of the face of the other in Levinas. For now though, I think this is enough Hegelian context for us to turn to the linguistic performativity that is such an important dimension of the theoretical space that Butler opens up for questioning epistemological violence. An account of language that theorises it in terms of discourse and performativity can also be associated with a potential for radical change, because it unsettles the traditional account in which language has a stable relationship to external reality. To the extent that our language acts upon and constitutes our reality, an account of performativity in language can be a way of theorising the “mechanics” of Hegelian historicism; a way of theorising the movement of meanings, rather than framing a progress or movement of events in terms of a stable set of meanings. If the Copernican revolution in cosmology invited us to account for our observations of the heavens in terms of our own movement, and

50 “The truth of man, or the revelation of his reality, therefore, presupposes the fight to the death. And that is why human-individuals are obliged to start this fight.” (Kojève, 1947/1980, p. 12).

Kant's philosophy invited us to account for empirical phenomena in terms of our own psychological structure, Hegel's historicism invited us to account for our understanding of all this—for the account itself—in terms of our own particular historical location.

Butler enters this long stream of movement toward perspectivism not long after Wittgenstein's invitation for us to let go the logic we have clung to as the last vestige of stable "a priori" truth, and accept the utter inextricability of our subjectivity not only from the objects we "observe", but even from the relations configuring that observation. Ontology and "things in themselves" aside, language at least offered some comfort as a formal, structural testament to the fact that "things are", somewhere out there beyond subjectivity. Butler, however, trades in this comfort for a radical poststructuralist account of language and materiality. We are *embodied*, and so we do not encounter the world of bodies from some other place, as subjects "inside" bodies that are somehow external to ourselves: we *are* materially real, and at the same time we *are* produced discursively, and this is no contradiction, because language does not float along beside the world "representing" it as traditionally assumed. Language acts in the world, and exists as part of the world, and so—like any other part of the world, in Hegel's account—*language is perpetually becoming something other than what it was*. If this becoming is to act upon itself reflexively, an account of the nature of such action—of performativity—can move language further in this direction.

**When we do act and speak, we not only disclose ourselves
but act on the schemes of intelligibility that govern who will be a speaking being**
Judith Butler⁵¹

Performativity

In *Doing Gender* (West & Zimmerman, 1987), West and Zimmerman write that gender is “an emergent feature of social situations: both ... an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and ... a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society” (p. 126). In *Undoing Gender* (Butler, 2004c, p. 212), Butler continues, “gender is complexly produced through identificatory and performative practices” through which we are led to believe that it is “a truth that is somehow there, interior to the body, as a core or as an internal essence ... which ... is treated as given”. These “performative practices” are necessarily linguistic; but this does not distinguish them from *bodily* performances; rather it attests that bodies are languaged. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler famously uses the example of drag as a “subversive bodily act”: “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency” (p. 175). When a man “does femininity” by dressing, moving and speaking in recognisably feminine ways; or when a woman “does masculinity” by a similar performance of the masculine, the performance is disturbing to heteronormativity precisely because it *parodies* heteronormativity: it demonstrates that gender *can* be performed—regardless of any supposed “true” internal essential gender—and this demonstration hints at the fact that it *is* performed, not only in the abnormal performance of drag, but in the normal performance of gender.

Performativity for Butler, then, is much more than “the business that is being done in talk” (Potter, 2003, p. 77): it is a complex aspect of language involving not only words, speech and written texts, but also bodies, desires, and psychological experiences of subjectivity. One’s own performance can be the means by which one “recognises” one’s self in terms of another’s desires: it is not merely that we “do

51 Butler (2005, p. 132)

things with language” as individual agents, but also that we are *done* with language, in the sense that the performance defines us as subjects.

Understanding language as achieving rather than merely describing things has consequences for the status of “hate speech” as a social phenomenon. What could once have been described as contributing to a *potential* for violence can now be described *as violence*, inasmuch as it represents “words that are used as weapons to ambush, terrorize, wound, humiliate and degrade” (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1). In *Excitable Speech* (Butler, 1997a) however, Butler examines the form of this “wounding” and challenges the idea that we should prosecute individual acts of assaultive speech, on the grounds that this prosecution of individuals constitutes a misunderstanding of the role of the speaking subject in relation to oppressive discourse. The homophobic man who calls another a “faggot” does not merely work to reproduce an abjected subject position for the intended victim: he also works to constitute *himself* as a *real* man; a proper subject, as opposed to the disgusting pseudo-subject that—like a corpse—resembles a real man and yet is not.

To forcibly suppress the assaultive speech act can be a way to deflect attention from the conditions that give rise to it; to avoid asking questions, like *why* do so many people find that it advantages them to position themselves as homophobic? What are the social conditions that make it so important for some subjects, in some contexts, to clearly demonstrate their revulsion at the “faggot”? Is it that homosexuality is actually threatening (perhaps because it leads the homophobic man to imagine himself being sexualised in the same predatory way that he sexualises women) or does “doing homophobia” represent a form of “doing masculinity”, regardless of any real fear of homosexuality? Does the spectacle of a male body doing some form of *femininity* call into question the naturalness of the hypermasculine subject’s masculinity? If a man can *choose* to be gentle and nurturing, might this not imply that another man is *choosing* to be aggressive and selfish, so that the masculine man might feel obliged to contest this implication by emphasising the “unnatural” status of the feminine man? These kinds of questions can be asked when we attend not only to what assaultive speech “does to others”, but also to how it functions to enact the subjectivity of the speaker.

They are more difficult to ask when we react to assaultive speech only by forcibly suppressing it.

Perhaps more importantly for Butler, to forcibly suppress the assaultive speech act can be to foreclose other potentially more effective means of subverting heteronormative, racist, or otherwise violent discourse, because it assigns to the individual subject responsibility for an act that derives its power from a social context over which the subject has very limited control⁵²: the speaking subject is *produced by* this context, and as useful as it may sometimes be in the short term to add censorship laws to these conditions, it might be considerably more efficient to stop producing subjects who hate, rather than to continue working to produce them while simultaneously working to suppress certain specific enunciations of hatred.

One of the important implications of Butler's account of performativity—an account that supplements the mechanistic notion of something that “performs” a task with the social connotations of “performance” in front of spectators—is that the *interpretation* of performance is also subjective. “The repetition of assaultive speech does not simply reproduce and hence consolidate hegemonic (racist and patriarchal) power relations; when a term is appropriated and made to resignify in insurrectionary or mutinous fashion it can deform, reconfigure or even suspend those relations” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 121). A word like “nigger” does *not*, Butler suggests, represent a straightforward transmission of racist violence in verbal form: whereas Matsuda et al. (1993) argue that an African American community embracing the term and calling each other “nigger” with affection is still, albeit unwittingly, reproducing the violence of a slaver's use of the term⁵³, Butler challenges such a static account of meaning, and suggests that the appropriation of a hostile term can work to disarm it. A term like “queer” can become so widely used in non- (or less) homophobic contexts that its

52 The nature and extent of this control is addressed on pp. 95-104 in relation to the role of *agency* in our accounts of subjectivity, and Butler's theorisation of agency in terms of the iterative structure of discourse.

53 While they write that “‘Hey, nigger,’ spoken affectionately between Black persons and used as a greeting, would not be actionable” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 110) as a legal instance of assaultive speech, nevertheless their arguing elsewhere that “certain words are offensive and only calculated to wound. No other use remains for such words as ‘nigger’” (p. 94)—and their “choice of strategy” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 110) in arguing for judicial punishment of such speech—both serve to articulate a more traditional account of hate speech than the account produced by Butler's texts.

articulation of heteronormative power relations can be significantly undermined; it can even, in some contexts, subvert the very power relations that it articulated in others.

In many other accounts of performativity in language, the simple contrast between denotative (“there’s a dog on the table”) and performative (“what I meant was, *get the dog off the table*”) functions of language enables a kind of reflexivity that can ask, “what am I *doing* with this language?”. What actions do these words perform? In this context hate speech can be understood as violent action, rather than merely as a factor that may contribute to violence. Informed by Butler’s theory, however, another kind of reflexivity is enabled: a kind of reflexivity that is made possible by attention to subjectivity, fields of cultural intelligibility, and a different kind of “performativity”, no longer merely “what am I doing with this language?” but now, “how is this language doing ‘me’?”. Not merely “what actions do these words perform?”, but, “how does this performance enact ‘me’ as a particular kind of subject?”. Normative violence is not only reproduced in order to constrain the activities of others: it is also reproduced in order to establish one’s self as a legitimate subject. How else can one define one’s self as a subject, if not in relation to others? “I have a relation to myself, but I have it in the context of an address to an other” (Butler, 2005, p. 131). As words depend upon textual context for meaning, subjects depend upon social context for their existence *as* subjects, and this links the two kinds of performativity discussed above, inasmuch as every discursive constitution of another is simultaneously a discursive constitution of one’s self. To perform a social act is always a performance: linguistic performativity is always an enactment of subjectivity.

**Something is sacrificed, lost, or at least spent or given up
at the moment in which the subject makes himself into an object of possible knowledge**
Judith Butler⁵⁴

Subjectivity

If “consciousness” is hard to define in a way that does justice to the psychological experience of “experiencing”, “subjectivity” is even more problematic, because it constitutes this experience as being—despite the phenomenological purity implied by an individualistic psychology—inevitably structured by language, and so by other people⁵⁵. Even experiences as “pure” as heat or colour are infused with meaning, and these meanings are always produced socially, even if this production is indirect and depends upon other socially determined meanings. Warmth and coldness have pleasant or unpleasant connotations in relation to the warmth of a human embrace or the coldness of a corpse; a colour like red cannot be experienced as a “pure” visual stimulus, but inevitably brings with it connotations of boldness, or blood, and so on, due to practices as complex as the tradition of wearing red to “stand out”, or as simple as bleeding. Similar social practices transform meaningless visual noise into the face that comes to have meaning for an infant, or the distant horizon at which a young adult might gaze. Everything from “faces” to “distance” is a languaged experience, and to enter into language is to enter into the world of social practices that it represents, and to take up a position in relation to this world (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995).

In some respects the phrase “enter into language” is misleading: it implies a subjectivity prior to language that makes a transition from a pre-linguistic to a linguistic mode of experience. Recalling Butler’s concern with the rhetorical technique of positioning something as existing prior to or in some other way “beyond” culture and language—in order to naturalise it and to make it seem inevitable and unchangeable—this account of an essential subjectivity prior to language is politically dubious. Any account that has the psyche penetrating the social world from without,

⁵⁴ Butler (2005, p. 120). Butler is arguing this as a shared claim of psychoanalysis and Foucault.

⁵⁵ Including the dead; not only our own ancestors, but all who have shaped our language.

rather than developing from the energies already within it, is likely to have a socially conservative effect, working as it does to constitute an essential human nature beyond the domain of the social. Rather than uncritically accepting the kind of timeless truth produced by such accounts, we can ask “how it came about and how it was able to establish itself *as if it were* timeless” (Butler, 2004b, p. 60). With regard to the truth of the individual soul, Foucault’s (Foucault, 1975/1995) claim that “the soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (p. 30) can remind us of what is at stake in accounts of the soul—in psychological accounts—and the implications of our theories of how the subject comes into being; of how the subject and language relate to each other.

Interesting in this context of language, subjectivity and power is the question of conformity to norms of language use. An important aspect of Butler’s theory of subjectivity is a development of the idea—already articulated in the texts of Althusser (1970/2008) and Lacan (1960/2001e)—that one’s status as a social subject *depends upon* one’s submission to social power. It is simply not possible to be a “subject” in the sense of a rational speaking “I” that can give an account of itself, without also being a “subject” in the sense of one who is subject to power. The same language that can privilege the human subject as a speaking being who demands an ethical response (rather than a mere object that can demand nothing) also positions the speaking being as a particular *kind* of subject, demanding a particular kind of response.

The interdependence of speaking rights and “subjection” in the sense of submission to power can also be discussed in terms of grammatical rule-following. Althusser (Althusser, 2008) noted an integration of mastery and subjection in practices of schooling. Mastery of grammatical rules and submission to them are almost the same thing: in the English-speaking world, at least, shrugging off the rules of “correct” usage and employing idiosyncratic usage is likely to be read as marker of low status and limited speaking rights—even of madness, depending on the degree of idiosyncrasy—whereas to follow the established rules diligently is to speak “The Queen’s English”. As an effect of social power relations, “I” cannot enact mastery without being subjected to it: “The more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved. Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and this

paradoxical simultaneity constitutes the ambivalence of subjection” (Butler, 1997b, p. 116). A crucial implication of this is that we should not imagine that power “constitutes us first and foremost against our will” but rather, “prior to the formation of our will” (Butler, 2004a, p. 130). Our “will” is part of the subjectivity *produced by* power, and its use *of* power can be understood in this context.

Althusser’s (1970/2008) *interpellation* uses the metaphor of a police officer hailing a citizen, “hey, you there!” (p. 48), to account for the subject’s being called into being by a language that positions the hailed subject in a matrix of power relationships. Just as there will likely be unpleasant consequences for the political subject who simply tries to ignore the police officer’s address, so there will likely be unpleasant consequences for the infant who ignores the name and identity given to it and chosen for it at or before its birth. To “ignore” interpellation is not really an option at all—even the act of not responding will still be read as a particular enactment of subjectivity (criminal, autistic, or whatever)—so the interpellated subject will always be produced as a subject with a particular moral status in relation to prevailing norms. “Interpellation, on this account, is not an event, but a certain way of *staging the call*, where the call [is] ... a demand to align oneself with the law ... and an entrance into the language of self-ascription—‘Here I am’—through the appropriation of guilt” (Butler, 1997b, pp. 106-107). In this way our “linguistic survival” (Butler, 1997b, p. 130) as recognisable social beings can be likened to the slave’s choice in the Kojévian account: “better to ‘be’ enslaved ... than not to ‘be’ at all” (Butler, 1997b, p. 130).

Better still, however, to be and yet not to be enslaved. Butler wonders about this possibility: is there a kind of subjectivity that “enabled by the law, turns away from the law, resisting its lure of identity, an agency that outruns and counters the conditions of its emergence”? (Butler, 1997b, p. 130). “Is there a possibility of being elsewhere or otherwise”? (p. 130). When Althusser theorised interpellation he wrote, “ideology *has no outside*” (Althusser, 1970/2008, p. 49). Yet he qualifies this claim parenthetically, “... (for itself)” (p. 49), and this attention to the fact that it is ideology itself that constitutes itself as “simply the way things are”—“those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology” (Althusser, 1970/2008, p. 49)—points to a possible way outside that which has no outside: a kind of action that must take place

inside the terms of address, in order to alter those terms. A “different kind of turn” (Butler, 1997b, p. 130). “Such a turn demands a willingness *not* to be—a critical desubjectivation—in order to expose the law as less powerful than it seems” (p. 130). Returning to the metaphor of the citizen hailed by the officer of the law, it may at first appear that there are only two options: obey the law, or become an outlaw, no longer a *subject* but an *object* of direct, violent physical intervention. There is a structural similarity here between the forced binary of subjection or physical struggle, and the Kojévian forced binary of submission or dominance: one accepts that one is a slave, or one fights to the death in order to be otherwise. Yet, if Williams (1997) is right that Hegel positioned this binary as something to be transcended, what “kind of turn” might enable such transcendence?

We might claim that the citizen has “rights”—to vote, to lobby for law change, to campaign for office, and so on—and that these enable the citizen to alter the very same law that gives the officer authority to demand a particular response from the citizen. However, such “rights” are defined by the law itself: it is not merely that there is “no outside”, but one’s movement “inside” is “always-already” (Althusser, 1970/2008, p. 50) established by discourse. What of the abjected individual (Kristeva, 1980/1982) to whom the terms of address do *not* grant the speaking “rights” of a subject? If we look inside the walls of our prisons we will not struggle to find people who are barely recognised as people at all—“monsters” in popular discourse—often the descendants of colonised or enslaved ancestors, and born into conditions out of which citizens with rights are unlikely to emerge. The infant whose cries are met by having his arms and legs broken by intoxicated adults does not develop the kind of relationship to the Other that invites formal legal argument. By the time this violated abjected pseudo-subject can say “fuck you” to the officer of the law, the “freedom” to lobby for *change* to the law has long since been absent; has always-already been absent.

Who, with the power to alter the law, will listen to the voice—the pseudo-voice—of this angry, tattooed, scarred individual whose every gesture reeks of the “fight to the death”, reeks of *death*? The monstrous offender, like the corpse, repels the true subject: as the absence of the signs of physical life in the corpse evokes the threat of

physical death, so the absence of the signs of normal subjectivity in the abject individual evokes the threat of psychological death. “There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being” (Kristeva, 1980/1982, p. 3). We don’t cuddle corpses; we don’t befriend monsters. If a psychotic cannot write but only “engage in writing behaviour”, can a psychopath speak? A transcendence of ideology from “inside” the ideological framework seems to require at least the power to speak, to act as a subject within that framework; and yet, just as the mastery of a language involves conformity to its rules, so the ability to address an ideological framework involves subjection to that framework. It seems an elegant symmetry: one’s power to alter the framework is inversely proportional to one’s desire to do so. What kind of transcendence can take up the power of a subjectivity—an identity—and yet somehow refuse to take up the desire built into that subjectivity? What kind of desire can turn upon itself without weakening itself; can say “I want to be different; I want to want something else” when the energy of the “I want”, the desire to be different, comes from what one is *now*, not what one wants to become? Is it a matter of looking for common interests, of asking: “What do I desire, intensely, the attainment of which will destroy me? What do I want so much that I am willing to *change* the ideological framework, and so to disappear as the subject constituted by the existing framework; to die; to reappear as the different subject produced by the different framework? What desire can lead me away from myself, instead of defining myself more precisely by the pursuit of that desire?” Or are these the wrong kinds of questions: is the turning of desire against itself the act of ideological submission par excellence, inasmuch as the libido is—*energy* is—a kind of pressure for things to be otherwise, so that the turning of this energy against itself is exactly the “prison of the body” (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 30) that ideology seeks to build as the subject of its discourse?

Butler contests this last suggestion as a “reification of desire as a natural phenomenon”, “the arbitrary restriction of desire to certain ends, and the unjustifiable elevation of those ends to a natural or necessary status” (Butler, 1999, p. 71). For Butler then, the subject cannot simply be “true to itself” in the traditional humanist sense, because this can amount to being the best slave possible, a *true* slave, if this is the nature or “self” that has been produced for the subject to “be”. Her continual attention to an iterative agency—a potential to change, as the word “queer” has

changed, in terms of a “meaning” that can never be self-determined, but can only be established contextually, and relationally—points to a transcendence more profound than the overcoming of slavery by a slave whose labour constitutes a form of mastery, or a citizen whose submission to the law endows her or him with rights to change the law. It points, I think, to a more radical Hegelian transcendence in which not merely events but the meanings of events can be altered: “master” and “slave” are not transcended “within” the dialectic, by a kind of revolutionary transformation of their relationships with each other; instead, a more radical transcendence is possible in which the meanings of the words change.

Science did not overcome the demons of Christendom by means of a powerful exorcism: it took up the language of Christendom and, slowly but surely, reconfigured it until the words meant different things and the demons no longer existed *as* the demons of Christendom. The subjects of modern discourse are real enough: I am such a subject, and my fingers clatter as they type on these keys. Yet so were the demons of medieval Europe: they were just as real in relation to the bodies that they flung to the ground and whose eyes rolled and mouths frothed in response to them, as I, the modern subject, am real, with my fingers moving in response to me. Or were the demons of Christendom not real? Have things *always* been just as they are now, in the modern episteme, only our ancestors didn’t know it? Could it be that the extent to which we acknowledge the possibility of difference in the future is related to the extent to which we acknowledge the possibility of difference in the past? If we still claim, with our colonial forebears, that the people of the cultures we colonised didn’t *really* hear the voices of their ancestors; didn’t *really* commune with their gods, then how different is our relationship—as Western subjects—to the peoples we colonised, today, from what it was then? Surely we do not “transcend” the violence of colonisation by reproducing it: but if we are to transcend it at all, what kind of transcendence could this involve, and what political conditions would make it possible? If we theorise subjectivity as Butler does, what different questions—what different *kinds* of questions—might become available?

To the extent that “discourses reproduce power relations” (Parker, 1990, p. 199) and that they do so in relation to the subjects who use and are constituted by them,

discourses of subjectivity are important vehicles for the reproduction of social power relations. In this context any new theory of subjectivity suggests a change or an opportunity for change in the political order that engages with it. Whereas psychoanalysis tends to be positioned by mainstream psychology as an archaic unscientific predecessor (Parker, 2008)—roughly, to psychology, what alchemy is to chemistry, or astrology to astronomy—psychoanalytic discourse has been taken up by many contemporary theorists at or around the margins of psychology (Parker, 2008), perhaps because they see in it a “radical, revolutionary potential in questioning the status quo” (Esgalhadó, 2002, pp. 779–780). Butler is one contemporary theorist who uses psychoanalytic theory in her writing.

Psychoanalysis provides a rich account of psychological development that has for over a century articulated some aspects of the points that Butler makes in regards to subjectivity. It acknowledges the role of social activity—including, as has been mentioned, that of violence—in the production of basic psychic structures. It acknowledges the continued presence and activity of the social within the personal psyche, in terms of the “superego” at the very least. It also famously acknowledges the limitations of individualistic accounts of agency by theorising an *unconscious*⁵⁶ that straddles the traditional line between a psychological interior and exterior. It is *within* the boundaries of this traditional, coherent, rational modern subject in the sense that the unconscious—inaccessible memory, for example—is not merely “a physical disposition for the recurrence of [a] psychical phenomenon” (Freud, 1912/1986b, p. 135), but rather is already psychological, so that for many unconscious psychological elements “the only respect in which they differ from conscious ones is precisely in the absence of consciousness” (Freud, 1912/1986b, p. 144). Yet it is also *outside* the subject in the sense that the subject may not only be unaware of it, but may even take up a stance in opposition to it (Freud, 1917/1986e). For a relatively popular

56 Freud’s systematic study and innovative theory of the unconscious was a “discovery” of the unconscious in the sense that it made significant contributions to the accounts we may give of it today, but of course this discovery was articulated in terms of already available discourse. For example, several years before Freud’s writing about the unconscious, Nietzsche wrote: “the greater part of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly influenced by his instincts, and forced into definite channels. And behind all logic and its seeming sovereignty of movement, there are valuations, or to speak more plainly, physiological demands, for the maintenance of a definite mode of life” (Nietzsche, 1886/2006, p. 7). In Nietzsche’s account of conscious thought being secretly influenced by instinct and physiological demand—and also his account of the historical, social production of subjective conscience (Nietzsche, 1887/1996)—many of the theoretical “building blocks” of psychoanalysis are already taking shape.

psychological discourse—even, in some of its articulations, “pop psychology”—this is an impressive degree of sophistication in terms of theorising the subject as “a split subject, or a subject whose access to itself is forever opaque” (Butler, 2005, p. 64); more sophisticated, perhaps, than the problematic brain-as-computer metaphor (Wilson, 1996) that has dominated cognitive psychology.

The psychoanalytic account supports, in a very limited way, the claim of theorists like Foucault and Butler that the subject is not merely subjected *to* but also *by* power, taking on a particular form as a result of social power relations. It provides an early example of this in the castration complex (Freud, 1905/1986a) and the Oedipal drama, in which the subject’s sexuality and gendered identity are linked to themes of relations between other gendered subjects, and the threat of violence. Whether “penis envy” is read as a ridiculous articulation of nineteenth-century contempt for the female body or, conversely, as a potentially unsettling claim that little girls become aware of the *political* privilege of little boys as soon as they recognise the difference, in any case it is an early account of a subjectivity constructed out of social events and relationships. That it can be such a compelling account for the Western bourgeois individual is both a danger and an opportunity: psychoanalytic discourse can easily be used in conservative ways to provide narrative justifications for existing norms, and it has “a well deserved reputation for misogyny” (Myers, 1992, p. 136). However, Butler is not the only well-informed contemporary critical social theorist of subjectivity using this discourse as a theoretical resource. Branney (2008) discusses for example the various approaches of Michael Billig, Wendy Hollway and Ian Parker, who deploy psychoanalytic accounts in critical discourse analyses, as part of contemporary efforts “to change the subjectivity assumed by, and the subject of, psychology” (Branney, 2008, p. 586).

In Butler’s psychoanalytic account of subjectivity, the ego is “an array of relations and processes, implicated in the world of primary caregivers in ways that constitute its very definition” (Butler, 2005, p. 59) and this ego “long precedes the arrival of the subject” (pp. 59–60). As for the unconscious: “To say, as some do, that the self *must* be narrated, that only the narrated self can be intelligible and survive, is to say that we cannot survive with an unconscious” (p. 65). This important claim is made “not to

celebrate a certain notion of incoherence, but only to point out that our ‘incoherence’ establishes the way in which we are constituted in relationality: implicated, beholden, derived, sustained by a social world that is beyond us and before us” (p. 64).

One of the recent forms that the interrogation of subjectivity has taken in Butler’s writing has been an examination of the “precariousness” of life (Butler, 2004a), and a searching for a “way of imagining community [that] affirms relationality not only as a descriptive or historical fact of our formation, but also as an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence” (p. 27). By re-connecting the field of social and “political” power relations to personal and bodily vulnerability, this “turn towards vulnerability” (Watkins, 2008, p. 190) or “turn to ethics” (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 96) in Butler’s work obliges us “to consider the place of violence in any such relation, for violence is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another” (Butler, 2004a, p. 27).

When Butler describes the operation of normative violence in discourse—whether through mechanisms as obvious as hate speech (Butler, 1997a) or as subtle as the production of conditions of intelligibility for the accounts one can make of one’s actions (Butler, 2005)—she attends to the performativity of language in relation to the production of subjectivity; and by doing so, she advances her particular theory of linguistic performativity as well. It is often the discursively produced subject that Butler uses to unsettle simplistic traditional accounts of speech as action, and the assumption that such action can best be understood in a politics of conscious, rational, individual actors. How, she invites us to ask, can someone speak in her own defence when her eligibility to speak—even her status as a legitimate “person”—depends upon the conditions that reproduce her oppression?

“Cultural intelligibility, as Butler deploys it, refers to the production of a normative framework that conditions who can be recognized as a legitimate subject” (Lloyd, 2007, p. 33). In this context, Butler’s “normative violence” can be read as having an

important relationship to “reflexivity” as it applies to the reflexive problems of violence discussed earlier: it establishes who can speak, and those who speak are empowered to maintain it. There is significant potential for violence to sustain or reproduce itself, if it can enforce the production of subjects for whom such violence is “natural”.

The present text’s focus on epistemological violence is relevant in this context, due to the special significance of psychological theory to personal subjectivity. Psychological theory is a normative theory in terms of its social effects (Rose, 1998b), and so it is likely that epistemological violence in psychology will be closely related to the normative violence that has been a focus of Butler’s work. Her question for political theorists applies just as well to the task of psychological theory development: “What resources must we have in order to bring into the human community those humans who have not been considered part of the recognizably human? That is the task of a radical democratic theory and practice that seeks to extend the norms that sustain viable life to previously disenfranchised communities” (Butler, 2004c, p. 225).

Whatever else it is, subjectivity in Butler’s theory is social. The traditional Western psychological imperative, “know thyself”, becomes in her account a task of knowing and becoming known to others, and of understanding the implications of this relationality. “*You* are my anguish, surely. *You* are opaque: who are you? Who is this you that resides in me, from whom I cannot extricate myself?” (Butler, 2005, p. 80). Such questions are not asked from a distance: in a performative account of language, they are themselves a relational activity, a form of encounter with the other, and so to ask such questions is to act in a context of ethical significance. The attainment of psychological knowledge, and even the development of psychological questions is a form of social activity. For such theory, *reflexivity* is crucial.

What is it that is said to turn back upon what?

And what composes the action of “turning back upon”?

Judith Butler⁵⁷

Reflexivity

Agency and accountability are two crucial and interdependent ideas in the context of language and violence. When we hear, around violent domestic relationships, statements like, “well, she keeps taking him back” and “she chooses to stay”, and so on, we are confronted with the ambiguity around action as personal choice or as social effect. Every day, women are killed, crippled or mutilated for attempting to leave violent relationships⁵⁸. If a violent partner threatens a woman with death or serious harm to her or her children if she leaves, then she may indeed “choose to stay”, but to constitute this as a personal “choice” is to shift attention away from the abuser’s violence, and onto the victim’s response to it (Anderson et al., 2003). This focus on the victim’s action also tends to position her as bearing the responsibility for outcomes, because she made this “choice”.

Whereas it may seem reasonable⁵⁹, in some contexts, to attribute actions and the decisions informing them to the “free will” of individual subjects, the presence of violence calls into question the possibility of an agency that somehow influences its environment whilst remaining “free” from its environment’s influence. Traditional accounts of subjectivity can sustain this logically inconsistent asymmetry, perhaps by means of the kind of confusion of language games for which Wittgenstein

57 Butler (1997b, p. 69)

58 A review of 22 empirical studies identifying risk factors for spousal murder in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States found “threat of separation” to be a major risk factor (Aldridge & Browne, 2003, p. 266), and this is consistent with a large amount of recent research (e.g. Campbell, 2007; Nicolaidis et al., 2003) suggesting that the decision to leave a physically abusive partner places a woman at high risk of murder or serious assault. “Declarations like ‘If I can’t have her, nobody can’ are recurring features of such cases” (Wilson & Daly, 1993, p. 3). Based on this research and the offending data, women are murdered and seriously assaulted every day for leaving or threatening to leave intimate relationships.

59 Clearly it *does* seem reasonable to many of us much of the time, given that the infamous philosophical problem of “free will versus determinism” has persisted for centuries, and relies heavily on the assumption that our subjective experience (of being disconnected agents “free” from the chains of cause and effect) reveals a truth that we must somehow reconcile with our very different experience of objects (which are inextricably connected to each other in relationships that can be described, across time, in terms of causality).

recommended “therapy” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001); in this case a confusion between talk of “making something happen” (in the sense of cause and effect) in language games of physical description, and talk of “making someone do something” (in the sense of coercion or manipulation) in language games of social narrative. In talk of accountability, “he made me do it” positions another person as more accountable for an action, and suggests coercion. Against this social fact of being “made” to act, we set up a binary opposite of *not* being caused to act, and so acting “freely”. The confusion occurs when we transpose this caused-or-free binary from the social context of coercion or its absence, and onto the different context of physical or general “cause and effect” relationships. The absence of a gun to my head does *not* make my writing “uncaused”: countless trillions of events—not only such obvious things as my conception and birth, but such things as the factors contributing to the room temperature, so that I am not somewhere else seeking a jacket or moving the computer to a warmer location—can all be treated as “causing” my writing inasmuch as I am writing because of them, and if they were otherwise I would not be writing. If we let go the persistent dualist myth of the “ghost in the machine” (Maynard, 2006; Ryle, 1949) where the psyche is somehow acting in the physical world while not being part of the physical world, then there is no need for glaring inconsistencies between our accounts of physical and psychological relationality.

Understood in this way the “free will versus determinism” debate depends upon a confusion of the language games of social coercion and physical causality, made possible by a lonely sense of “freedom” that depends in turn upon a profound sense of psychological alienation from the material world. Although Butler’s account is more concerned with the subject in a field of language than the brain in a field of particles, the subject’s being formed *by* discourse beyond the subject’s control similarly challenges the traditional boundary between self and world. “Does this mean that we are without agency and without responsibility?” (Butler, 2005, p. 85). This voices (rhetorically, in order to address it) a common criticism of accounts that challenge the uncaused “free” agency of the popular account; yet what makes it seem necessary to ask such a question?

Is the ghost in the machine the *only* protagonist that we can speak of, or write into our accounts of agency? O'Connor (2002) identifies a key assumption of this position: "if everybody's responsible, then nobody is" (p. 111). Yet how does my activity's being in some sense "caused" by prior events—or by discourse that exceeds me—make me any less accountable for this activity? Is a "caused" account, embedded in the world, less *meaningful* than a "free" account that enters the physical world from some other, transcendent place? Is it not still meaningful, whether I claim that I did something out of fear, or fascination, or because I was well paid, or coerced; intoxicated, trying to impress someone, trying to hurt someone, to heal someone, "because I felt like it", "I don't know why", and so on? All of these different accounts still ascribe responsibility differently, or achieve different effects socially: does my preferring one over another require me to deny that I am part of the universe?

In trying to counter attributions of blame I will most likely attempt to offer *some* account—however inadequate—of external factors influencing my "choice", so there are two inversely related sets of circumstances in which it might very well be useful, rhetorically, to posit an uncaused agency. If I want to *blame* another—a child, for instance, for "wicked behaviour", so that I can justify a performance of anger in order to bully the child into obedience, rather than addressing the causes of the behaviour in a more collaborative way—then it makes very good sense to constitute the child's agency as "free" rather than acknowledge any contributions I may have made through conditioning, modelling the behaviour, and so on. Conversely, if I want to take *full credit* for something—my financial "success" for example, so that I can claim it was entirely my hard work that got me here, and not my privileged access to education, or freedom from the career-damaging effects of regular beatings from a violent partner, or any other fortunate circumstances—then once again, the independence of the "I" is useful. In either case, the agency so constituted supports the asocial mechanistic "individual among many other individuals" of traditional psychological accounts, rather than the properly *social* subjectivity of contemporary social psychological theory.

"The grandiose notion of the transparent 'I' that is presupposed as the ethical ideal" (Butler, 2005, p. 80) is grandiose not only because it claims to be able to *know* the

trillions of contributing factors and contexts and possible explanations of its actions and to be able to choose a single objectively “true” explanation from among them, but also because—in the traditional account—the “free agent” whose agency *depends upon* a radical freedom from the constraints of environment and history is not only “transparent” but also transcendent; hovering above the material world like God, with an agency impervious to causation, and yet able at any moment to intervene in the world (in the brain, perhaps, firing a crucial neurone here or tweaking a crucial synapse there)⁶⁰. An alternate account, less grandiose and more consistent or coherent with the accounts we give of interactions between objects, involves an agency that is “neither fully determined nor radically free” (Butler, 2005, p. 19). Subjectivity, for Butler, is inextricable from its social (and so linguistic or discursive) context; but this does not mean the end of agency: it only means that our theories of agency must be more complex; more attentive the contextual situation of the agents they discuss, more reflexively attentive to their own rhetorical performativity, and—in the move towards “even more reflexivity” that characterises much of Butler’s theory—more reflexive too about the agency and subjectivity of the theorist, which the theory is constituting implicitly, even when it explicitly theorises the agency of others.

In relation to violence, the inconsistency between subjective “agency” and objective “causality” in the traditional account is problematic, because violent projects can exploit this inconsistency to obscure causal relationships in the reproduction of social violence. In this context what becomes interesting is the rhetorical effect of employing *either* discourses of material causality *or* discourses of freedom-versus-coercion to account for an event. We see this very often in the forensic domain, when the fate of a defendant is being contested in the media or courtroom. If some external factor can be presented that the public or jury can relate to as if it were their own experience (e.g. the aggravation caused by an underprivileged “tagger” defacing their private

60 Did God really die, as Nietzsche claimed, in the transition from Christendom to modernity; or was it rather that He became the rational Western subject? “I am” is, in the Judaic-Christian tradition, the secret, sacred name of God (Exodus 3:14, King James Version). “I think, therefore I am”, in this context, might be not so much the beginning of the *end* of discourses of supernatural activity in the world, but rather the development of a more subtle and effective means of propagating such discourse. An “unmoved mover” seems, rhetorically, like an excellent general-purpose tool for avoiding uncomfortable explanations that involve actual connections and chains of events. Perhaps you can deny the “unmoved mover” if He is said to dwell in the clouds; but can you deny the “unmoved mover” when *you* are constituted as such, and your very existence as a conscious subject seems to be the proof of uncaused events?

property⁶¹) then the defendant's actions can be presented as provoked or in some other way *caused* by this external factor. If, on the other hand, the public cannot relate to the experience (e.g. the extremely severe child abuse associated with extremely serious offending⁶²), then the defendant's actions were uncaused and the defendant must be held fully responsible. While the forensic domain is a familiar scene of this sparring between "causes" and "choices", many other scenes of justification for retaliatory violence deploy the same rhetoric: the actions of "terrorists" are evil for which they must be held to account, whereas our burning their families to death was not a choice for which we must be accountable, since it was caused by their evil (which was not, of course, caused by our burning their families to death at some earlier time, since that also was not our fault, but merely a "consequence" of some earlier act of theirs, and so on ad nauseam). There is no need to suggest a "fundamental attribution error" or bias towards understanding the behaviour of others as dispositional: we can instead ask questions about the rhetorical effects of doing so.

If a woman kills her husband, what are the likely outcomes of explaining such an action in terms of free agency (the *choice* to kill) or in terms of causality (fear, a history of abuse, and so on)? No matter what explanations we might offer, doesn't *any* explanation other than "at the end of the day, she chose to do it" do a better job of problematising the conditions within which the action arose, and so perhaps of supporting interventions to change such conditions? By contrast, the "free will" story supports a traditional retributive intervention. Ironically, the idea that harsher punishments can have a deterrent effect—that she might not have killed her abuser had she feared the state's torture even more intensely—concedes the point that her "choice" can be influenced by "external" factors; yet it does not concede the point that this vulnerability of agency to causality makes causal explanations more useful for understanding violence, and free will explanations more useful for sustaining it.

61 "Tagging" or spray-painting graffiti "tags" or signatures onto fences, walls and other surfaces, is a source of great annoyance to many property owners. In 2008 a 15-year-old Māori boy was about to tag the fence of a Caucasian businessman: the businessman chased him for 300m and stabbed him to death. One of the national newspaper's headlines read, "Hang him or give him a medal? Citizens divided over knifeman" (Tan, 2009, February 14).

62 Taffy Hotene—whose case is discussed in more detail on pp. 193-196—was raised in circumstances of horrific abuse and deprivation. When, after many years of abuse, he committed terrible crimes against others, a psychologist declared that "the decision that he made each time that he committed a crime was his, and his alone" (The Law Report, 2009, January 20, ¶ 63).

While Butler has recently challenged this cycle of vengeance explicitly (e.g. Butler, 2009; Butler, 2004a), her critique of accountability in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) addresses the idea of accountability in terms of the impossibility of any subject's giving a "full" account of his or her actions, and so the subject's "opacity to itself" (p. 69). Butler also treats the relationship between accountability and blame as important: she relates Nietzsche's account in which the very inauguration of reflexivity and so the genesis of subjectivity takes place in the context of having to excuse one's actions in the face of an accusation; and as her book's original subtitle *A Critique of Ethical Violence* suggests, her interest in accountability is related to its importance in contexts where ethical or "righteous" violence is justified by accounts of blame. The subject of Butler's theory acts in a world that is not only intersubjective, but also intertextual in the sense that a subject can always be located in multiple fields of discourse. Inasmuch as there are always alternate narratives and frameworks of understanding within which to account for an event, none of us ever fully understands what we are doing: to imagine that we do suggests a deep confidence in a powerfully hegemonic single account of reality.

Butler's critique of accountability can be a useful resource for a strongly anti-violent treatment of the issue of "cause versus choice", because the justification for one explanation over another ("what *really* happened?") can be based upon notions of full and proper accounts that accurately represent the events; and Butler's critique calls this objectivist tactic into question. The widespread use of this tactic not only suggests that minority cultures or others whose "reality" differs from the dominant reality will end up being *blamed* a lot more often when their interests conflict with those of the dominant group, but (perhaps more importantly, as it can do this even in contexts where there is no obvious power imbalance) it also de-emphasises the performativity of the explanation itself. The claim to know "what really happened" can function as a disavowal of social stake: one is not doing anything *to* the group in question; one is merely relating the facts "about" them. I would prefer to argue that what matters is what is being done by means of an explanation: this is a more important "truth" than any alleged correspondence with an objective reality. This is not an argument that valuable aspects of the notion of referential truth should be ignored and that the use of "correspondence with reality" validation should therefore

be utterly abandoned: it is only an argument for giving *priority* to the criterion of non-violence. Where this is contested by appeals to the priority of the “true account” in relation to “reality”, Butler’s theory can dramatically undermine the basis of such appeals.

In terms of reflexivity, this can translate into an awareness of one’s own accounts as necessarily limited, and one’s own subjectivity as necessarily obscured from one’s own attention: the self is “opaque” and some aspects of it will always be hidden from conscious or rational description. Butler’s writing style demonstrates—to me, at least—this kind of reflexive humility or awareness of the limits of *author-ity*, inasmuch as it addresses me as a fellow human being rather than as an opponent to be convinced, a fool to be educated, or an unethical person to be shamed into proper conduct. Despite my identity as a heterosexual male, and Butler’s strong critique of heteronormative masculinity, I do not experience myself as being “thrown out”⁶³ of the text by anything that addresses the reader as “us” and heterosexual males as “them”. It is not merely that Butler seems to be careful to distinguish between criticism of practices or discourses and criticism of people: even the passion of her criticism of unjust practices is a *careful* passion; not “restrained” so much as carefully pitched and thoughtfully phrased. It suggests an awareness of the inevitable incompleteness of her own account: it is offered to the reader, with confidence but without arrogance. Calling into question the criteria by which injurious language is deemed harmful, Butler says of the content of such language, “the very ‘content’ of certain kinds of speech can be understood only in terms of *the action that the speech performs*” (Butler, 1997a, p. 72). Here the analysis of linguistic performativity or meaning as use is being applied to the *content* of language. How much of the content of language is “contained” in its *form*? It is not hard to imagine hyperbolic scenarios in which the performative effect of language use is achieved more by the form of its delivery than by its ostensible semantic “content”: “peace be with you” is probably not a blessing but a threat, if it is painted on the wall of the home of a political protester’s family in the murdered protester’s blood. As the examples become more commonplace and the incongruities

63 My supervisors use this metaphor of being thrown out of a text to describe the experience of suddenly being the other that the text is writing about, rather than the reader to whom the text is addressed.

less extreme, it may become easier to fall into the trap of attending only to discursive “content”.

In relation to epistemological violence we might ask about, for example, the form of academic literature. This question is not only a question about the influence of form upon content—asking if the “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 81) that might be articulated by marginal voices could, in the process of making their content acceptable to an academic readership, have to substantially alter that content—but a question about the discursive effects of the form itself. What is *said* by the style of prose, the grammatical conventions, the presentation of the text, even the act of submitting it for academic assessment? A statement in a thesis may have a different meaning if the “same” statement—in terms of surface meaning⁶⁴—is shouted in a prison yard, spoken as part of a prayer in church, or embroidered and framed for hanging in the kitchen. Even to the extent that psychological theory involves formal academic constraints, it might be useful to consider the relevance of these constraints to the theory itself. For example, Māori traditions of knowledge place great importance on *kanohi ki te kanohi* (roughly “face to face”) or *kanohi kitea* (“the seen face”) (Bishop, 1999, p. 13), and it might be worth considering, with Derrida (Derrida, 1967/1997) and others, the specific role of *writing* in relation to language use more generally, and what impact the relative importance of academic journals and face-to-face interactions could have upon theory development.

However, if we assume for the moment that a reflexive criticism can be rigorous without saying, “enough, even silence would be better”—or without saying, with Fish (1995), “if you want to send a message that will be heard beyond the academy, get

64 By “surface meaning” I do not mean Kristeva’s “phenotext”, in contrast with semiotic genotext, so that “a theoretical treatise in mathematics is almost pure phenotext” (Roudiez, 1980, p. 7). If the performative or rhetorical generative process I am writing about here were the “genotext” then nothing—not even a mathematical treatise—would be anywhere near “pure phenotext”. However in this case it is not merely a denotative/performative contrast either, because even a clearly and already “performative” statement like the imperative “just say ‘no’ to drugs” has more layers of meaning that will differ if the statement is posted on the wall of a school cafeteria (here it can also say “we are a responsible school surrounding our children with responsible messages”), or posted on the wall of a community mental health support centre (here it can hint at a subversive message inasmuch as it can refer not only to illegal drugs but also to prescribed psychiatric medications; in this case perhaps there is an interesting “genotext” in Kristeva’s sense). I am using the metaphor of depth only to distinguish the easier determination of “surface meaning” from the more difficult contextual analysis of meaning in terms of performative aims and effects.

out of it” (p. 2)—and that the conditions of possibility for non-violent psychological theory do at least allow for such theory to be *written*, and for it to be presented as journal articles and so on, then the issue of “form” can be reduced (for the moment, at least) to questions around the “style” of such written theory.

In Gane (2004), Butler discusses some of the ways that the tradition of literary theory can help us attend to “what is being socially articulated at the level of form” (p. 48), where a social science tradition can neglect this kind of analysis. An inability to perceive violent rhetorical effects achieved through style, literary form and so on could perhaps be understood as an example of the “foreclosure” described in *Reflexive Problems of Violence* as an unconsciousness due to lack of narrative context: if an epistemological violence that works through a theory’s *content* is already something that Teo (2008) “introduces” with much explanation—rather than discusses easily with the assumption that his readers will recognise the violence he is naming—how much more unnameable is an epistemological violence enacted through literary *form*? A clichéd example of the role of language in perception is the anecdote⁶⁵ about Inuit peoples having many different words for many different varieties of what we know simply as “snow”. The implications of this idea are important: it is not merely that we cannot see these kinds of snow for which our language has no words, but we cannot see processes involving them either, so that a sudden abundance of one kind and reduction of all others might be invisible to us. A language community that talks about literary form (such as a community of literary theorists) may—through having a language for naming structural linguistic elements for which other communities do not have names—be aware of processes in this domain of which other communities are unaware, including violent processes.

Whether or not it is a conscious style informed by her familiarity with literary theory, Butler’s writing style seems to me to demonstrate a kind of performative consistency with the contents of her texts. I wonder if it is *because* of her reluctance to arrogantly shut down a line of questioning in a decisive way that her writing style has been so heavily criticised? Critics of Butler’s theory were delighted when, in 1998, *Philosophy and Literature* awarded her the first “prize” in its “Bad Writing Competition” (Roden,

65 The dubious veracity of which is discussed in Martin (1986).

2001), accusing her of long-winded and pretentious obscurantism. I suspect that any text attempting to avoid the epistemological violence with which “normal” language is saturated risks being read as deliberately obscure: if readers do not understand an author’s reasons for rejecting a common, “easy” expression, not all of them are going to take it on faith that they are good reasons, and that the author is being careful rather than pretentious. Interestingly, Butler makes similar comments in relation to *Hegel’s* writing style. Like Butler, Hegel has often been accused of awful writing⁶⁶: even Butler, who elected to read him for her doctorate, describes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 1807/1977) as a “sometimes tortuous text” (Butler, 1999, p. 17), but as with her own writing, she is willing to defend the fact that “Hegel’s sentence structure seems to defy the laws of grammar” (p. 17), in Hegel’s case arguing that “the narrative structure of the text as a whole convey[s] the elusive nature of both the grammatical and human subject” (p. 18).

Perhaps it is possible, without too great a struggle, to write in a non-violent way while remaining “accessible” to more than a small group of readers with similar concerns. Perhaps not. As Salih (2003) suggests, “social change ... is painful and difficult, in which case, perhaps we shouldn’t baulk if the text is, too” (p. 49). It would be an advantage, in terms of practice implications, if guidelines for non-violent theory development could be articulated in a form accessible to large numbers of practising psychologists. I hope that some of the recommendations arising from the present research—for example, those pertaining to the terms used to describe people in psychological texts (pp. 146-174)—will make sense for some people, even in a context of traditional understandings of subjectivity.

A wide readership, however, may amplify the effects of an epistemological violence, so to compromise the truth—in Gandhi’s sense of truth—for the sake of readability may be a serious mistake. In any case, minimisation of theoretical or textual violence involves a comprehensive effort, not only to minimise the violence that may occur some day as a distant effect of the text’s claims, but to minimise its operation at the moments of writing or reading, to the furthest possible extent, by following Butler’s

66 “Too many excuses have been made for abominable philosophical prose, so let us just say outright: Hegel was a horrible writer” (Solomon, 1983, p. xi).

example of taking the effects of writing seriously, and aiming to ensure that these effects do not include the objectification, vilification or humiliation of others. To the extent that it aims for consistency between its stated aims and its social effects, a text that claims to work against violence must aim to be a non-violent text.

A key contribution that Butler makes to this aim is her insistence—in the tradition of post-structuralist critique—that I, the individual theorist, cannot fully *achieve* such a text; and her closely related insistence that a kind of freedom or reiterative potential can be constituted *in terms of* these limits to my authority over the text I write, rather than in spite of them: the conditions “limiting” my agency are also the conditions producing it. Control over a text’s meaning involves control over how a text is read, and so the violent fantasy of authorial control is related to the violent fantasy of control over a text’s readers. A text’s claim to be working against violence is undermined by its own efforts to herd readers (with cattle-prods, perhaps) into a particular theoretical camp (perhaps a camp that flies a “non-violence” flag); but this kind of passion for conformity makes sense in a traditional account of language and subjectivity in which we must fight to occupy the grounds of truth, because among multiple positions, for mine to be right the others must be wrong.

In this context Butler’s writing *about* subjects who cannot possibly give “full” accounts of themselves—because their “selves” are being co-produced by the others to which the accounts are being given—is consistent with her writing *as* such a subject. Both stylistically and in terms of theoretical content, Butler’s theory is unashamedly partial. In the terms of this theory, *all* theory is partial: the necessity for shame and denial of one’s own partiality may be the price paid for aggression toward and condemnation of the partiality of others.

By engaging with Butler’s theory, I am therefore attempting to take up Butler’s writing as a practice: *a way of relating to other texts*, and so in a context of discursive subjectivity, a way of relating to other people. Some elements of this practice can be discerned in the language use of theorists working in other contexts, too. Niels Bohr, one of the key contributors to quantum physics, said of language and physics: “We

must be clear that, when it comes to atoms, language can be used only as in poetry. The poet, too, is not nearly so concerned with describing facts as with creating images and establishing mental connections” (Bohr, 1920, as cited in Sheppard, 1993, p. 28). This account of language attends to its social effects, at least in relation to technological empowerment: the “poetry” of quantum physics is true when it produces in the reader a set of “mental connections” enabling mastery of the appropriate tasks. A good physicist does not produce another good physicist by “describing facts”, except insofar as this poetry, art, or *practice* of “describing facts” contributes to the social production of a good physicist. To imagine that the good chemist’s *useful metaphor* for working with a chemical is actually a tiny “copy” of that chemical inside the chemist’s head is to make a fetish out of the metaphor: it is to confuse the establishment of a relationship of knowledge with a transfer of material, so that the empiricist researcher is literally “taking the world in”, rather than adjusting always existing relationships (including those relationships that we might in some traditions call “knowledge of” or “ignorance of” objects in the world).

The theoretical resources that Butler offers to a non-violent psychology are valuable because, reflexively, they announce themselves as the instruments and effects of a social practice, rather than as an accurate representation of “how things are”. They can be a metaphor for how things are: Butler’s “indistinguishability between the other and myself at the heart of who I am” (Butler, 2005, p. 75) is a poetic use of language with *effects* upon readers; not a penetrating snapshot of how things “really” are that readers must accept in precisely the way that Butler intends, or else remain in ignorance.

The idea that a subject immersed in the real world can at the same time be ignorant of the “real reality” of the world fits nicely with the metaphor of the subject as ghost in a machine: the ignorant subject flails about almost blindly in a machine with a tiny, dirty, pinhole-sized window, while the enlightened subject has achieved enlightenment by “letting in the light”; enlarging the window and polishing the glass until the ghost can see clearly what lies beyond the machine, and can steer it accordingly. Like the change of metaphor from an atomic nucleus consisting of welded-together billiard balls to a

nucleus consisting of waves interacting like ripples on the surface of water⁶⁷, a change of metaphor from a soul comprised of a ghost in a machine to a soul that speaks and is spoken into being by other souls is not a change in terms of “accuracy”, because truth-as-accuracy belongs to the world of ghosts and machines. It may, however, generate a change in terms of truth-as-non-violence.

In this context, Butler enables me now to engage with the practice of forensic psychology, equipped with a set of theoretical resources that can help us to “make sense” out of criminal violence. Some of this assistance involves the way these resources make it harder for us to forget that we *are* “making” sense out of the issues we theorise. They remind us that there is no God’s-eye-view from which to narrate what is really going on when a crime is committed or a prison is built: our theories of these practices are engagements with them. The theoretical resources that Butler offers us can be developed into technologies for such engagements. By telling a particular story about the psyche, Butler contributes to the production of a particular kind of psyche. Engaging with the stories of the psychology of crime, and informed by Butler’s account, we can work towards a psychology of crime that will reduce rather than reproduce its violence.

67 For all their inadequacies, metaphors like these have been very fruitful: e.g. Anastopoulos (2008) discusses how, when Schrödinger was starting to devise his demonstrably useful quantum wave mechanics, “in the back of Schrödinger’s mind was a picture from wave propagation in fluid mechanics” (pp. 178-179).

The degree of civilisation in a society can be judged by entering its prisons

Fyodor Dostoevsky⁶⁸

Legal and Criminal Violence

Criminal violence is among the most visible forms of violence. We can watch it every night on television: according to Chiricos, Padgett and Gertz (2000), on many televised news programmes in the United States, crime stories not only run every night, but are usually the lead story; and they can take up more than half of the total news broadcast time. In this context the evening news is a regular evening spectacle of crime: a theatre that plays every night (with follow-up performances from “reality” policing shows, fictional series about specialists hunting serial killers, and so on). If the function of television is to produce a particular kind of audience (p. 133), how might the regular spectacle of crime relate to this function?

Psychologies informed by Foucaultian accounts of power and subjectivity highlight the significance of the forensic domain because “for Foucault, individuals are never made visible in their normality, but only in their abnormality”⁶⁹ (Fleming, 2003, p. 105). Discourses of deviance are implicitly discourses of normal subjectivity, and so criminal violence is not only highly visible, but also highly significant in terms of its contribution to this subjectivity. I am interested in how violence may operate to *produce* this visible account of itself, and so in the relationships between criminal violence and the forms of violence that are less visible. How might the reflexive problems of violence discussed in the first chapter operate in mainstream discourses of criminal behaviour? How could the theoretical material discussed in *Judith Butler and*

68 Attributed (Platt, 1989, p. 286).

69 Foucault’s insight is also significant for psychology in terms of the ethical implications of the shift—in discourses of the “psyche” or “soul”—from “spiritual” psychologies explicitly concerned with ethics, to the medical model of health versus abnormality. By constituting normality as “mental *health*” and abnormality as “mental *illness*”, psychology not only sanctions conformity to existing power relations, but counter-subverts the ancient *ethical* madneses of prophecy and so on—whereby a community can challenge or transcend its customary ways of thinking or its “sanity”—by positioning radical non-conformity as mental illness. A politically naïve psychology not only reproduces violence by normalising violent social power relations; it also functions to resist challenges to violence by denigrating the abnormal as *unhealthy*, drawing on a metaphor of physical abnormality or “disfigurement” to position the *differently* formed psyche as *de*-formed.

Violence inform our engagement with these relationships? Butler's account of the subject can contribute to a non-violent psychology if it can help us to narrate criminal violence in a way that addresses, disrupts, or at least does not facilitate the reproduction of violence through such accounts. The "visibility" of criminal violence may function to distract us from the active effects of our narrating events in particular ways. We "see" criminal violence as it is constituted for us every day in media accounts, even if we are fortunate enough not to see it or otherwise experience it directly.

In 2006, in Salem, Ohio, a man captures a woman and forces her into his car, driving her away from family or friends who might protect her from him. Once she is completely at his mercy, he is joined by associates, and—ignoring her screams—they hold her down and tear off all of her clothes. For the next six hours, she is locked, naked, in a tiny room. Should we constitute this account of legal violence—an arrest by police, followed by legal suicide prevention procedures (Meyer, 2008)—as a *response* to the criminal violence of the "offender", or as an act of violence that, as such, might contribute to the reproduction of the criminal violence it aims to oppose, by modelling the appropriateness of interpersonal violence, once a person has been positioned as a suitable target? How much is our perception of "violence" influenced by whether it aligns with or challenges state power that depends upon violence? Do some of the normal activities carried out by state officials avoid problematisation as "violence" simply *because* they are carried out by state officials? If we are inclined to notice violent outbursts of resistance to power, but not to notice the hegemonic violence that keeps such power relations in place, what are the social and political implications of the potential for violence to shape the language we use to theorise violence? How do our contemporary texts of forensic psychology realise this potential?

Writing about "human hunters and predators", Andrews and Bonta (2003) say that "in order to carry out their acts" they "must select, follow and 'capture' their victims", and that "this aspect of violent criminal behavior—the following, watching, and waiting—is one of the most fearful aspects of criminal behavior" (p. 389). The word

“behavior” is both times qualified by the word “criminal”, underscoring the importance of its being done *outside the sanction of the law*. Is the desire to hunt and capture people without their consent, however, not already a problematic desire; or should we only address it as *violence* when its fulfilment puts people at odds with the power of the state? Or, if we problematise the desire to hunt and capture other people, do we regard the problem as having been adequately addressed when a subject finds legal ways to satisfy this desire?

“The thrill of the chase” is a familiar phrase when police discuss their work (e.g. Baker, 2009), and Herbert (1998) writes of police “enjoyment of the thrill of the hunt” (p. 396). When Jameson and Strudwick (2009)—two women who analysed interviews with security guards in an English city—write that “male security guards, somewhat unsurprisingly, appeared to revel in ‘the thrill of the chase!’” (p. 98), there is no explicit commentary⁷⁰ as to how are we to read the adverb “unsurprisingly”, and the exclamation mark at the end of the claim. I am inclined to read them, together, as an acknowledgement that “boys will be boys”: the *male* security guards “revel in ‘the thrill of the chase’” because to pursue, capture and conquer another person is a thrill for a masculine subject. I would much rather see people motivated by the desire for thrills and other pleasures than by fear, especially if they are doing the kinds of dangerous and important work that many police do; heroic work, at times, placing their own bodies between violence and victims. I wonder though if the pleasures associated with protecting and saving people could be untangled from the pleasures of hunting and conquering them, so that the former might be admired and the latter discouraged? To admire the conquest of another human being seems to offer encouragement to the very behaviours that policing is supposed to deter.

If the “human hunter” or “predator” in popular (media and mainstream psychological) discourse is typically a *male sex offender*—and the serial killer is said to “exalt in the thrill of the chase”, to the extent that this thrill becomes “even more satisfying than the murders themselves” (Oates, 1999, p. 254)—then we might ask whether the

⁷⁰ There are, however, plenty of implicit contextual cues, like the phrase “watching breasts instead of making arrests” (p. 95) or the claim, attributed to a “male security guard”, that “we are all partners, a *brotherhood* [italics added], many of us are ex-forces” (p. 98).

reproduction of *masculine* desires to hunt, capture and conquer human bodies could contribute to the reproduction of criminal violence, even when it is ostensibly to be deployed against such violence. Here an analysis that attends to the hunter-prey relationship itself can produce a different account of “violence” as a problem, from one in which the legal and illegal hunting of human prey are constituted as utterly different⁷¹ activities: violence rather than illegality is foregrounded as a problem. In this account, to position “legal violence” as being less problematic or serious than “criminal violence” can be to position the legal violence of the Nazi camp guard as less problematic or serious than the criminal violence of the prisoner attacking the camp guard in an effort to escape.

A tendency for hegemonic violence to be obscured by the production of its own normality through foregrounding of criminal violence can be partially unsettled by theory that adopts, if not a relativistic stance, then at least a critical scepticism in relation to moral discourses of good and evil. We have no shortage of warfare, and so we have no shortage of “baddies”—terrorists, communists, warlords and so forth—yet seldom do we hear the “baddies” affirming, “yes, we are evil terrorists: our violence arises from the malice in our hearts; and indeed, righteousness is our enemy”. Instead, violent physical confrontations between conflicting interests map to conflicting accounts of righteousness and evil: the “goodies” and “baddies” are not consistent across the various accounts. In one respect however, they *are* consistent: the goodies are “us”, and the baddies are “them”, so that whoever is telling the story is the group whose interests are reasonable, whereas *they* on the other hand are the violent enemy who cannot be reasoned with and so must be dealt with by force, despite our decency and preference for peace. The “goodness” of hegemonic violence justifies its reproduction, and so in this context, the constitution of highly visible “evil” violence can take place precisely in order to justify the violence of the “good”.

71 They are, of course, different, and I am not arguing for a *reduction* of all such accounts to a simplistic “violence of the hunt” analysis, regardless of whether people are hunting others to assault them or to prevent them from carrying out such assaults. We can however attend to the violence of the hunt as a means of “prevention”, and we can ask whether such violence might feed into the activities it claims to address, and whether other approaches to prevention might therefore be more effective. The legal and illegal hunt and capture of other people are different, but they are both violent, and this commonality may be even more important than their differences.

The founder of the first journal of sociology, Émile Durkheim—“often credited with making sociology a ‘science’ by insisting that social facts can only be explained by social facts” (Wright, 2009, p. 64)—made a similar argument in relation to the spectacle of crime, long before it was a nightly theatre performed through television. The response to crime is far more important as a social *ritual* than as the instrumental intervention that it usually claims to be. Legal punishment “does not serve, or serves only very incidentally, to correct the guilty person or scare off any imitators” (Durkheim, 1893/1997, p. 62). “Its real function is to maintain inviolate the cohesion of society by sustaining the common consciousness in all its vigour” (Durkheim, 1893/1997, p. 63).

In this context Dostoevsky’s claim that our prisons are a measure of our civilisation, with which this chapter opened, can be read in several ways. In a fairly traditional account of “civilisation”, we can read “entering its prisons” as “seeing what it is prepared to do to people”. It is once a person is rendered utterly *violable*—both physically by means of capture and restraint, and socially by means of discursive positioning—that our readiness to violate can be assessed. The presence of easily violable persons does not serve as an index of our violence by itself; but when their interests conflict with ours—as will nearly always be the case when we have taken them prisoner—then their vulnerability to instrumental violence means that we have both an opportunity and a reason to be violent. We have something of a “measure”, then, of the violence of a civilisation.

Auschwitz for example is often used in this way; in fact it, and other concentration camps, are almost explicitly presented in terms of Dostoevsky’s claim in countless cinematic and televised depictions of the final days of the war: the horrified liberators *learn the truth* about the Nazis by entering their prisons and discovering the suffering that they hide. Despite its familiarity as a symbol of evil, the “meaning” of Auschwitz is contested: in a context of admiration for modernity it can be “a huge and mysterious evil, so resistant to the normal progress of human rationality” (Alexander, 2002, p. 28); but in critical texts it has almost the opposite meaning. Rather than evilifying “the Nazis” as if twentieth century Germany were radically different from

other Western states, critical accounts often treat the systematic slaughter of human beings in death-factories as “*the* paradigmatic modernist event” (Faye, 2003, p. 246): modernity itself is constituted in these terms, so that modern rationality becomes “a project of ‘mastery’ that would eventually lead to Auschwitz” (Laclau, 1989, p. 66). For other writers, Auschwitz symbolises the inadequacy of the symbolic in the face of unimaginable violence: “a metonym for ... historical unintelligibility and radical unrepresentability” (Jay, 2009, p. 110).

Skirting the edges of the question of “whose evil?” Auschwitz embodied, another familiar treatment of this material—in psychology, at least—was to use it to organise the prototypical (and sometimes purely rhetorical) question of terrible acts of violence: “how could anyone do such a thing?”. Milgram’s (1965) infamous obedience studies suggested, to Milgram at least, that “the kind of character produced in American democratic society, cannot be counted on to insulate its citizens from brutality and inhumane treatment at the direction of malevolent authority” (Milgram, 1965, p. 75). A few years later in another classic social psychological study, Zimbardo’s “Stanford Prison Experiment” (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, Maslach & Haney, 2000) suggested that a simulated prison environment could produce sadistic behaviour in normal American college students (Haney & Zimbardo, 2009; McFarland & Carnahan, 2009). Interestingly, Milgram finishes his (1965) account by citing Laski (1929) in a way that accords with a traditional reading of Dostoevsky’s claim: “civilization means, above all, an unwillingness to inflict unnecessary pain” (Milgram, 1965, p. 75).

In terms of this first, “traditional” reading of Dostoevsky’s claim, none of this is particularly encouraging as a “measure” of the modern Western civilisation. Today, many people forced into the United States’ prisons can expect to be subjected to “years of sexual slavery and torture” (Dumond, 2003, p. 356), while on the other side of the walls, the community is “turning a ‘blind eye’” (Dumond, 2003, p. 358) to their suffering, making it one of our “darkest, and yet most open, secrets” (Man & Cronan, 2001, p. 128). That it can remain a “secret” at all is likely an effect of the prison and its geographical veiling of such treatment from public sight: it would probably be

harder to constitute ourselves as “civilised” in terms of modern ideas if the people we condemned to years of rape and other violence were abused in full view, in cages along the sides of our streets.

Undoubtedly the symbol of Auschwitz *does* represent a violent historical event that far exceeds the limits of “representable” horror; but how adequate is any representation of the personal horror of being deliberately killed by other people? In our contemporary gas chambers, we—the modern West—use the same gas now⁷² as we used upon the Jews (Christianson, 2010). In fact, we tested our gas chambers on America’s unwanted *before* we went into large scale production in Europe: the method of killing an individual was “adapted for genocide” (Christianson, 2010, p. 149). For many, this comparison of the violence of an execution in the United States with the violence of an execution in the Third Reich may be outrageous. For the human bodies writhing as they inhale the gas, neither the nationality of the executioners nor their legal entitlement to kill may have much bearing on the personal violence of the event. In any case, imprisonment, executions, and other legal violence *can be problematised as violence*, even when they are constituted by those who profit from them as a necessary response to criminal violence, or other threats to society. This raises another set of questions around the idea of “civilisation”: for example, what may be some of the social effects of constituting the deliberate killing of human beings as a “civilised” activity? Or, if our death sentences, military invasions and so on are *lapses* of civilisation, how does civilisation come to be positioned as depending upon these lapses for its continued existence?

Another somewhat different reading of Dostoevsky’s claim might be informed by Durkheim’s argument about the primacy of the ritual element of our response to crime. In this case the prison enables us to assess “the degree of civilisation”, not in the traditional (and likely intended) sense of “degree” as “amount”, but rather in the sense of “degree” as a point on a compass. The question changes from “let us look

72 In the United States, federal prisoners are executed by lethal injection, and most states that perform executions also prefer to kill by this method, so execution by gas chamber is rare, but it can still be carried out in some states (Snell, 2009). Whether we poison them, electrocute them, hang them or shoot them, over 3,000 prisoners are currently awaiting such treatment in the United States (Snell, 2009).

inside our prisons to see, from the violence done therein, to what extent we are civilised”, to, “let us look inside our prisons to see, from the groups we exclude from civilised society, in what direction ‘civilisation’ lies”. Talk of prisoner “reentry into the community” (Wormith et al., 2007, p. 880) is ubiquitous in popular and mainstream psychological discourse around prisoner release. “The community” is defined—by both physical and linguistic exclusion—as the people who are *not* in prison. If it is inconvenient for rhetoric of “community safety” to have to take into account the safety of colonised or formerly enslaved peoples, rituals of exclusion can demonstrate that these at-risk groups are, in fact, *not* part of the community at all, so that “the community” can continue to prosper at their expense. In this account one enters a prison not so much to assess a civilisation in terms of “how civilised” it really is, but rather in terms of *who* is civilised, and who—in order to support this construction of civilisation—is constituted as “savage”, “barbaric” or “brutal”. Animal-like, inasmuch as “civilisation” does not mitigate *their* thrill of the hunt.

In terms of brutality, the modern prison—“the paradigmatic institution of democracy” (Davis & Dent, 2001, p. 1236)—is “less brutal” than the terrible and more visible punishments of pre-modern and early modern Europe. Yet to understand prison only in these terms is to position it simply as an improvement over Roman crucifixion or medieval disembowelment; a “step in the right direction” towards a civilisation worthy of the name. Foucault’s research around the development of prisons and imprisonment did not constitute it as a more humane or ethical means of maintaining state power, but rather as a more *efficient* and *effective* means; “an element of that physics of power which gave rise to the psychology of the subject” (Foucault, 1997, p. 36). The stunning “failure” of our modern prisons to eliminate criminal violence should not be understood as a failure at all, but rather as a vital part of “the coupled penalty-delinquent system” (p. 35). As a certain amount of unemployment can be desirable in capitalist economies (in order to keep workers fearful, and so tolerant of otherwise intolerable working conditions), so a certain amount of *crime* can be desirable in modern societies (in order to keep people fearful and tolerant of otherwise intolerable

political conditions⁷³). Thus “the penal institution—with the prison at its center—manufactures a category of individuals who form a circuit with it: prison does not correct—it endlessly calls the same ones back” (Foucault, 1997, p. 35)⁷⁴.

Prison and the modern discourse of crime and imprisonment “constitutes a marginalized population that is used to exert pressure” (pp. 35-36) on the wider population; not through the inefficient traditional method of direct threat, but through the production of a more and more precisely defined “normal subject”: a subject made known by the *abnormality* of the delinquent subject. Normal and abnormal subjects are defined in relation to each other, and each play specific roles in discourses of crime that function to reproduce specific arrangements of power. We can “consider both the criminal justice system that is concentrated on poor communities and the private sector of middle-class securitized environments as class-specific modes of *governing through crime* [italics added] that interact with each other” (Simon, 2007, p. 7). The “transformation from the welfare to the penal state” (Brown, 2008, p. 133) involves an ingenious political strategy of taking the inconvenient, ever-growing populations of victims of structural violence—the poor, ethnic minorities, formerly enslaved populations and so on—and *using* these populations instead of direct repression to frighten the general population into acceptance of state violence as “protection”, so that the state’s control and capacity for direct repression can be continually increased as we move towards “a new social and civic order built fundamentally around violent crime” (Brown, 2008, p. 133).

73 For example, living in Binde and Giroux’s (Giroux, 2003) “emergency time”. In an emergency, one’s normal activities must be put aside, and one must simply obey the instructions of rescue workers, police, fire and ambulance crews, etc. To question them is irresponsible: the delay could be disastrous. Politically, “emergency time” is constituted rhetorically in order to shut down debate and attention to long-term issues (like the *causes* of crime): the immediate presence of threat demands immediate action, and to question such action is irresponsible. The violence of 9/11 may have been useful for the Bush administration politically, inasmuch as it stole the spotlight from debate around a dubious election win, and justified military aggression that might have been much harder to justify in the absence of the 9/11 attacks. Horrific criminal violence can be similarly useful for any rule of law. The “social contract” itself—“our ideology” (Gauthier, 1977, p. 130)—*depends upon* the threat of lawless violence.

74 There are parallels here between the delinquents of modern Justice and the heretics of medieval Inquisition: “Those convicted of heresy almost never completed their term of penance. Even if released from prison ... they remained *ex-heretics* [italics added]” (Given, 1997, p. 85). “Penitent heretics thus entered a special, clearly defined, marginal social status” (p. 85). There are also parallels between Given’s (1997) account of the Inquisitors’ written “manuals” cataloguing “the beliefs and practices of different types of heresy” (p. 2) and modern psychological diagnostic manuals: in each case the violence inflicted upon human bodies can be constituted as a kind of “correction” by showing how subjects do not conform to the ideals outlined in the manual.

This suggests a sinister third reading of Dostoevsky's claim. In this account, we do not peer into our prisons because we regard violence as antithetical to civilisation, and so are checking to see what terrible deeds are hidden inside its walls. Instead, we peer into our prisons as a baker peers into an oven, making a calculating, unsympathetic assessment of the prison's efficiency. Here, violence is not what civilisation resists, but rather what it *uses* in order to achieve its ends. Yet, without the re-framing provided by Durkheim's account of prison's symbolic function, and Foucault's detailed analysis of its role in the production of modern subjects, the *inefficiency* of imprisonment seems astonishing. According to the "Bible" (Webb, 2005) for New Zealand's Corrections Department's Psychological Services, "in brief, if the type and severity of official punishment has any effect on recidivism, it appears to be that 'less' is better than 'more'" (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 287). Even if imprisonment actually *reduced* the re-offending of individuals—let alone reduced the levels of violence in the wider community—instead of *increasing* it, at a cost of over \$90,000 per year per prisoner (Department of Corrections, 2010), a prisoner sentenced to ten years is receiving over \$900,000 of dubious "treatment". In New Zealand at present this is enough money to pay several therapists to work *full time* with that *one* person, for several years!

In answer to the question, "why this strange institution of the prison, why this choice of a penalty whose dysfunction was denounced so early?" (Foucault, 1997, p. 36), Foucault offers: "prison has the advantage of producing delinquency" (p. 36). In this context the forensic domain is crucially important for the reflexive interaction of violence and psychological theory. Not only does psychological theory make an important contribution to the legal violence of the prison system, but—for Foucault, at least—the prison makes an important contribution to the constitution of modern subjectivity, and the development of modern psychology. As one of the key "points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion" (Foucault, 1980a, 30:42), the prison is a key site of interaction between psychology and violence.

The prison-industrial complex has already been widely discussed, not only in terms of its function of disguising and maintaining the servitude of colonised and enslaved peoples (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Davis, 2005; Davis & Dent, 2001), but also in terms of its role in the production of a specific kind of individual subjectivity:

Foucault's (1975/1995) classic study of the "corrective technologies of the individual" (p. 235) and their part in "the fabrication of the disciplinary individual" (p. 308) documents the historical development of this production. Common to all of these accounts is the psychological significance of the forensic domain and its associated discourses of crime and responses to crime.

This psychological significance may be particularly important in relation to discourses of violence. By embodying a community's official response to criminal violence, legal violence not only establishes the boundaries between what kind of violence is endorsed by the community and so can be repeatedly practised (keeping a human being in a cage for the rest of her or his life, for example, or forcing 50,000 volts of electricity through his or her body) and what kind of violence offends the community and so must be forcibly prevented (removing your own clothes in a public place⁷⁵, for example, or snatching food⁷⁶ off another person when hungry); it can also enunciate an implicitly pro-violent ethics in which the question of an action's objectifying, abusing, exploiting or inflicting suffering upon another person is less important than the question of *who* gets abused and who gets to do the abusing. Psychological theory around this material may therefore represent—even if it does not set out to do so explicitly—a powerful, authoritative expert account of what violence is; who does it, what it achieves, and why it matters.

75 Indecent exposure can be positioned as a sexual offence, and so as a form of violence.

76 The infamous "pizza thief" who became the poster-boy for opponents of California's "three strikes" law was sentenced to 25 years in prison for snatching a slice of pizza off a twelve-year-old boy (Davey, 1998). This is an extreme example of legal violence outdoing the violence it is alleged to address, but this kind of disproportionate sentencing is an almost inevitable outcome of "three strikes" laws that seek to impose maximum penalties without the interference of judges or parole boards; and despite the evidence that such policies may increase homicide rates (Marvell & Moody, 2001). Sadly but not surprisingly, as I write this, New Zealand is implementing its own "three strikes" bill.

Even without the assistance of psychologists, the law can exert a powerful psychological influence by framing the problems of violence in particular ways. An individual subject may be abused every day by her partner, her employers and others in her community: her life energy may be exploited by others as she labours for their benefit in the home and in the factory; she may live her entire life within the stifling constraints of their desires and their violence. Every aspect of her person from the colour of her skin to her spiritual beliefs may play a role in violent systems of social control; yet in the midst of all this violence, if a journalist were to ask her to discuss “violence”, she might say nothing of the patriarchy, nor of the effects of colonial violence that she still endures, nor the capitalist economy and the enormous legal violence required to maintain it, nor of any of the other forms of violence that saturate her social world but remain invisible due to their normality. Instead, she might very well talk about *criminal* violence: violence as it is constituted for public consumption, no longer only in courtrooms and public squares, but now also on television and computer screens in the living spaces of private homes⁷⁷. *This* is violence, the viewer of these public spectacles is reminded daily: not the requirement that you spend ten or more years of your life being trained to labour—for the rest of your productive life—to benefit those who colonised your land; nor the steel cage that awaits you if you refuse that requirement, but *this* drama of rebellion and reconquest, in which a wicked

77 If a rat in a laboratory experiment is given a tasty reward, we can speak from the rat’s perspective and say that the purpose or function of the reward is to nourish or satisfy the rat; but to do so is to ignore the interests of the more powerful experimenters, in the context of which the purpose or function of the reward is to modify the rat’s behaviour. Given that the experimenters’ interests rather than the rat’s are largely responsible for the reward’s production, it can be more useful to discuss the reward’s function in relation to these more powerful interests. Similarly, whereas a television set may be purchased for “entertainment”, in some contexts it can be more useful to discuss the functions of television in relation to the more powerful interests that produce it. Thus, a key purpose of television is to generate advertising revenue; or, in terms of social psychological function, to *produce* consumers, both via persuasion to buy specific products, and via a wide range of long-term effects that work to develop in viewers the psychological need for consumption of goods and services (Billig, 1999; Hackley, 2002). Even mainstream economic analysis has recognised this to some degree: “The first and most serious mistake that an analyst of the television industry can make is to assume that advertising-supported television broadcasters are in business to broadcast programs. They are not. Broadcasters are in the business of producing *audiences*” (Owen & Wildman, 1992, p. 3). In this account, one of the reasons that television can so greatly enhance the courtroom’s ability to constitute “violence” in ways that serve violent interests may be that the same violent interests informing legal discourse also inform decisions about programming content: in both contexts, the reproduction of exploitable labour and other *profitable* social conditions (obedient subjects rather than non-violent subjects; good consumers rather than good citizens) takes priority over less profitable and less violent aims.

individual (or gang of such individuals) pursues self-interest in defiance of his or her community⁷⁸.

Mainstream psychological texts are not ignorant of the potential for our “response” to criminal violence to contribute reflexively to the problem with which we claim to be grappling. The principal psychological text for New Zealand’s Department of Corrections accounts for the observed increase in the murder rate after the reintroduction of the death penalty in terms of a “brutalization effect” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 336). When the state demonstrates that killing a human being can be a reasonable way to treat a person, the public responds to this legitimation of lethal violence by killing more often, even in contexts outside the execution chamber. Andrews and Bonta (2003) say that statistical analyses have lent support to the brutalization hypothesis⁷⁹. Yet “despite the evidence, the death penalty is enjoying a renaissance of sorts” (p. 336). What are we to make of this “brutalization effect” and, in particular, its dissonance with the professed aims of punitive legal interventions? How does the enactment of legal violence come to be so important to a community that it continues even when it *increases* the criminal violence it claims to address?

We can ask similar questions around “brutalization effects” in other forensic contexts. The pattern of desire for cruel punishment—despite its effect of increasing recidivism—is not limited to the death penalty: Andrews and Bonta (2003, p. 338) describe New Jersey’s famous “Scared Straight” programme as another approach that enjoyed great popularity despite its demonstrably negative effects. A follow-up evaluation showed that youths who were exposed to the programme had about four times *higher* rearrest rates than those who were not: yet similar programmes were implemented not only in the United States, but internationally (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). How do we

78 “His” or “her” community—rather than an antagonistic community of colonists, bourgeoisie, or whatever—is a crucial idea in such accounts. Media accounts manage to deploy discourses of community membership and social obligation when they are constituting the actions of criminals as reprehensible betrayals, despite simultaneously articulating the community’s *unwillingness* to look after “one of its own”, and its eagerness to treat the offender as an outsider (Lazar & Lazar, 2004; Lindgren & Lundström, 2010).

79 According to a recent study (Shepherd, 2005), “In the seventy-eight percent of states where executions either increase murders or have no effect, the brutalization effect either counterbalances or outweighs the deterrent effect. The deterrent effect outweighs the brutalization effect in only six states” (p. 206).

account for our communities' valuing the production of *scared* youth so much more highly than the production of non-violent youth that they will invest millions in such projects, even when it increases the likelihood of the young people committing criminal violence? No matter how great the commercial benefits of disguising social injustice may be, it seems unlikely that the empirical evidence—readily available to most citizens—could be hidden from the voting public by selective reporting alone.

Consider the “Scared Straight” programmes in terms of the “brutalization effect”. I remember watching a televised presentation of the New Jersey “Scared Straight” programme some time in the 1980’s, when I was a youth myself. A nervous group of juvenile delinquents is taken into a prison, and subjected to threats of sexual and physical violence from adult inmates. As well as sitting and listening to the inmates’ threats and frightening accounts of prison violence, they are verbally abused, intimidated and humiliated in various ways, to underscore their relative powerlessness and vulnerability to such violence. After more than twenty years, I still remember my own fear—as a child who had never been in trouble with the law, watching the programme in my own living room—at the realisation that my community was prepared to subject me to gang rape if I offended it sufficiently. “Scared Straight” left me wide-eyed, both in the sense of being shocked, and in the sense of feeling that my eyes had been opened and I had awakened from a fantasy of benevolent government. I had believed a fairy-tale in which the leaders of my community worked to reduce suffering, but now I had been shown that they *used* suffering—deliberately inflicted it, intensified it, prolonged it—in order to achieve their goals.

Andrews and Bonta (2003, p. 338) say of the official “Scared Straight” programme: “Surprisingly, 19 of the 46 youths attending the program did not even have a prior criminal record, and their recidivism rate was 31.6 percent”. If it is possible that our saying to a child, effectively, “obey our instructions or we will arrange things so that you are raped, and tortured in other ways, every day for years and years”, can have a “brutalization effect” that actually increases the likelihood of the child’s being violent to others, what might be the social psychological effects of broadcasting a programme like “Scared Straight” to millions of young viewers worldwide?

More generally, how are children affected psychologically, by learning that the adults of their communities have created special places of rape and torture for people who disobey its laws? In terms of Foucault's (1975/1995) analysis, this can appear as a regression from the more sophisticated modern disciplinary practices (e.g. of the "official" practices of imprisonment) to the less efficient and less effective direct threats of public torture that were used to maintain social power relations in earlier times. Does the threatening function of "unofficial" prison violence constitute a *failure* of disciplinary subjection, or is it an important supplement without which the "official" violence of imprisonment would be less effective?

We can ask this not only of prisons, but of other disciplinary institutions like schools and, perhaps most importantly, the family. Can our apparent blindness to the "brutalization effect" be explained in terms of our repressing its operation as a necessary and fundamental aspect of the development of the forms of subjectivity that count as "normality" in the existing social order? Without an acceptance of one's own body as a reasonable target of violence—and the associated understanding of the bodies of others as similar targets for violence—how can any subject be expected to submit to the daily routine of meaningless labour for the benefit of powerful others? If violence is *necessary* for the maintenance of our capitalist social structure, what truths must be inscribed into the subjectivities of individual children so that they experience violence as a necessity? Could the justice system—with its public enactments of a "justice" in which violence is endlessly and repeatedly legitimated—play an important role in this constitution of violent subjectivity? How is the discipline of psychology positioned in relation to this production of violence-accepting (and so, perhaps, violent) subjects?

Foucault attends to discourse broadly in terms of social practices, including bodily practices of social organisation (Foucault, 1975/1995), emphasising the role of subjectivity as a means of maintaining and reproducing such practices. By experiencing ourselves in particular ways and by "doing" these selves discursively, we demonstrate what mainstream psychology studies as "behaviour", and at the same time we reiterate the discourses within which such behaviour has meaning. Althusser's

(1970/2008) account lists “the educational apparatus, the religious apparatus, the family apparatus, the political apparatus, the trade-union apparatus, the communications apparatus, the ‘cultural’ apparatus, etc.” as *ideological apparatuses*, the function of which is “the reproduction of the relations of production” (p. 24). A critical tradition in psychology attends to the epistemological dynamic whereby “common-sense notions” can function as “assumptions which confirm existing arrangements of power” (Billig, 1991, p. 1). In terms of this tradition, mainstream forensic psychological theory can—if it does not assess itself critically in relation to broader interdisciplinary scholarship—represent a narrow, naïve focus that functions as a “scientific recoding of uncritical culture” (Wexler, 1996, p. xviii), legitimating popular prejudice by dressing it up as evidence based knowledge.

Rigorous scholarship takes context into account: Bernstein’s (1976, p. 3) claim that “the best way to ‘know’ a thing is in the context of another discipline” is one way of articulating the importance of “thick description” in social theory. It would be a serious over-estimation of the explanatory power of physics to imagine that a description of air pressure changes, electromagnetic fields and so on could serve as a full and comprehensive account of an orchestral performance. Neither is an economic account of the door charges and performers’ wages, nor an account of the history of the music being performed, nor a psychological account of the performers’ responses to this music, or their anxieties around performing it, nor any of an almost infinite range of possible descriptions “complete” in itself⁸⁰: each is enriched by its attention to the context provided by the others. Forensic psychology is no less complex, and so even without the arguments made by Billig (1991) Wexler (1996) and others who examine the political context of psychological knowledge, a serious concern for academic rigour involves a critical stance towards the kind of “thin description” provided by psychological theory that addresses its material as though historical and political contexts did not exist.

80 In terms of theory that has language *doing* things, the idea of a “complete” account is bizarre: it would be an account that did everything. The endless potential for accounts to be adapted to new purposes, located in new contexts and to draw upon new textual resources makes an account’s positioning itself as “a complete description” something like the textual equivalent of saying at a gathering, “silence please; that’s enough now: everything we want to hear has been said”.

It is hard to find a popular “common sense” prejudice about criminal behaviour that is *not* legitimated by mainstream forensic psychological theory: the evil predatory monsters, crazy unpredictable lunatics and rotten undisciplined kids that inhabit the popular unscientific narratives are all recognisable as the psychopaths, psychotics and conduct disordered youth of psy-discourse. I do not want to argue that this is necessarily or entirely bad: for all its hegemonic power to foreclose alternate understandings, the scientifically respectable “medical model” does at least tend to prefer “illness” over “evil”, and so to justify its interventions in terms of treatment rather than vindictive punishment. In 1916, a seventeen-year-old African American boy was found guilty of raping and murdering a white woman; possibly based solely on a coerced confession (Bernstein, 2005). An angry white mob dragged him out of the courtroom to where a bonfire had been prepared for him. They cut off his fingers, his toes, his ears and his genitals, and suspended the boy above the fire, lowering him into it and raising him again repeatedly, cheering as he slowly burned to death (Bernstein, 2005). For all its insidious efficiency, the violence associated with individualising and pathologising social injustice does at least tend to be less brazenly sadistic than the violence associated with individualising and *demonising* it. In New Zealand, psychology’s Code of Ethics (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002) represents an explicit rejection of this kind of sadism.

Nevertheless, the law’s function of legitimating and reproducing existing power relations survives the translation from popular terminology to the jargon of psy-discourse, and—as will be discussed below—some of the sadistic or aggressive elements of the popular understandings can also be discerned in psychological texts. Having established a context for thinking about psychological theory in terms of violence—including its own violence—it is possible now to examine mainstream psychological theory around criminal behaviour and assess its relationship to the reproduction of violence in this context.

Textual intelligibility: violent exclusions of readers

Like so many binaries, the distinction between the “form” and the “content” of a theory is questionable, but it can be useful for highlighting the possibility that the elements we might group together as “content” (the explicit claims or manifest propositions of a theory) may be addressed as if they were the whole substance of a theoretical text, while its “form” may be overlooked. In writing about textual “form” I am using the term loosely to refer to a very wide range of characteristics that may have rhetorical significance, from the idiom, “tone”, and other stylistic features, through to the media or means by which a text is presented (e.g. as a journal article or an audio recording) and the genre (whether the text positions itself as a critique, an instruction manual, an appeal for political action, a poem, a work of fiction, etc.). Some of these formal qualities may be established meta-textually or contextually (e.g. by the text’s being part of another text that identifies itself as an academic journal, or by the text’s being read at a poetry recital), but many are established *by* aspects of the text’s “content” (e.g. the inclusion of slang words to establish an informal tone, or words that rhyme to suggest a poem). The reverse is also possible, inasmuch as the narrative *form* of a text can be distinguished from its content: “the use of narrative ... provides a *content* that is not given by the subject matter. Narratives endow real events with meanings that they do not have as mere facts” (Coombes & Morgan, 2004, p. 307). Formal elements contribute to the interpretation (and so, arguably, to the substance) of “contents”, while contents establish and guide interpretation of form, in a complex interplay between the different qualities of a text. Hanks (1989) describes many such qualities, as aspects of “textuality”.

If “many of the classic theories of rhetoric were preoccupied with issues of style” (Billig, 1996, p. 87), some attention to stylistic elements of psychological theory may be important to a critical account of its performative effects. One of the reasons I have selected Judith Butler’s work as a theoretical resource for informing a (reflexive) project of theorising non-violence is because, “as she repeatedly emphasises, grammar and style are not politically neutral” (Salih, 2003, p. 46). In this context I am examining “the content of the form” of forensic psychological theory: the overall

effects of its use, taking into account the effects of formal elements like grammar and style.

One of the questions that we can ask about the “style” of a text is, “to whom is it addressed?”. Whereas the text’s contents may include claims to address a particular readership (“Dear Editor, ...”), there is no reason to assume that such claims actually tell us for whom the text is written, nor to assume from the absence of such claims that the text speaks to a “general” readership. I will discuss three different kinds of “language barriers” that may exclude certain groups as readers of psychological texts, effectively placing them among those who can be theorised and so ordered in some way by the theory but who cannot participate in dialogue about the theory due to their linguistic exclusion.

A text written in English is addressed to speakers of English, and even the possibility or practice of translation does not necessarily overcome this language barrier. This is probably the aspect of the writing that most overtly includes or excludes particular groups—a reader confronted with a text in an unfamiliar language may not even attempt to engage with the theory it articulates—and as such this issue of “language” can be important. In New Zealand, the Kaupapa Māori research movement acknowledges the importance of producing and presenting research in Māori (Walker *et al.*, 2006), and the issue of translation “accuracy” may become more important as the contents of a theory become more culturally complex. The meanings and legal implications of New Zealand’s founding political document are still vigorously contested, and much of the debate concerns differences in the meanings of words in the Māori and English versions of the treaty⁸¹ (Byrnes, 1998). How is a culturally foreign and extremely complex political institution (“government” or “sovereignty”) to be “accurately translated” by its replacement with the “most similar” word in another language; a word associated with a completely different social institution? If “the meaning of a word is its use” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001, p. 18^c) and the proper

81 There is some acknowledgement of this in my own (*Pākehā*, the term that is widely used in New Zealand for the population descended from British colonists) community: whereas I grew up hearing only of “The Treaty of Waitangi”, from time to time I now hear—even among Pākehā—talk of “Te Tiriti o Waitangi”, with the Māori title being used to refer specifically to the Māori version of the Treaty, distinguishing it from “The Treaty of Waitangi” as the English version.

use of a word depends upon a cultural, social and historical context, then the idea of “accurate translation” between the languages of two relatively similar cultures is somewhat less problematic than the idea of accurate translation from one text into the language of a radically different culture.

Māori whakataukī (roughly, “proverbs”) can provide a good illustration of the richness of meaning that may be embedded in particular cultural usage, and lost in translation. Many traditional whakataukī make little sense to me, due to my personal distance from the cultural conditions of their usage. My favourite whakataukī, on the acknowledgements page of this text, is interesting in this context because its first couplet is richly metaphorical or “poetic” and so less accessible—even after translation—to English speakers, whereas the second translates more easily as sensible. They can be translated⁸² into English roughly as:

If you pluck out the centre shoot of the flax,

Where will the bellbird sing?

If you ask me, “What is the most important thing in this world?”,

I will reply: “People, people, people!”

I can read the second couplet fairly easily, and in a way that harmonises to some extent with contemporary social theory—and a non-violent epistemology—as the critical “turn to language” can also be constituted as a turn to *people* (rather than external Reality, “facts” or other inhuman sources of authority) inasmuch as it attends to the social production of meaning, and to the social effects of theoretical claims.

The first couplet however had little significance for me until—while learning to weave flax as part of a formal “Māori culture” course—a tutor not only gave us the practical advice to pull leaves from the outside of the bush and leave the heart alone (since taking older leaves was sustainable, whereas taking from the *rito* would eventually kill

82 I have used Joan Metge’s (1990, p. 55) translation.

the plant); she also discussed the traditional symbolism associated with this practice. In this symbolism, the flax bush is a metaphor for human society, with new generations growing out of the heart, and older generations surrounding and protecting this heart.

In terms of this symbolism, English speakers can construct a possible meaning for the first couplet that fits with the second, or even works to justify it. Our children's futures depend upon the world that we have prepared for them. To tear out the heart of the flax—literally while gathering flax, or metaphorically in other contexts—is to put the desire for short-term material rewards ahead of “the big picture”, involving long term effects and the provision of safety and care for emerging generations. This can happen in terms of epistemology and other aspects of culture, as well as in terms of material economic relationships: to tear out the heart of the flax is to destroy unnecessarily, through greed, ignorance, or both. And the loss of the bellbird? Here is an excerpt from an English-speaking writer's account of the bird:

For many years when I first came to the Valley, I was awoken almost every morning by a particular bellbird which started the morning, just before or on dawn, outside my window, with that single lovely bell like note which some bellbirds sound to perfection. Not to hear it of a morning was to leave me with a sense of there being something not quite right with myself or the world, rather like forgetting to meditate or pray. When he disappeared, ceased to sing outside my window, it left me with a real sense of loss, of desolation even. (Olliver, 1999, ¶ 3).

The literal meanings of “harakeke” and “komako” can be looked up in any Māori-English dictionary as “flax” and “bellbird”; but a translation based on these literal definitions can produce a text that does something very different from what it may do in other cultural contexts. Shifting meanings are inevitable and even the huge shift that can occur in translating from the language of one culture into that of a significantly foreign culture will not necessarily do any harm; but it is an issue worth considering

when the language of psychological research and theory is being discussed.

Translation into or from the language of a significantly foreign culture introduces a risk of significantly foreign understanding: to learn a language from lexicons and formal instruction rather than from immersion in the language community even runs the risk of generating a kind of fluency that involves using the vocabulary and formal grammar of another people's language, to speak or write with the meanings of one's own. This risk can make "the language barrier" more formidable than it might at first appear to be, and increases the possible importance of the language within which psychological theory is written. In this context and, in New Zealand, where Māori are imprisoned at such a high rate and are so often targeted for interventions informed by a colonial forensic psychology, the dominance of the English language in our texts of psychological theory should not be ignored.

As an adult with the resources to learn and use other languages, not only one's choice of words but one's choice of *language* can be a form of social action: this is acknowledged explicitly in the Kaupapa Māori research tradition (Bishop, 1999; Walker, Eketone & Gibbs, 2006), where the use of the Māori language is treated as an important part of the development of a distinctively Māori knowledge system. To use English can be an important social act as well: Phillipson (2008) points out that "international" conferences will often use English, and that this can make sense in a long tradition of linguistic imperialism, in which the English language is positioned as the "world" language, much as Western science is the world's knowledge, democracy is the world's system of government, and capitalism is the world's way of managing its resources.

If we are questioning the relationships between language and violence, we do not have to limit our questions to such obvious territory as "how can I use my own language less violently?". We can ask questions about the possibility of violence at work in particular languages or choices of language, and the implications of learning and using the languages of others.

In English, when we say “he is angry”; the word “is” functions as a verb, and “angry” is an adjective: grammatically he “is angry” much as he “is large” or “is young”, so that the grammatical form immediately presents anger as a state or quality of a person. In Māori, “he is angry” can be translated as “ka riri ia”; the verb in this phrase is not the verb “to be”, but “riri”, for which—if we were to try to retain its form as a verb—we would have to write something like “angries”; or we could try to retain this active meaning by using the verb “to do” instead of the verb “to be”, writing that he “does anger”⁸³. The difference between “he is angry” and “he does anger” can be read as an example of “content” in grammatical “form”: a man who *is* angry can position his violence as an explosion of this hard-to-control anger⁸⁴, whereas a person who “does” anger (or who “angries”) is, by the grammar of the verb, positioned as an active agent who is, perhaps, acting in order to achieve specific ends. This kind of difference can be important, as could many other subtle grammatical differences that we eliminate when we “translate” the knowledge of other peoples into our Western framework, replacing ways of relating to others that the West may never have practised, with our own familiar meanings. If we attempt a reflexive self-criticism of Western epistemological, political and psychological traditions *using Western languages*, might we be reproducing social practices by using forms of language for which we do not know any alternatives, despite the existence of such alternatives elsewhere? How useful might it be, for psychological theory development, if psychologists were to inform themselves of non-Western psychological traditions? At the very least, it might build collaborative relationships between theorists and communities beyond our own; at best, it might—through the effects of theory—build such relationships between larger sections of our respective communities.

83 The significance of a “stative” verb’s having the same grammatical form as a dynamic verb is debatable: translation into English via the use of the verb “to be” (Head, 1989, p. 84) doesn’t necessarily mean that the literal shift from “ka riri ia” to “he *is* angry” involves a different kind of shift in *meaning* from that between “ka rere ia” to “he flies”; and certainly not one that can be treated simply as if it were equivalent to the difference between “he angries” or “he does anger” and “he is angry” in English. Nevertheless, we do have a verb “to rage” for our adjective “enraged”, yet I suspect a man’s accounting for his domestic violence by saying “I raged” will seldom be heard, next to the less active and deliberate sounding “I was angry” form. The point is not that the Māori translation’s omitting this articulation of “being” (“I was...”) is psychologically significant in this case; merely that these kinds of grammatical issues *could* be, and are worth attending to for this reason.

84 Employing discourses of “violence as an expression of inner tension” (O’Neill, 1998, p. 463).

There are also opportunities, around these kinds of questions, to consider the relationship of “correct” language use to “truth”. If the president of a powerful nation can move armies with his words, does this power demonstrate a mastery of the language; or do the disastrous consequences mean that he is *incompetent* with English? What are the truth criteria for claims of grammatical or linguistic correctness? If “incorrect” usage becomes “correct” usage, or vice versa, by convention—as the correctness of “speak with thee” changed places with “speak with you”—couldn’t this rightness or wrongness *of language use* be even more rhetorically persuasive than the rightness or wrongness of the various “opinions” that must *all* conform to the correct rules of usage? Imagine if it were *grammatically* wrong to use violent language, so that the adjective “evil”—like the adjective “logarithmic”—just “didn’t really make sense” when applied to a human being. In this account, the rules of correct behaviour embodied in legal codes and the norms of healthy behaviour embodied in psychological texts may all be subordinate to the norms and rules of “correct” social practice embodied in dictionaries and guides to grammatical correctness. Attention to these kinds of possibilities involves attention to “a language”, like English—a more or less “specific” system of actual practices—rather than the abstract “language” that social theory sometimes treats as if it were a transcendent, community-independent entity. Language is socially constructed itself, laden with political aims and implications, and like so much else that is reified as natural, we can be suspicious of a “language” that is said to exist independently of the material practices that produce it.

This most obvious feature of writing, then—its language in the sense of “which language” it uses—is therefore important, because it can participate in violent exclusions of readers from theoretical texts. However, in some circumstances other more subtle language barriers may also work to separate the theorists from the theorised. One of these is addressed by the question of “difficulty” or the amount of education required to understand the theoretical text. Butler’s texts have been criticised for their “impenetrable writing style” (Kapur, 2001, p. 79). I have discussed this issue, and indicated my agreement with Salih’s (2003) suggestion that “social change ... is painful and difficult, in which case, perhaps we shouldn’t balk if the text

is, too” (p. 49). However, the question of accessibility is important in relation to epistemological violence, and so I will revisit it briefly here.

In the “symbolic struggle for the production of common sense” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 21), common-sense assumptions are elements of *dominant* discourses; they are not somehow objectively “more sensible” ideas, nor do they have any special “common sense qualities” beyond their social dominance. If common sense has it that agency is a product of individual “free will”, then a text that writes about agency using this common-sense language may be easily understood by most readers; even by critical readers who disagree with it. By contrast, a text that writes about agency as a discursive production may seem more difficult or less accessible to many readers, not because the idea of a discursively constituted agency is “inherently” more complex than the idea of an independent agency with an ambiguous relationship to the material universe (sometimes participating in physical causality and sometimes acting independently of it), but rather because the simplicity and elegance of the contemporary theoretical account—like the simplicity and elegance of the heliocentric solar system in the time of Copernicus—is only “simple” and “elegant” in relation to a host of other assumptions that are not dominant (common-sense) knowledge. An idea that disagrees radically with “common sense” may function as part of a whole system of different ideas: as such any explanations of it are less likely to “make sense” to readers—and perhaps more likely to be dismissed as obscurantism disguising sophistry—unless the readers are already familiar with the other ideas with which it engages or upon which it depends. If, therefore, an element of popular “common sense” discourse is violent, the decision to avoid such language and employ less widely used alternatives can often be, simultaneously, a decision to produce a more “difficult” text that can function to exclude some readers.

However, this can also be a violent exclusion, inasmuch as it can produce a selective language barrier that makes the text more accessible to people with more⁸⁵ education. It would be difficult to argue that “expert language” is never useful, and that

⁸⁵ That is, more of the conventional education taught in Western schools and universities: a reader could be, of course, highly educated in other ways—even in other formal education systems—and still encounter a Western theoretical text as inaccessible.

accessibility is always a priority: performing complex surgical procedures using accessible language like “hand me that curved thing so I can move this squishy bit” would be rather impractical, and if medical jargon also presents a barrier to opportunities for people eager to have a go at surgery, this kind of barrier can be very desirable to the extent that it makes it more likely that the person holding the scalpel will have had some medical training, and will know how to carry out surgeries that heal rather than harm. Nonetheless, this common sense reading of “expertise” establishes differences in power and social privilege that can produce systematic exclusions when historical and cultural issues of accessibility are taken into account. If educational requirements (medical school fees, for example) exclude particular ethnic or socio-economic groups then the justifiable language barriers associated with jargon as both a tool and a marker of expertise can be exploited to reproduce unjust social relationships.

This is, of course, what does happen throughout our education system: “one striking feature, for instance, is the consistent advantage conferred students from the highest quartile of income in nearly every facet of the college process” (Rubin, 2006, p. 190). Thus, as psychological texts become more “difficult” in the sense that they become less accessible to people who have not undertaken years of formal study in universities, they may—even as they try, with their difficult language, to avoid violence—unwittingly reproduce it by contributing to the favouring of some groups and the exclusion of others from the community of psychological theorists. So, whereas I am sure that Butler does not merely (as some of her critics suggest, e.g. Findlay, 2003) use deliberately obscure language in order “to awe rather than enlighten readers” (Salih, 2003, p. 42), nevertheless her use of *unfamiliar* (to common-sense accounts) language—even though it is a well-informed and carefully considered decision to avoid the careless epistemological violence of common-sense “clarity”—can still play a role in forms of violence that are enacted in the education systems that channel particular groups into particular activities. Nussbaum’s (1999) scathing condemnation of Butler’s work misreads her focus on discourse and the symbolic as a neglect of the material political realities structured *by* that discourse—and it also demonstrates a kind of *ad hominem* criticism that is, stylistically, violent, positioning Butler as something of a fake and a coward, rather than as a respectable

person making disagreeable arguments—but for all that I disagree with this condemnation, I do agree that the difficulty or “impenetrability” of a text is a political issue, and one that has to be taken into account. Can psychological theory be violent simply by being so “difficult” as to be accessible only to a relatively small community of privileged academics?

I think it can, but I also think that this possibility emerges from a paradox in which “sensible”, readily accessible texts are so precisely because they reproduce existing social power relationships, making them in other respects unfriendly to the readers they may seem to embrace and include. At the same time, the obscurity characteristic of highly specialised texts can potentially reproduce some of the same social power relationships through the systematic exclusion of particular readers. Still, it seems reasonable to me to argue that, as Salih (2003) suggests, some textual difficulty may be necessary as part of the minimisation of its violence. Whereas Nussbaum argues that difficult political change is best supported by easily comprehensible, straightforward theoretical argument, I am inclined to agree with Butler that theory and the material world do not operate independently—that theory *matters*, literally—and so I do not see anything inconsistent or surprising about difficult, painful political change being associated with difficult, painful theoretical change.

Nevertheless, Nussbaum and others among Butler’s critics draw attention to some important issues and can remind those of us who admire her writing to be vigilant, ensuring that any stylistic “difficulty” of psychological texts is kept to a justifiable minimum: like the use of the English language itself, the use of Western theoretical literature may have some violent social effects, but as Butler argues, we can only take up the tools available to us, even to make new tools. Non-violence—like a “perfect” musical performance—is an ideal that can always be transcended, which is why I prefer an account of violence *minimisation* as the task of non-violent theory. Even if a “total” elimination of violence were logically possible, it would be dangerous to imagine it as a practical possibility for any text; and yet, like the “perfect” sound at each moment of a musical performance, it can be aimed for continually.

So, with regard to the language barrier posed by the educational or other cultural requirements for engaging with psychological theory, what we can do, at least, is weigh the need for *le mot juste* against the need for texts that are as inclusive as possible. “Precisely the right word or phrase” is wordier and so harder to read, for some readers, than “*le mot juste*”; but “precisely the right word or phrase” is probably more accessible to more readers of English. So, is the French phrase an example of good, concise writing, or bad, pretentious writing that excludes readers unnecessarily? Of course it can be both at once, and many other things for different readers, but if it seems likely to offer a comfortable reading experience for privileged groups and a more difficult experience for underprivileged groups then this is not “merely” a stylistic concern but a potentially serious social effect.

Under what conditions do precision, economy or aesthetics become important enough to justify the use of language that is likely—at least under our existing social conditions—to present something of a barrier to readers from economically disadvantaged social backgrounds? Conversely, when does a concern for inclusiveness inform a “lowering of standards” that functions to *withhold* education from underprivileged groups, by making one kind of education—one that offers “employment skills”—more accessible, while continuing to reproduce another kind—one that offers access to the means of transforming knowledge and discourse—that remains accessible only to privileged groups? I think these are difficult questions that are likely to have different answers in different circumstances. They are the kinds of questions that non-violent psychological theory has to address as part of its attention to form or style. To the extent that “common sense” reproduces existing power relations, “accessible language” may stay rather close to these common-sense understandings; and conversely, for a text to radically challenge existing power relations, some degree of “inaccessibility” or unpopular language use may be an unavoidable aspect of this unpopular aim. There will be specific contexts within which this argument is not enough, and within which a requirement for non-violent psychological theory may be that it is “non-threatening” too, in the sense of its being stylistically “easy” and accessible. For the present text, as a doctoral thesis written specifically for educated psychological theorists in order to address violence taking place within the practices of this community, other stylistic concerns—like, for

example, the implications of writing the more awkward but less violent “people diagnosed with schizophrenia” instead of “schizophrenics”—are focal, and the question of accessibility remains an important but more marginal concern.

Nominal comprehensibility: violent inscriptions of persons

Another form of exclusion is more specific to particular subject positions than the language or style of the text: an inscription of identity that positions the reader—perhaps suddenly—as “one of them”, rather than as “one of us” or as “you”, the person to whom the text is addressed. Here, some of the traditional meanings of “violence” can apply to the formal violence of such texts: the African American who perhaps experiences a proud sense of belonging to a positively constituted community as he reads a patriotic leaflet is *violently* excluded from the text when he encounters the word “nigger”. The young woman grieving and needing support after having an abortion, who perhaps experiences a degree of comfort as she reads a text offered to her by a church-going friend, is violently excluded from the text by its use of “murderer” as a term for people like herself. The gay man enjoying a humorist’s witty column is violently ejected from the position of addressee, and reminded that the text’s “I” is in dialogue with someone else’s “thou”, when the term “faggot” positions him as one of “them” who are excluded, by means of this inscribed identity, from the text’s dialogue between writer and reader.

The inscription of excluded identities was once a literal inscription of such identities onto bodies. “Criminals and dissidents in various historical contexts have been physically branded with a mark or letter on the body that signifies their offense (e.g. “T” for thieves, “B” for blasphemers, “R” for rogues, “A” for adultery)” (Miethe & Lu, 2005, p. 35). “In the nineteenth century, the stigma was no longer directly inscribed on the body of the perpetrator, but was rather administered in collections of data by the police” (Becker, 2001, p. 155). In this way an identity excluding a person from participating in certain kinds of social activity could still be inscribed upon the subject, but the inscription was affixed to the body through its use in another text.

Such texts can affix the inscription to a particular subject by means of a proper name (so that the body identified by that name is now inscribed with a particular kind of identity); or they can be textual embodiments of discourses inscribing identities upon whole classes of identifiable bodies (for example, bodies with a particular skin colour). The discourses themselves are complex intertextual enactments of multiple social relationships and their constitution of subjectivity is not achieved through a single term; yet inscribing a single term upon a particular subject can be enough to *invoke* these discourses and so to constitute the subject in their terms. If a discourse of terrorism positions “terrorist” subjects in certain ways in relation to other subjects, these effects can be brought to bear upon a specific subject by inscribing the terrorist identity upon that subject.

The shift from bodily to other forms of textual inscription occurs along with the shift from torture to disciplinary power that Foucault (1975/1995) theorises in *Discipline and Punish*. Whereas “in physical torture, the example was based on terror: physical fear, collective horror, images that must be engraved on the memories of the spectators, like the brand on the cheek or shoulder of the condemned man” (p. 110), the movement of the inscription from bodies to other texts moves the action of power from the clearly visible realm of violent bodily struggle to the realm of discourse. “In the penalty, rather than seeing the presence of the sovereign, one will read *the laws themselves* [italics added]” (p. 110).

This has several consequences: [punishment] leaves the domain of more or less everyday perception and enters that of abstract consciousness; its effectiveness is seen as resulting from its inevitability, not from its visible intensity; it is the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of public punishment that must discourage crime; the exemplary mechanics of punishment changes its mechanisms. As a result, justice no longer takes public responsibility for the violence that is bound up with its practice (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 9).

Here again an aspect of the form of the text—human body or printed page—is itself significant: in Foucault’s account, the inscription’s being moved from the body makes its action upon the body less visible. By attending to “violent inscriptions of persons” in theoretical texts however, I do not mean to focus upon the violent *act* of inscription—the branding, for example—but rather the visible textual *inscription* itself; whether it be a letter burned into flesh, or a word printed onto paper. In this sense, the inscription is violent because of the violence that it can continue to reproduce, by invoking discourses that constitute the subject in a particular way. Terms like “nigger” and “faggot” are similar violent inscriptions: they exclude by replacing a normal term for a subject (like “mother” or “person”) with a term that is epistemologically violent.

I am positioning the inscription of identity as an important site of the interrelationship between content and form, not only because it plays such a key role in producing the narrative form of a text (the difference between “witches” and “women” can be pivotal for the difference between an account of religious purification and an account of political oppression), but also because of its potential to function as a form of address, when it locates the *reader* of a text in relation to the text and to other subjects. To write about (rather than to or with) a colonised people in a colonial language can be a means of formal exclusion from the practices achieved by the writing; to write about a colonised people *as* a particular kind of object can achieve a similar textual exclusion.

Buber’s (1923/1958) *I and Thou* constitutes the difference between “I-Thou” and “I-it” relationships as being of pivotal importance: so important that, for Buber, the “I” alone—the grammatical analogue of the psychological subject—has no distinct, isolated meaning, but instead assumes a different meaning as part of an “I-Thou” relationship, or as part of an “I-it” relationship. This is an interesting early account of the relational self, and one that can inform a deliberate effort to write from the position of “I-thou”, even in relation to the “third person”. With regard to the textual exclusions discussed so far, there is a kind of writing of third-persons that in some respects *maintains* the “I-Thou” relationship: if I write about a lecturer, for example, my identifying her or him as a “lecturer” does not exclude the possibility that this

“third person” is—in the event that s/he happens to read the text I am writing—also the “Thou” addressed by the text. On the other hand, in some contexts if I refer to her or him as a “positivist”, it is beginning to sound as though I may be positioning the lecturer as one of *them*: not a potential “Thou” with whom collaborative relationship is entered into, but an “it”, a problem that must be dealt with in some non-collaborative way. There is no stable point of transition from “Thou” terminology to “it” terminology; but there are terms (e.g. “naïve positivist”) that seem to shift the relationship in one or the other direction, and some are so demeaning or aggressive (e.g. “ignorant positivist”) that they seem very unlikely to be the terms by which one might address another as part of a collaborative project, or an invitation to participate in such a project. Instead, such objectifying language seems better suited to an account that problematises “them” as part of an address to some other “you”: a “you” who is invited to understand “our common problem”.

The “terrorist”, for example, is in many contexts an untenable subject position today, in the sense that a terrorist is not a Thou with whom one collaborates, but an object that one deals with in one’s collaborations with others. This is spelled out explicitly in the familiar “we don’t negotiate with terrorists!” of international politics (Toros, 2008). Also of interest in this context is Toros’s (2008) argument that historically, when the terms of address have shifted and “terrorists” *have* been legitimated by constituting them as valid political groups—as happened in Northern Ireland, for example—the terms of engagement *can* shift from bombs to verbal debate.

Is it precisely in order to avoid this possibility that a group with more military power might prefer to keep the engagement violent by positioning another group outside the field of collaboration? If so then the United States’ policy of not negotiating with “terrorists” can be read not only as a courageous unwillingness to give “evil” acts legitimacy, but also perhaps as an unwillingness to legitimate a voice that is only “evil” in relation to its own interests. Do bullets and bombs defend the “American⁸⁶ way of life” precisely because the “American way of life” is otherwise indefensible?

86 Constituted as such—an “*American way of life*” that does not even include the many ways of life *within* the United States of America, let alone the many other different American nations—in patriotic discourses of the United States.

Habermas is critical of the “mercilessness” (Habermas, 1985/1990, p. 246) of Foucault’s account of truth, in which “so little can the structures that make truth possible themselves be true or false that one can only inquire about the function of the will that attains expression in them” (p. 248). Yet an account of “the structures that make truth possible” that positions them as *themselves* “true or false” and *without* reference to the “will that attains expression in them” seems to appeal to universal principles of rationality. There are many contexts in which such appeals can seem more optimistic and constructive than the “merciless” relativism of a socially constructed rationality, but I think that the textual conditions under which subjects are not merely compelled to take on particular forms and speak in particular ways, but are excluded altogether from the subjective order and positioned instead as objects, can exemplify conditions in which faith in a universal modern rationality begins to look as though it may be informed by the particular experience of such rationality that is enjoyed by a “proper” (“rational”, or male, Western and “sane”) subject like Habermas, in which the effects of such rationality’s talk of “everyone” may not be so acutely felt as by feminist, queer, indigenous post-colonial and other “improper” theorists.

A theory of communicative rationality in which any “violation of claims to truth, correctness and sincerity affects the whole permeated by the bond of reason” (Habermas, 1985/1990, p. 324) may have many positive social effects, but to constitute this political “whole” as though it incorporated all human bodies is to risk blurring an idealistic vision of a society we might desire (even a state of affairs we might attempt to bring about; perhaps even an “unfinished” project, if we want to position colonial efforts to “civilise” as perversions of rather than as realisations of this project) with the very different state of affairs that our social theory must enter into and transform. Habermas claims:

There is no escape and no refuge for the few who are in the truth and supposed to take their leave of the many who stay behind in the darkness of their blindness, as the day takes leave of the night. Any violation of the structures of

rational life together, to which all lay claim, affects everyone equally (Habermas, 1985/1990, p. 324).

Yet violence can offer an escape and a refuge: the violent exclusion of those condemned to “the darkness of their blindness” from the (en)light(enment) of “the structures of rational life together, to which all lay claim” simultaneously excludes such groups not only from the kind of political action that legitimate subjects can undertake, but even from the kind of political effects that legitimate victims can achieve by being acted *upon* politically. The “all” and the “everyone” so constituted may indeed experience a kind of intersubjectivity within which “betrayal of another is simultaneously betrayal of oneself” (Habermas, 1985/1990, p. 325), but it is only a matter of inscribing upon a particular body an identity that is *not* part of this order, and that body becomes an object that subjects can manipulate as they see fit, without compromising their own truth or the “universal” communicative or ethical principles.

It might be comforting to imagine that Nazi generals never *really* loved their children, or that slave owners never *really* trusted their friends. If we read “just as water reflects the face, so one human heart reflects another” (Proverbs 27:19, New Revised Standard Version) as a kind of reciprocal action of self-judgement in the judgement of another—so that to read another’s psychological interior as “evil” is to produce an account of how one is reading one’s *own* psychological interior, since this is the only “internal” guide to the interpretation of another’s “interior” that one has—then we might agree that there is “no refuge” for the subject who tries to locate darkness and violence in other subjects: but we no more live in a world of equivalent “hearts”, all of which can equally reflect our own, than we live in a world of equivalent, identically clean and polished mirrors for examining our faces. Does my constituting a psychopath as a pitiless monster reveal myself to be a pitiless monster, or does it merely attest to the fact that “the psychopath” is not part of the subjective social order that I interpret in terms of my own subjectivity, but rather is part of the world of objects? Only those valid human subjects I constitute as such participate in “the structures of rational life together” (Habermas, 1985/1990, p. 324), and so the “universality” of the modern rational *demos* is the very thing that functions to

radically exclude certain groups from this idealistic “all of us”: in New Zealand for example we have “universal suffrage”, yet prisoners cannot vote⁸⁷. Few people question the “democracy” that excludes the very people (often colonised or formerly enslaved peoples) upon whom it acts most forcibly from participating in its “democratic” decision-making, because the exclusion does not merely happen through the physical containment of people in cages: it happens symbolically through the constitution of a “them” who are not part of “all of us”, the community, the *demos*. *People*.

I have only to position another as being outside the order of legitimate ethical subjects, and they become a thing that may be relevant in terms of my ethical obligations to others (as when I work on an offender’s recidivism for the sake of “the community”) or even to myself (as when I forgive a terrorist in order not to be consumed by hatred); but I need no longer experience any ethical obligations to that person (who is, now, not really a person at all). When people can be—and have been, and are—so utterly excluded from the sphere of ethical and political deliberations, what might be some of the effects of trying, with Habermas, to salvage or bring to fruition the *good* that is supposed to be associated with this account of reason, or this form of life? I agree with Vattimo’s (1994/1997) account of the problem: “It is less a matter of rejecting the practical-political conclusions of ... Habermas’s discourse than of asking whether one can share its theoretical bases and above all whether these bases do not turn out to be unduly strengthened by the generally acceptable nature of those conclusions” (p. 34). Even if a non-violent global community is “generally acceptable”, the criteria by which we decide what counts as violence are not, and this raises the (terrorist, in Lyotard’s terms) possibility that we achieve a kind of universality that has “all of us” enjoying our non-violent rational society, not by finding new ways to involve people in the development of new accounts of “justice”, but by finding new ways to exclude them from “us”, in order to impose a single account of justice upon them.

87 At present, prisoners serving short terms can still register to vote, but a Bill currently before Parliament aims to remove this right as well (New Zealand Parliament, 2010).

Discursive technologies that objectify by inscribing illegitimate or a(nti)social identities highlight the shortcomings of a politics that depends upon “the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible” (Lyotard, 1979/1984, pp. 81-82), and “the fantasy to seize reality” (p. 82). If the exclusion of the “terrorist” is itself a form of epistemological terrorism, we might ask how much of the terrifying difference that we aim to exclude is itself produced by that exclusion. Of course, this—as Foucault suggests—may be the point: what would happen if the underprivileged groups in our prisons were *allowed* to speak of their experiences, instead of being kept in subject positions from which legitimate speech is impossible? Which is more of a threat to the existing political order: thousands of angry young men, attacking each other in cages; or thousands of radical political activists, calling for justice?

Similar questions can be asked in relation to the use of epistemological terrorism to de-legitimise the voices of other domestic populations with whom negotiation brings a risk to ordered social hierarchies of domination. Forensic psychology operates near a potent interaction of discourses producing badness and madness: arguably the twin arms of a modern domestic epistemological terrorism. R. D. Laing (Laing, 1967) famously challenged the psychiatric practices that reduce people to “patients”, thereby depriving them of voice. How many people who might have been “patients” in the twentieth century’s psychiatric institutions are now “offenders” in the twenty-first century’s prisons? According to Torrey (1995) in 1995, “quietly but steadily, jails and prisons are replacing public mental hospitals as the primary purveyors of public psychiatric services for individuals with serious mental illnesses in the United States” (p. 1611). In 2010, “Americans with severe mental illness are now three times as likely to be in jail as they are to be in a hospital” (Moran, 2010). It is therefore a mistake to think first of psychiatric hospitals, if we are concerned about the treatment conditions for the seriously mentally ill people in our communities: in this context prisons *are* our mental hospitals. Appalling as this is, nevertheless we might ask: how much difference does it make to the speaking rights of an individual subject *which* specific inhuman identity is inscribed upon him or her in psy-discourse, if the available identities are all inhuman things rather than legitimate persons?

If the phrase “inhuman things” seems melodramatic, consider this recent public statement by New Zealand’s best-known forensic psychologist—Nigel Latta, who has hosted popular television series and authored popular books—in regards to one of our most high-profile “offenders”: “How was it possible that a man deemed fit for parole could kill again in just a few months? To answer that, you need to understand what Burton is. He’s a psychopath” (Bates & Bates, 2010). Not who, but *what* Burton is. Not a potential “Thou”, whose personal account might be taken seriously as contributing to dialogue and negotiation, but a thing, a manipulative psychopath that must be dealt with as a problem by those of us with voices (into whose company the claim “you need to understand what Burton is” invites the listener).

Interestingly, a publicity blurb advertising Latta’s book *Into the Darklands* on several websites (e.g. Antipodes Books, n.d., ¶ 3) includes the following claim: “In this groundbreaking book, he takes us inside the minds of some of the most chilling characters to walk our streets. ... *This is as close to inside information as it gets* [italics added]”. The psychologist’s account of the offender is not quite the “inside information” that the *offender’s* account might be; but *it’s as close as it gets*: any “closer” is impossible. The psychologist stands on the outer edges of “us”, gazing into the abyss—the “Darklands”—in which *they* dwell. What kinds of accounts—what kinds of questions—need to be silenced by this kind of radical exclusion? What kinds of questions can we ask on behalf of those whose questions are dismissed as excuses, manipulations; “behaviour”?

We might continue Latta’s questioning of Burton’s re-offending, but this time ask, how is it that a man can be subjected to *fourteen years* of continual treatment without his consent, and when the treatment appears to have done more harm than good, *he* is fully accountable for the harm, while the treatment practices remain unchallenged? And if he is to be held accountable, what kind of carefully staged “accountability” depends upon the constitution of subjects who are denied legitimate voices with which to give their accounts? How sincere are our demands for accountability when we have already foreclosed the possibility of accepting a person’s account, by positioning the person as an *object* of *our* dialogue; a psychopath? Even in the

unlikely event that we were to engage sympathetically with the speaker, this would be an instance of our being “manipulated”, because, of course, there is no real human being behind the mask of sanity with whom we might experience *real* sympathy. Burton’s being not a “who”, but a “what”—a psychopath—forecloses the possibility of his (its) account being treated as anything other than “behaviour”: something for us to understand in order to better control the thing. Is it a coincidence that this pitiless treatment of a human being as a mere object is precisely the behaviour ascribed to psychopaths? Are we producing the psychopath from our own pitiless discourse?

The same questions that can be asked of the international response to “terrorists” can be asked of the domestic response to “offenders”: do we defend our way of life with tasers and prison cells precisely because our way of life is otherwise indefensible? How much do those most privileged by the dominant episteme stand to lose by acknowledging the people in our prison cells *as people*: not as objects of control but as subjects of dialogue? How do we ensure that a term like “offender” stays permanently inscribed, so that even when prisoners are released they remain excluded from political dialogue? Currently in New Zealand, parolees are required to report regularly to their probation officers (Department of Corrections, 2008) and, each time, to sign another “instruction to report” form. They must sign their name after the word, “Offender: ”, so that they are not only constituted in the official discourse as offenders (rather than, for example, as “probationers”, or as “parolees”, which might be a more direct and obvious term to use for people subject to parole conditions), but are required by law to affirm this identity by signing their names to it. If they are subject to parole for life, then they may be required to continue regularly affirming their inscribed identities as “offenders” for *decades* after the offence. This is all the more remarkable when a key psychological text for the Department of Corrections (Andrews & Bonta, 2003) lists “Identification with Criminal Others” as a factor predicting recidivism (p. 62), and even gives a specific example in which parolees who “identified with offenders to a moderate degree on intake and subsequently reduced their identification six months later had a recidivism rate of only 10 percent” (p. 62), while those whose identification remained constant had a higher recidivism rate, and “those whose identification with offenders increased during probation had a recidivism rate of 57 percent” (p. 62). In this context, the requirement that parolees must

consistently identify themselves as offenders through the explicit pairing of “Offender:” and the parolee’s proper name is an *enforced* ritual of inscription so important that it continues even in the face of contraindicative empirical research.

If the discursive constitution of subjects as context-independent “offenders” nevertheless does not seem important to discussions of the causes of offending, consider how the term is used in media accounts of crime, and how this usage is taken up by political lobby groups. In New Zealand, the “Sensible Sentencing Trust” continually pressures the government to increase the harshness of its punishments, and is often consulted by journalists so that these aggressive sentiments can be included in an account of a crime or its sentencing: this lobby group has had a significant impact on national sentencing policy (Pratt, 2007). It lobbied *against* compensation for victims of the prison violence discussed on p. 61, despite positioning itself as a champion of victims’ rights. The Trust’s literature uses the terms “criminals” and “victims” repeatedly to constitute these as distinct groups, for example: “Reduced prison sentences as a means of coping with expanding prison musters is yet another weak effort to cope with a growing number of criminals and completely ignores the growing number of victims of those criminals” (Monk, 2007, p. 3).

Yet the “victims” and “criminals” tend to come from the *same* demographic groups, both internationally (Daday, Broidy, Crandall & Sklar, 2005; Shaffer & Ruback, 2002) and in New Zealand (Cunningham, Triggs & Faisandier, 2009), and frequently are even the same individuals: many of the “criminals” whose interests the Trust opposes are also the victims of violent crime (Hamilton, Falshaw & Browne, 2002; Macmillan, 2001) whose interests the Trust claims to champion. By constituting the contextual offender/victim relationship as a pair of stable *identities*, the severe and repeated victimisation of underprivileged groups can be disguised, even when empirical evidence of its relationship to crime is firmly established in the literature. Huge numbers of underprivileged victims are rhetorically disappeared by reconstituting them as offenders. The white middle class victim is a *real* victim, because s/he has no criminal record; the poor brown victim, on the other hand, is *not* a real victim, because repeated, severe abuse has made him or her an “offender”. In this way the

constitution of stable “offender” identities can be important to the constitution of public opinion about the social response to crime: a “public opinion” produced by media and lobby groups (Pratt, 2007).

Psychologists are members of this public. Discourses of violence as an *appropriate* response to the violence of “offenders” not only inform popular but also scientific accounts of the issues. Andrews and Bonta (the key Department of Corrections text mentioned before) explicitly endorse retribution as distinct from deterrence and as an aspect of “justice” that they “do not deny” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 27), claiming that in terms of “the retribution purpose of punishment” (p. 329), “a punishment should not be overly harsh or too lenient; it must be fair and just” (p. 329). By constituting a “justice” aspect of punishment that is *distinct from* the “deterrence” aspect that psychology usually addresses, this key psychological text reproduces discourses of vengeance in which the deliberate infliction of suffering upon other human beings—and explicitly for no constructive rehabilitative purpose—is justified.

The aggression that might only be implied in retributive justice discourse can be articulated more explicitly when psychologists write for a general rather than an academic or professional readership. Nigel Latta, in his previously mentioned popular text, *Into the Darklands and Beyond: Unveiling the Predators Among Us*, describes a man convicted of sex offences against children: “On top of that he even *looks* like a paedophile ... when he smiles at you there’s an unpleasant simpering quality to it that makes you want to lean out and slap him a couple of times. You don’t, of course, but you sure as hell feel like it” (Latta, 2007, p. 136). Here, the phrase “*you* want to lean out and slap him a couple of times” emphasises the commonality between Latta and the reader: a shared, normal experience of desiring to hurt the “offender”. What does this demonstration of shared desire to hurt achieve discursively? At least the physical violence is positioned as unacceptable (“you don’t, of course”); but the strength of the desire is emphasised too, as if to counterbalance this rhetorically (“...but you sure as hell feel like it.”). Perhaps one’s normality *depends upon* one’s desiring to hurt the “paedophile”? If a failure to hate the paedophile can be read as a failure to hate paedophilia, then—in a cultural context of extreme and sometimes lethal violence

towards “paedophiles”—perhaps it can be unsafe *not* to demonstrate such hatred? Is Latta’s desire to “lean out and slap” his client a self-protective positioning of himself as thoroughly *unsympathetic to*, hence *unlike* his client? If so, what could be some implications of working from such a position, in terms of therapeutic outcomes?

The violence of this account—in which the desire to assault a “paedophile” is positioned as a normal desire—can, in a popular text for a general readership, be dismissed as humour: having “no sense of humour” and failing to laugh along with the image of the paedophile being struck in the face a couple of times is, like failing to laugh along with racist or sexist jokes, an uptight political correctness. In formal psychological writing, however, with a professional or academic readership, “political correctness” is more likely to be taken seriously; perhaps because the political effects of language are taken more seriously. In this different context, it is still possible to demonstrate one’s difference from “them”, by using discursive technologies that enable a whole set of relationships to be articulated by means of a single term’s inscription upon the subject.

In examining the operation of violence in forensic psychological texts—and specifically its operation in terms of how people are written—I would like to call attention to New Zealand’s *Code of Ethics* for psychologists (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002); specifically to “Practice Implication 1.1.4.”, which reads: “Psychologists use language that conveys respect for the dignity of others in all written or verbal communication” (p. 5). The way this particular practice implication—amplified by the (official) comment: “this includes avoidance of demeaning descriptions or comments”—explicitly attends to one of the issues of writing about subjects is of interest⁸⁸. Here, the practice of writing is addressed directly and explicitly, along with that of “verbal communication” or speaking: we are required to “use language that conveys respect for the dignity of others”, and to avoid “demeaning descriptions or comments” (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002, p. 5).

88 Many other “Value Statements” and “Practice Implications” of the *Code of Ethics* are also interesting in relation to issues of legal violence. I would prefer to focus on the issue of inscribed identity here, rather than devote a large portion of this chapter to a commentary on the *Code of Ethics*; however, I have attached a table from the *Code* as an *Appendix*, with an additional column, “Forensic Implications”, addressing some of these issues.

What remains is to determine what kinds of descriptions or comments are “demeaning”, and what kinds of descriptions or comments constitute “respect for the dignity of others”.

“Dignity” is an interesting term in this context. Shultziner’s (2003) analysis of its usage in various other contexts—including the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—describes “human dignity” as “a supreme value that not only stands separated from human rights but also supercedes them” (p. 2). “Because human beings have dignity they *should* be given certain treatment and human dignity *must not* be degraded or humiliated” (p. 4). This reading—in which dignity is not only something to be respected but also something that is inseparable from humanity—is consistent with the tendency for supporters of harsh punishment to constitute people convicted of serious crimes as inhuman monsters (Hudson, 2005). In order to treat a person the way no person should ever be treated, the person must be positioned as something other than a person.

Shultziner (2003) also notes the relationship of dignity to “honour”: an interpretation that is supported by our uses of the verb “dignify”, and the adjective “undignified”, that associates a lack of dignity with a lack of honour or social esteem. This reading is also consistent with the comment in the Code of Ethics opposing language that respects dignity to “demeaning” language (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002, p. 5): dignity is associated with social respectability. In this context, writing about people as “rapists” or “murderers” is about as far removed from using “language that conveys respect for the dignity of others” as it is possible to get: even “fool” is arguably more respectful, as a fool is likely to be regarded as more honourable, more human, and so more endowed with dignity than a rapist.

“Rapist” and “murderer” certainly are used in psychological texts (e.g. Maletzky, 2003; Snowden, Gray, Smith, Morris & MacCulloch, 2004), along with other terms like “child molester” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 382; Harkins & Beech, 2008), which, like “paedophile”, is arguably one of the most offensive, derogatory terms it is

currently possible to apply to someone in the English language⁸⁹. Indeed their usage is so normal that the suggestion that such terms are violent can seem baffling at first: what else could we write? The American Psychological Association's Publication Manual—in both the fifth and the recent sixth edition—says in regards to terms like “schizophrenic” that we should “avoid labeling people when possible” (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 63; 2010b, p. 72) and that it is inappropriate when people “are equated with their conditions” (2001, p. 63; 2010b, p. 72). It suggests instead that we “put the person first” and gives the example of “people diagnosed with schizophrenia”, noting also that this is currently the preferred way to write when discussing people with disabilities. If we are advised to avoid reducing a human being to a mental illness by writing “person diagnosed with schizophrenia” rather than “schizophrenic”, should we also avoid reducing a human being to an act of violence by writing “person convicted of rape” instead of “rapist”?

The ethical issues informing the Publication Manual's recommendation can apply in a very similar way to the different (though overlapping) contexts of mental illness and criminal conviction. The ethical principle articulated in Practice Implication 1.1.4. of New Zealand's *Code of Ethics* (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002), “Psychologists use language that conveys respect for the dignity of others in all written or verbal communication”, is not spelled out in those specific terms in the American Psychological Association's (2002; 2010a) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*, but its “Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence” and its “Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity” do imply that psychologists use respectful language as made explicit in New Zealand's Practice Implication 1.1.4. We can read the APA's *Publication Manual* as taking the ethical issues seriously, since—in the same chapter that advises “economy of expression” (2001, p. 34; 2010b, p. 67)—it prefers the wordier and more cumbersome “people diagnosed with schizophrenia” to the concise and easy “schizophrenics” (2001, pp. 63-64; 2010b, p. 72).

89 Even in prison—already a stigmatised, ostracised community—the “child molester” is constituted as the most detestable kind of person, in New Zealand so hated by other inmates that he must be segregated from them for his own protection (Looser, 2004); in the United States this ostracism may be extended to “sex criminals” generally, although “some [prisoners] state that the pedophile is more lowly than the adult rapist” (Phillips, 2001, p. 19). Hated both in prison and in the wider community, the “child molester” is the pariah of pariahs.

Since these ethical principles are relevant in contexts of writing about people diagnosed with mental disorders, it seems entirely plausible that they could be relevant in forensic contexts as well. A person may be a mother, teacher, friend, daughter, athlete, artist, and so on, and be diagnosed with a serious mental disorder: summing that person up as an instance of mental disorder is explicitly disrespectful. Similarly a person may be a mother, teacher, friend, daughter, athlete, artist, and so on, and be convicted of a serious crime: summing the person up as an instance of offending is disrespectful in much the same way. To the extent that these identities are epistemologically violent, to inscribe them upon subjects can be to enact such violence. Again the trivial inconvenience of using a short phrase rather than a single term is easily justified in terms of psychology's core ethical principles.

Another perhaps less obvious reason for attending to the labelling issue is one that might traditionally be considered as "pragmatic" rather than "ethical": regardless of the questions of dignity and respect, there is the question of identity and effects upon future behaviour. A large body of criminological and sociological literature has addressed the effects of stigma in terms of Becker's (1973) controversial labelling theory, an account in which the processes by which we label certain individuals as deviant are among the processes that actually produce deviant identities and behaviour. Labelling theory is about more than "self-fulfilling prophecies": it emphasises the importance of the social enforcement of rules, especially who gets to enforce them. Deviance is constituted "by rule enforcers" and—since those who make and enforce the rules tend to be the relatively wealthy and powerful—notions of deviance often work "against the poor and powerless members of society" (Shoemaker, 2005, p. 210). Labelling theory can therefore represent an early attempt at a psychological account of criminal behaviour that attends to both the influence of social identity upon action, and the influence of political interests upon the constitution of social identity.

Labelling theory has had "inconsistent" support from empirical research (Shoemaker, 2005, p. 223), and mainstream forensic psychology (e.g. Andrews & Bonta, 2003) does not take it seriously ("we will ignore the rhetoric around social class and

culture”, Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 143). Psychologists more concerned with mental health diagnoses than with forensic issues have “modified” (Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout & Dohrenwend, 1989) labelling theory, shifting emphasis away from the claim that deviant identities and behaviours are produced by stigmatisation and towards the claim—much easier to demonstrate empirically—that stigmatisation has significant negative effects upon the lives of those labelled. In terms of epistemological violence, labelling theory does at least have the merit of drawing attention to the possibility of negative effects arising from the imposition of negative identities. It falls far short, however, of being an adequate account of the psychological significance of “labels” that inscribe deviant identities.

Butler’s account is not only a richer exploration of the constitution of the “criminal” (or “terrorist”) identity in language: it also aligns with Foucault’s account in treating this issue as important to the development of normal identity. “Condemnation becomes the way in which we establish the other as nonrecognizable or jettison some aspect of ourselves that we lodge in the other, whom we then condemn. In this sense, condemnation can work against self-knowledge, inasmuch as it moralizes a self by disavowing commonality with the judged” (Butler, 2005, p. 46). If I constitute someone—in written or spoken language—as a “rapist”, I am constituting that person as a particular kind of person. There is a significant difference between a “person who has been convicted of rape” and a “rapist”, as there is between a “person who has told a lie” and a “liar”. When I identify someone as a person who has done something deviant, I am acknowledging a commonality between my own and the other’s identity, and attending to a different behaviour. But if I condemn another as a “rapist”, I simultaneously position myself as a non-rapist—a particular *kind of person* who does not rape—and by doing so, I refuse to acknowledge that the violent social conditions contributing to rape can make me dangerous too: at least more dangerous than I would be if those conditions were otherwise. It is a rhetorical shift of emphasis from rape itself, to the “rapist”, and as such it can be a rhetorical technique for avoiding the treatment of *rape*—rather than the individual “rapist”—as a problem to be addressed.

The endlessly reiterated accounts in the news media of astonishment that people who “seemed so normal” could nevertheless commit terrible acts of violence can function rhetorically to support the myth in which violence is perpetrated by monsters rather than by people. They *seemed* normal, but clearly they were not: they were “the predators among us” (Latta, 2007), evil individuals whose violence can be explained in this way, so that the conditions enabling violence seem less important. How important must this normative fiction be, that it continues to be reiterated after Auschwitz? Is the possibility that Germany was not infested with monsters—but rather that ordinary human beings did monstrous things—so unsettling that it simply hasn’t been acknowledged, or do we actually believe that Germany *was* the unfortunate homeland of a vast horde of monsters, “born bad” with neurological deficits predisposing them to murder? If we were to acknowledge the possibility that social factors produced murderous acts, and worse, through the agency of countless “normal” people, how might an awareness of this possibility affect our political decisions today? Conversely if we are confident that only “they”—the monsters—are violent, might we be less vigilant in regards to our own actions, and more likely to violate others? Hauling a handful of soldiers before the courts and holding them accountable for the systematic torture and sexual abuse at Abu Ghraib may explicitly function to condemn the violence in “them”, the abusers, precisely in order *not* to address the violence in “us”, the institutional violence and the “power dynamics that made these acts possible in the first place” (Puar, 2004, p. 531).

Butler claims that “condemnation can work against self-knowledge, inasmuch as it moralizes a self by disavowing commonality with the judged” (Butler, 2005, p. 46). Perhaps we disavow our commonality with the people of Hitler’s Germany precisely in order *not* to know ourselves as the modern West—the authors of Auschwitz and the atom bomb⁹⁰—or at least, not to know ourselves in the judgemental way we “know” the Nazis. If we cannot perceive violence without condemning the violent, then we must be careful not to perceive violence in ourselves. In this project of self-concealment, the more I can set myself apart as an altogether different kind of being from the one who does violence, the better. To constitute social conditions as being

90 “As a sudden disruption of the everyday world, the flash of light serves as an ominous doppelgänger to the light of creation and of knowledge. The light of the atomic bomb brings with it death and destruction, not progress” (Sharp, 2000, p. 436).

capable of producing violence is to constitute agency and subjectivity as vulnerable, permeable; dependent on something beyond themselves. Far from setting myself apart from the “evil” subject, a theory of social subjectivity—of intersubjectivity—constitutes my own subjectivity as vulnerable to whatever factors produced violence in the subjectivities of others: it affirms my common humanity with Adolph Hitler. For many, it seems, this is intolerable: one’s virtue arises from one’s essential difference from “monsters” like Hitler. To reiterate this—to “do humanity” for one’s self by reproducing accounts of the “inhuman” that inscribe this identity upon the bodies and biographies of others—it is necessary to de-emphasise the power of conditions beyond the subject to produce the subject; to downplay the technologies that continue to produce the subject, from moment to moment, calling upon this very subject to perform and articulate their absence.

Indeed, in this individualistic account my personal virtue increases in proportion to the violence of the social conditions I refuse to address: I become, for example, an admirable, compassionate man if I treat my slaves with kindness despite my full legal rights to torture and kill them. Without such rights my “compassion” would be the everyday respect of one person for another; but the violence of the social order enables me not only to violate my slaves, but also to be charitable to them; to perform a kind of virtue only possible from a position of violently upheld power. What a paragon of virtue I am, if I live in a community that treats women as the sexual property of their husbands, yet I choose not to rape my wife. Every additional “rapist” in my community increases my own worth, not only as a virtuous non-rapist, but as a *man* who might protect *women* from wicked rapists, without ever acknowledging the violence of the masculinity shared by the rapist and the hero, offering different pleasures to each, as slavery does to the cruel and the kind owner of slaves.

To the extent that I divide the world into villains and worthy folk, and position myself among the worthy, there is at least one respect in which I may benefit from increasing the violence in my community: it increases the worth of my own identity as a “non-violent person”. It is not, therefore, merely a case of our evilifying others in order to avoid addressing the social conditions giving rise to “evil”: evil and good are a binary

pair and, like the scales of justice, as one end sinks, so the other rises. To evilify—to constitute another as “evil”—is also to constitute one’s self as “good”, by virtue of one’s difference from evil. If one is violating another, evilification is a highly effective rhetorical strategy, simultaneously justifying the abuse as what the wicked other deserves (“the atomic bomb was justice coming back to haunt the Japanese for their many atrocities”, Sharp, 2000, p. 438) and positioning the violator as the “good” party who, by definition, does not commit atrocities. Thus the brilliant shining light of the United States’ bombs were, if not—in terms of moral enlightenment—part of “the beacon of law and justice” that “America expects to continue to be” (Dumond, 2003, p. 358), then at least—in terms of rational enlightenment—more glorious evidence of the progress of scientific knowledge, so that today when we want to study the efficient killing of entire cities of civilians, such research “in the best cases is based on modeling that has been validated by the results from Hiroshima and Nagasaki” (Harney, 2009, p. 2).

In this context psychological research around violent crime is not merely a matter of “understanding the causes” of criminal violence. If understanding and prevention were our principal aims, an account in which a man rapes because of a particular set of social conditions (e.g. discourses of masculine sexuality, masculine domestic privilege, and so on) that we could work to change is a far more useful account than one in which he rapes “because he is a rapist”. At the very least, this is a strangely arbitrary point at which to break off our investigation; perhaps even a refusal to investigate—a refusal in the form of a “matter-of-fact” answer—like Willie Sutton’s responding to the question of why he robbed banks with the answer, “because that’s where the money was” (Stack, 2006, p. 15). Proximal factors are not always the factors out of which the most useful account of an event can be constructed. To position “criminals” as the cause of crime is to problematise something so late in the process of crime-production that its problematisation is more remarkable for its normalisation of the conditions of possibility for violent crime, than for its contribution to a useful explanation of it.

The constitution of evil subjects is therefore, at present, inextricably bound up with narrative accounts of violence. Accounts that put “evil” in the place of social conditions that we can actually address are unlikely to be useful for violence minimisation. More than merely ignoring the causes and producing an identity in their place, the act of condemnation produces a scapegoat for the same purpose it has served since it was literally a goat: an endlessly repeated ritual that announces, “see, we have purged ourselves of the evil in our midst”, in order to continue the very things that necessitate the ritual’s endless repetition.

Becker has written recently that if he were to revise his labelling theory he would perhaps “re-orient the approach slightly by making it a study of the process of *accusation* [italics added]” (Becker, 2005, ¶ 13). Butler has studied this process in relation to subjectivity:

Levinas considers the accusative inauguration of the moi—the “me”—in both its grammatical and ethical senses. Only through a certain accusation does the “me” emerge. In this sense, paradoxically, he is aligned with Nietzsche, for whom the accusation of guilt produces the possibility of a subject. For Nietzsche, the subject emerges through a retroactive understanding of itself as the cause of an injury and proceeds to punish itself, thus spawning a reflexivity in which the “I” first treats itself as an object, a “me” (Butler, 2005, p. 85).

This “pragmatic” reason for avoiding language that reduces people to crimes is therefore a supplement to the earlier, “ethical” reason, both adding to it and completing it. It adds to the ethical considerations of dignity and respect the pragmatic possibility that constituting someone as a “criminal” in written or spoken discourse may perpetuate the crime, both in relation to the specific individual (through the inscription of a criminal identity with very real social effects, some of which may include an increased likelihood of offending), and in relation to the wider community (by constructing a discursive scapegoat that enables us to normalise, and thus ignore, conditions giving rise to violence). But it also completes an account of the ethical

reason, involving respect for human dignity, inasmuch as it embodies—in terms of Butler’s theory—a form of respect for our own dignity as human beings who can neither give full accounts of ourselves nor achieve the perfectly alienated self-control that such an individualistic notion of agency implies. Each of us includes a “region of existence that is radically unwilled” (Butler, 2005, p. 85) or at least, that embodies the will of others.

If I write about another person with this kind of respect then I acknowledge the possibility that my desires may inform their actions; even the possibility that these desires may inform their actions against “my” will. To inscribe upon subjects identities that effectively reduce people to their worst acts can function not only to locate violence in the bodies of individuals rather than in the unjust social practices that we might otherwise change: it can also function as a form of evilification; a form of epistemological terrorism that works to silence those who might have the most to say about unjust social practices.

Even if we disregard the psychological importance of identity for subjectivity, there is also the issue of “hate speech” to consider. The *Code of Ethics* for psychologists in New Zealand explicitly forbids the use of such language⁹¹; but this leaves open the question of whether or not a specific term is a more or less “neutral” adjective, or whether it is “demeaning” and implies hostility. It is important to note that the acknowledgement of some “hate speech” as such may depend upon a particular group’s not being hated—or at least, not officially hated—by the community acknowledging and forbidding the hate speech. The notion of the Third Reich’s outlawing derogatory terms for Jewish citizens is somewhat at odds with its other policies; similarly in the United States as late as 1935 a democratic senator “used the terms ‘nigra’, ‘colored’, and ‘nigger’ with no apparent awareness that that last word would or should be viewed as offensive” (Kennedy, 2003, p. 9). This is important because it suggests that a term may “feel” like a neutral, matter-of-fact adjective when it is being used, and yet may represent an example of hate speech for another

91 “Psychologists use language that conveys respect for the dignity of others in all written or verbal communication. This includes avoidance of demeaning descriptions or comments” (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002, p. 5).

community. The normality of the hatred endows the hate speech with its character of normal speech. I do not therefore expect to see terms like “offender” identified and proscribed as hate speech, or at least not any time soon, because “offenders” *are hated*, and the term itself—along with all the various terms for different kinds of “offenders”—is consistent with this hatred, and with our other policies, from our textual accounts of them to the physical conditions of their treatment.

What psychologists could do now, however, is attend to the social acceptability of public statements articulating desires for violence to be enacted on the bodies of “offenders” (calls for capital punishment and so on), and in the context of this socially acceptable hatred, ask questions about how it might manifest itself in psychological texts, in case its widespread acceptability has reduced our vigilance. It is easy enough to agree with the *Code of Ethics* that psychological texts should not say things like, “offenders are a useful population for tests of aversive therapies, since the suffering associated with these therapies is deserved, whether or not it turns out to be therapeutically effective”. However, we can go much further than this, and ask, with Butler, if there are ways of constituting people in language that embody violent social relationships; so that to argue for the “ethical treatment of offenders” is self-contradictory inasmuch as it enacts an unethical treatment of human beings.

A psychiatric institution that required its outpatients to regularly sign their names after “Schizophrenic: ” would (I hope) be advised by mainstream psychology to use more respectful language. At present there seems to be little chance of our Department of Corrections receiving any similar advice from mainstream psychology in regards to its parole policies: the term “offender” is ubiquitous in forensic psychological texts that use it as if it were no more problematic than “voter”. Psychology has simply taken up the term (which was in use before psychology emerged as a discipline, e.g. Redgrave, 1838) as it is popularly used, along with the popular assumption that—despite the possibility that our calling a large portion of the African American population “niggers” may have contributed to our keeping them in chains “back then”—our calling a large portion of the African American population “offenders” does not contribute to our keeping them in chains now. If we consider meanings in terms of

their social effects, perhaps the progress from “nigger” to “offender” is—like the movement from public torture to imprisonment—not so much a progress informed by an interest in minimising violence, as it is a progress informed by the production of more efficient and effective means of reproducing violence without exposing these means to criticism.

Does psychology’s reluctance to advocate for the people it works with in prisons reflect its having accepted the redefinition of “patients” as “offenders” that occurs with the shift of populations from hospitals to prisons? It is by no means certain that the “patient” would receive advocacy and care if she or he were being treated in a psychiatric institution—especially if the patient had done something terrible to others in the community—so it is not necessarily the case that the shift from one disciplinary (in the Foucaultian sense) institution to another has impacted negatively on the psychologist’s sense of ethical obligation. However, there is an important difference between the kinds of violence that can be done to the “mad” and to the “bad”: violence done to the mad must at least be dressed up as benevolence, whereas violence done to the bad can be, at present, unashamedly violent.

The relationship of the constitution of subjects to discourses of “evil”, “madness” and so on returns us to inscribed identity as a major site of intersection between the narrative “form” and the “contents” of psychological theory in the forensic domain. Many of the terms we see in media accounts of courtroom proceedings—including very common terms like “paedophile” and “psychopath”—are closely related to DSM diagnoses and individualistic theories of criminal behaviour. Returning to the “Bible” for New Zealand’s Corrections Department’s Psychological Services, we find that the number one factor listed under “The Major Factors” correlating with criminal activity is “1) Antisocial/procriminal attitudes, values, beliefs, and cognitive-emotional states (i.e. personal cognitive supports for crime)” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 430). Mainstream forensic psychology, using its advanced scientific research technologies, has discovered that antisocial behaviour is correlated with antisocial thinking! Based on this discovery, it argues that these “personal cognitive supports for crime” are a suitable target upon which to focus our efforts at intervention. How does a “social

science” manage to replace every dramatically empirically evident pattern in the offending data, from the enormous gender gap to ethnic and other socio-economic disparities, with the popular “common sense” idea that an individual act of violence can best be understood and addressed in terms of something that takes place inside that individual?

Rather unsurprisingly in this context, the most common DSM diagnosis among prisoners is “antisocial personality disorder”, with nearly half of the male prison population said to suffer from this illness (Fazel & Danesh, 2002). This is not only unsurprising because the symptoms of this disorder include such things as “pursuing illegal occupations” and a failure “to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behavior” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 702), but also because if mainstream forensic psychology produces “procriminal cognitions” as the most useful construct for addressing criminal behaviour, we might expect the explanation offered for a person’s antisocial behaviour to be “antisocial personality disorder”.

According to the DSM (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), antisocial personality disorder involves being “deceitful and manipulative”, “irritable and aggressive”, “extremely irresponsible” and lacking remorse (p. 702). In other contexts, attributes like “deceitful” are used in discourses of morality and immorality: deceitfulness (like aggression, irresponsibility and remorselessness) can be a form of “wickedness” as well as a symptom of antisocial personality disorder. Given the moral justifications for the prison-industrial complex, it is unlikely to be mere coincidence that most of the inmates are found to be afflicted with mental disorders the accounts of which are so consistent with popular accounts of evil. When the “treatment” that the community outside the prison wants to see is “punishment”, perhaps the desires of this community are embodied in the psychological discovery that the symptoms of “criminals” tend to consist of various forms of “wickedness”.

Of course, an even closer fit with the popular account of wickedness is “psychopathy”. According to the DSM:

The essential feature of Antisocial Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood. This pattern has also been referred to as psychopathy (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, pp. 701-702).

Some mainstream accounts, far from worrying about the closeness of the match between the scientific and popular explanations, seem to be delighted with it. In a recent issue of *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, an article entitled “Psychopathy is the unified theory of crime” (DeLisi, 2009) on the one hand claims that critiques of psychopathy as tautology can be “easily dismissed” via “correlational analyses” and “regression diagnostics” (p. 268), while at the same time enthusing:

There is a synergy between the violent criminals’ personality traits, lifestyle, and observed behavior that dovetails so exquisitely that it is as if their criminality is wrapped up in a box. That box is psychopathy (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008, as cited in DeLisi, 2009, p. 256).

The text goes on to constitute psychopathy as “the unified theory of delinquency and crime and the purest explanation of antisocial behavior” (p. 256). Does its “purity” consist of its being uncontaminated by social conditions, so that the inquiry into “crime” can be stopped at “criminals”? Like the popular account in which evil is done spontaneously by means of “free will”, the account of evil behaviour arising from an evil personality does seem very “pure”. Because of this purity: “Psychopathy mirrors the elemental nature and embodies the pejorative essence of antisocial behavior” (p. 257). For this reason we should embrace the theory and apply the diagnostic label, despite its explicitly being “controversial” because “in the public mind, psychopaths are deserving of the death penalty perhaps because of their label” (p. 268), supported by a finding that respondents presented with a vignette about a 16-year-old convicted of murder “were 130% more likely to recommend that youths should be sentenced to

death if they had psychopathic traits. Moreover, respondents indicated that youths should not receive treatment in prison” (p. 268).

That respondents did not *want* to treat these individuals may itself be important in terms of the possibility for violence to reproduce itself in psychological theory, since “clinicians, in general, have viewed psychopaths as incurable” (Andrews & Bonta, 2003, p. 376). But that they wanted to see these individuals *killed* is an account of an even more violent desire: can psychological theory embody such passions? DeLisi’s (2009) text continues: “In their review of the literature, Millon and Davis (1998) suggested that many murderers could be characterized as malevolent psychopaths, which is a particularly negative subtype of offender characterized as belligerent, mordant, rancorous, vicious, brutal, callous, and vengeful” (p. 263). “Mordant, rancorous, vicious, brutal, callous”: evilification of almost poetic grandeur, and a passage that might not seem out-of-place in a medieval inquisitor’s account of a heretic or other villain. All of this is rather ominous for the Māori people who comprise half of New Zealand’s prison population, given the implication that so many of the people in our prisons are wicked individuals who may be afflicted by “a congenital disorder” (DeLisi, 2009, p. 261) involving “brain glucose metabolism abnormalities in the prefrontal and temporal regions of the brains of antisocial persons” (p. 265). “It is likely that molecular genetics researchers will identify candidate genes for psychopathy” (p. 266). Very likely, I imagine, so long as indigenous and formerly enslaved peoples fill our prisons, since a genetic account provides a convenient biological justification for these demographics.

DeLisi’s (2009) text provides an excellent illustration of how a forensic psychological diagnosis can “embody or exemplify the sordid essence ... [of] violating the rights of others” (p. 267). At stake is the constitution of violence as essential to particular persons, or produced socially. I am not claiming that the notion of “personality” is never useful, and there may even be contexts in which the constitution of an aggressive, irresponsible, deceitful personality may be the best way to address the specific problems of that context; however, there is a very significant difference between contexts of explanation for individuals who must cope with acts of

aggression, deceit or irresponsibility face-to-face, and contexts of explanation for social policy. There are plenty of ways that acts of deception could be addressed without recourse to accounts of deceptive personality.

Our principal means of mass communication—watched by nearly every family in this country⁹²—could be viewed as exhibiting many of the symptoms of antisocial personality disorder every day. From this perspective, deceptive, manipulative, irresponsible advertisements cynically exploit parents' concerns for their children's health by marketing containers of coloured refined sugar as if they were health products, while other ads exploit body image anxieties, perhaps aimed at the audiences who purchased the products marketed in the first set of ads; and so on. At the time of writing this, plastic Coca-Cola bottles in New Zealand claim (on their exterior) to be "lovingly crafted". Perhaps the transposition of these words from advertising material for hand-crafted goods to an icon of mass-production was intended as a joke: a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgement that this is exactly the kind of product from which the phrase "lovingly crafted" establishes distance in other advertisements. I prefer that explanation to the bleaker possibility that "lovingly crafted" was identified through market research as a phrase that produced a good response in consumers, and so was stamped onto the bottles for that reason alone. But whatever the explanation, if in this case the meaning of the word is its *use*, what happens when young people read "lovingly crafted" on a plastic Coca-Cola bottle, and nowhere else? Does "lovingly" come to mean "in order to make as much profit as possible"? Can we really be surprised when people exposed to relentless, manipulative and frequently deceptive marketing sometimes behave "deceptively" and "manipulatively" in ways that *aren't* endorsed by law?

Epistemologically violent accounts of subjects can articulate epistemologically violent theories of subjectivity. These theories can reproduce violence by constituting their subjects as the evil agents of evil deeds. "Agency" can function as an account of *how* the subject intersects with the broader narratives within which subjects are located; of what it means for the subject to act or to "be" in the world. In this context the term

⁹² According to a recent Statistics New Zealand survey, "99 percent of households had a television" (Bascand, 2007, p. 8).

“offender” can deploy a particular theory of agency because the offender is not—like a “swimmer” in a flood—constituted as a normal subject who acts in a particular way due to a particular set of circumstances. Ostensibly to guard against a repetition of offending, a conviction for offending becomes inscribed permanently upon the subject, no longer as a brand or other physical inscription in the flesh, but as the inscribed identity of “offender”. By producing discursively a particular *kind* of subject—one whose offending is a matter of personal identity—the violence of the offending itself can be reproduced, by replacing explanations for offending with accounts in which the “offender” *is* the explanation.

When someone has been killed, or not, as a result of courtroom proceedings, it may seem obvious that the accounts that were produced in the courtroom—of the defendant’s subjectivity, and in particular of the subject’s *agency*—were instrumental in producing a particular outcome. “The sentencing phase of a capital trial, if conducted skilfully on both sides, was a battle of philosophies. The prosecutor told a story of free will, of a criminal with the opportunity to choose between good and evil. Defence counsel countered with a narrative of determinism, of social and biological forces that would have driven anyone to crime” (Banner, 2003, p. 294). The consequences of one or the other narrative of agency are fairly obvious for the defendant in such cases: the account of “free will” kills, whilst the account of “determinism” produces some lesser violence, or perhaps even an acquittal. However, the “battle of philosophies” between the “story of free will” and the “narrative of determinism” (Banner, 2003, p. 294) that we see enacted in the courtroom can also be theorised—as with many philosophical conflicts—as an ideological and political struggle. Theories of agency have important political effects, and as a key player in the production and reproduction of these theories, a psychology that aims to minimise violence must attend to these effects carefully.

Moral accountability: violent explanations of violence

A common criticism of Foucault's account of subjectivity is that its socially constructed subjects—"effects" as much as "users" of power—are somehow robbed, by this theory, of their agency. Theorists wary of relativism "worry that Foucault's account of subjectivity does not allow for agency and resistance" (McLaren, 2002, p. 2). An interesting aspect of this criticism is its implicit assumption that individual agency needs to be impervious and independent. Supposedly, a Foucaultian or Butlerian account of agency removes or denies my power to act, because it attends to the agency of others "in" or "through" me, or the extent to which my actions are configured by discourse. Yet if I am giving an account of the actions of another with *less* access to power—a child, perhaps—is it not precisely the reverse that the Foucaultian account achieves: rather than denying my agency, it acknowledges its action *in the child*? In the traditional account, I can train a little boy to be violent by modelling physical aggression every time another person challenges me, and by offering the boy no other social resources with which to resolve conflicts. I can punish him mercilessly for being a "sissy" when he fails to attack challengers, and reward him with kindness and respect when he beats them. After all this, when he finally gets into trouble for seriously hurting another person, I can claim it was *his choice*, his "free will", his own independent agency that caused the troublesome state of affairs. In the Foucaultian account, however, this is no longer the case: far from denying my agency or removing my power to act, the replacement of an individualistic with a social account of action *extends* my agency beyond my own body, acknowledging that I can achieve things with more than just my own two hands.

One implication of this that I consider to be of particular importance is a kind of systematic difference between the effects of the alternate theories of agency. If most of what you can achieve in the world *is* achieved with "just your own two hands"—if you are a very small girl, for example—then the traditional account seems to treat you fairly because it treats you "equally" with others: you are accountable for what you do with your hands, and Daddy is accountable for what he does with his. Yet the Foucaultian account, by *not* treating each individual subject equally, can be read as

treating us more fairly: it suggests that subjects are accountable *to the extent that they can influence outcomes*, rather than to the extent that their bodies are the proximal sites of agency. This is a “systematic” difference because it means that the traditional account’s effect of *denying* any *inter*-subjective agency will tend to advantage subjects directly in proportion to their power to act upon and through other subjects, by not holding them accountable for this action. For a little child, the traditional account is a constant source of accusation: my hands did it, *I* did it, I must be punished. Could legal regulation based on individualistic “free will”—like economic regulation based on capitalist principles—function as a social system that advantages each person in proportion to the advantage he or she already enjoys? If so, then—like capitalism—would a hegemonic narrative of individual agency lead over time to widening gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged subjects, with any “general” increase in power—any technological advancement that is differentially accessible to the advantaged and disadvantaged—producing an acceleration of the widening gaps? Against a background of questions like this, psychology’s treatment of agency in forensic settings may have implications that extend well beyond this specific field.

Agency has been already been discussed to some extent, in terms of evilification and of Butler’s theory around agency and the giving of accounts. From these texts it can be argued that evilification or the constitution of the “evil other”—the inscription of violence upon another person or group, so as to justify violent action against them in the name of action against “violence”—implicates one of the most frequent and destructive means by which violence reproduces itself with a specific account of agency. In order to deny the action and progress of violence across time, the process must be positioned at a single location, “frozen” in the person or group that one wishes to attack. This account of agency is already vulnerable to subversion by discourse related to empiricist neurological research: for example, an account of the work of Benjamin Libet.

Libet’s empirical research has been widely discussed (Hallett, 2007) in terms of its implications for the notion of “free will”. By observing neural activity, Libet (Libet, Gleason, Wright & Pearl, 1983) found that the activity signalling a conscious

“decision to act” happened *after* the first recognisable stages of the activity signalling the action itself. In a book summarising and discussing his research, Libet writes: “What we found, in short, was that the brain exhibited an initiating process, beginning 550 msec before the freely voluntary act; but awareness of the conscious will to perform the act appeared only 150-200 msec before the act. *The voluntary process is therefore initiated unconsciously, some 400 msec before the subject becomes aware of her will or intention to perform the act* [italics added]” (Libet, 2004, pp. 223-224).

What interests me most in all this, is that whereas other commentators were prepared to argue the conclusion that “a conscious free will (in the sense of consciousness initiating action) is incompatible with the evidence of neuroscience” (Spence, 1996, p. 75), Libet himself—not only a scientist whose work assumes some notion of physical causality, but one whose research specifically demonstrated the consistent temporal pairing of events that we normally interpret as “cause and effect”—found the traditional account of “free will” so compelling that he argued in its favour, on the grounds that the empirical evidence should not be taken too seriously when the feeling that we have free will is so convincing! “The phenomenal fact is that most of us feel that we *do* have a kind of free will” (Libet, 2004, p. 155). “Our intuitive feelings about the phenomenon of free will form a fundamental basis for our views about human nature” (p. 155). Yes: these “intuitive feelings” so fundamental to our account of “human nature” belong to that class of “natural” facts Butler invites us *not* to take for granted, but rather to examine in terms of how they are produced as “natural” and what this achieves socially. Libet goes on to say: “A theory that simply interprets the phenomenon of free will as illusory and denies the validity of this phenomenal fact is less attractive than a theory that accepts or accommodates the phenomenal fact” (p. 155). I agree: the phenomenological experience of “free will” is important and cannot merely be dismissed as “illusory” without explanation. Contemporary social psychological theory—with the attention it gives to the role of *language* in constituting our experience—offers us a theory that “accepts or accommodates the phenomenal fact” *and* is unproblematic in terms of its consistency with Libet’s empirical research.

Contemporary theory of subjectivity has already subverted traditional accounts of causation, both in relation to the “self” as a unified construct (i.e. the traditional account of the self that produces discourse is subverted as the discursive production of the self), and in relation to specific elements of the self (e.g. the traditional account of natural gender producing gendered behaviour is subverted as gendered action achieving the discursive production of natural gender). In all these cases the phenomenological experience (of one’s gendered behaviour arising from one’s natural gender, or of one’s discourse as the expression of one’s essential self) does not “invalidate” the critical account: the phenomenological experience is *part of* the discursive production described by the critical account.

Like refuting Copernicus by arguing, “regardless of your evidence, the earth feels motionless and the sun appears to rise and fall, so your account is invalid”, to refute an interpretation of phenomena on the grounds of the “direct experience” of the phenomena can be simply to cherish an existing interpretation, or to *refuse* the new account, rather than to refute it logically by relating the account to other phenomena. The “phenomenal fact” of the earth’s stability does not necessarily contradict the logical inference of its rotation, any more than the “phenomenal fact” of free will has to contradict the logical inference of its causation. As for the *phenomenological* contradiction, the logic of the phenomena can be changed: anyone who has watched the images of distant objects drifting across a telescope’s eyepiece can affirm that it is possible to *experience* the earth’s rotation when that particular account informs one’s interpretation of phenomena. Any contradiction between the phenomenological experience of “free will” and the rational account of causality that we treat as more reasonable in most other contexts is not inevitable: as with the experience of the earth’s rotation, we can transform the phenomenological experience by informing it with a new logical⁹³ account.

93 By calling the account of cause and effect that we accept in most contexts other than that of human agency the “logical” account, I mean primarily “involving words”, but I am also positioning the account as more reasonable in these contexts: my claims would likely be treated as “illogical”, “irrational” or “unreasonable” if I seriously argued that nothing had caused your cake to vanish from the refrigerator, and that it had simply vanished spontaneously (perhaps of its own “free will”).

We do not *have* to discard the notions of causality that make sense in our physical accounts, nor the empirical neurological research that supports these notions: an interesting question is, why do we *want* to? Whose interests—or perhaps, what *kind* of interests—are best served by an account in which the human spirit remains untouched by material conditions? When Marx called religion “the opium of the people” (1843/1977, p. 131), he was arguing that “the call to abandon illusions about their condition is the call to abandon a condition which requires illusions” (p. 131). What kind of illusions might be required by the conditions in which we live today?

A subjectivity that experiences itself as uncaused is not merely alienated from the material world: its separation aligns with a specific direction of influence from “object” to “subject”. If one is not *caused by* the world of objects, yet one’s subjectivity permits one freely to *cause events* in that world of objects, then this asymmetry establishes a fundamental distinction between the alienated subject and the human bodies that such a subject perceives in its phenomenological experience: those bodies *cannot be subjects* like one’s own “free” and uncaused self, because one’s freedom depends upon the specific asymmetry in which one’s “self” is “free”, whereas the objects in one’s phenomenological field of experience—including other people—can be moved, touched and influenced as a demonstration or enactment of this freedom. This asymmetry (of causal power to act) between subject and object constitutes “freedom” in such a way that it can only be achieved by the domination of other subjects: a Hegelian struggle for the position of “master” must ensue, or one is doomed to be a “slave”; a mere object of the “free will” of true, independent subjects. Subjectivities informed by this asymmetry are produced within the politics of power struggle: every subject striving for a “freedom” that can only be enacted by dominating others; mastering them as material objects the actions of which can be acted upon, in order to affirm one’s existence as a real, uncaused subject.

The asymmetrical form of this alienation is well suited to violence, but even without the asymmetry, alienation itself may provide suitable conditions for violence to be reproduced. By means of this alienation the subject is de-invested in the physical world, so that the material interactions of material bodies no longer have the full

significance that they would have if they belonged to the “spiritual” world of the subject itself. Embodiment takes on the character of a “virtual reality” in which one’s own body and the bodies of others can be abused, exploited, torn to pieces; all without lasting significance. Like gamers who can simply take off our virtual reality headsets, we experience ourselves as acting “in” the world without being “of” the world. If the violation of one subject by another can be made to seem less significant by the alienation of subjectivity from materiality, could this already be reason enough for violence to promote such conditions in order to reproduce itself?

Then there is the importance of uncaused agency to the justification and perpetuation of violence through cycles of vengeance. Althusser’s (1970/2008) *interpellation*—for contemporary theorists of subjectivity the process by which a subject is brought into being by the address of society and by the response to that address—meant, in Althusser’s France, interrogation by officers of the law⁹⁴. How important may the *legal* implications of “free will” be for the constitution of the psychological subject?

Are we carved into separate souls discursively, in order to render our bodies more violable? Is the courtroom defendant’s encounter with “free will”—as a theoretical claim that carries a threat of violence, even execution—a special encounter, or do discourses of free will and individual agency operate similarly upon all of us, producing subjects for and of violence?

What is so radically unsettling about the psychological analogue of the physical account in which we are embedded in the world, and not separate from it? Are our practices of accountability and our attributions of responsibility so bound up in discourses of autonomous, alienated individuality that we cannot imagine practices of accountability and attributions of responsibility that do *not* depend on the traditional individual agent? If so, what are some of the relationships between these practices of accountability and attributions of responsibility, and the discourses justifying our

94 The violent connotations of the French “interpellation” have, therefore, some overlap with the connotations of the English “interrogation”: Hodgson (2002) points out that historically to be “*sur interpellation*, under questioning” (p. 798) could involve being subjected to torture.

economic practices, in which one *earns* one's power over others? How are accounts of capitalist democracy transformed by the presence or removal of the discourse of "free will" that is articulated so aggressively in the forensic domain; the theatre playing *every night* on our televised news?

The forensic domain—as an important public arena for enacting and contesting responsibility and accountability—is one in which the constitution of individual "free" agency is continually re-enacted, even implicitly by its denial in cases of "diminished responsibility", where the exceptional absence of a fully accountable will affirms its presence in the normal individual. The abnormal influence of external factors upon human behaviour constitutes their normal lack of influence; the abnormal presence of violence constitutes its normal absence; the abnormal wickedness of the accused constitutes the normal decency of the accuser. All these productions of crucial binary distinctions have significance that extends far beyond the walls of the courtroom; yet the very existence of a special "justice system" distinct from the rest of social life works to position these issues as distinct from a "justice" that might apply to normal daily life. In this way important aspects of the politics of the family, schoolroom and workplace can be established in the courtroom without meeting the resistance of wives, children or workers: deviant violence is never a subjective resistance to the objective⁹⁵ violence of normality, but rather exists independently as an *inherent* deviance. The forensic domain is thus constituted as a domain of justice inherent to normality—dealing with the irruptions into normal society of an inherent deviance—rather than as the production of a specific account of justice. "Anthropologists, degenerationists, geneticists, phrenologists, physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social scientists and social workers, superintendents of the feeble-minded, and prison personnel—all at one time or another attempted to define where normality leaves off and inherent deviance begins. This historical eagerness to enter the fray indicates that the stakes have enormous social value" (Rafter, 1997, p. 238). What is at stake here?

95 In the sense of Žižek's (2008) account, in which an emphasis on the "subjective violence" of individuals can *enable* the reproduction of an "objective violence" embodied in social structures, material structures, and other conditions preceding and exceeding the individual actor.

A clue to the relevance of criminal violence to theories (and even “intuitive feelings”) of agency is the frequent appearance of specifically *criminal* violence in accounts that pose the agency-focused question, “how can anyone do such a thing?”. Here are the first few lines of the introduction to the philosophical text, *Agency and Responsibility: Essays on the Metaphysics of Freedom* (Ekstrom, 2001).

Concerns over free will and responsibility arise most readily in reaction to particularly bizarre and devastating manifestations of human agency. Consider the following, a selection of the countless examples that might be drawn from recent news accounts. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold plan and execute a shooting rampage at Colorado’s Columbine High School, murdering and wounding fellow students and then killing themselves (p. 1).

After describing another act of criminal violence, and then a prison inmate’s self-mutilation, Ekstrom (Ekstrom, 2001) continues: “Deep puzzlement over such cases begins from the recognition that these events do not merely happen. Rather, like all human actions, ranging from the heroic to the horrific, they are *done* or performed” (p. 1). The source of the “puzzlement” here is said to be “that these events do not merely happen”; but this alone makes them no more puzzling than any other human behaviour: we do not tend to puzzle over the issue of agency when people ride bicycles or brush their teeth. The earlier comment that the actions of concern are “bizarre and devastating” (p. 1) is important: to the extent that an account of the reasons for the actions could be given in terms acceptable to the wider community, it would not be “bizarre”, and so not especially puzzling; and if the actions had not been “devastating”, the question of agency might never have arisen.

This is important because it acknowledges the relationship of agency to *accountability*: in this context the issue of agency arises when an account is demanded. If I see a young man ~~kicking~~ kicking another youth and “hold him accountable” for that action, and I accept his account as reasonable (perhaps he points to the cameras and explains that they are acting a scene for a movie), then the issue of

agency is not even raised: I will not question whether he “deliberately chose” to act, or was coerced, or insane, or in some other way not acting “freely”, because my accepting his account makes the question of agency irrelevant. But if I do *not* accept his account (perhaps the cameras are in his friends’ mobile phones, and the “actor” he is striking is still curled up on the ground, looking seriously hurt), does even this necessarily raise the question of “free will”? Can I not reject his account and intervene (perhaps removing the “actor”/victim to safety) simply on the grounds of my different interpretation of the events? Even if he and his friends resist all this and I decide to use physical violence to stop the attack, in what context does it become useful for me to reject the possibility of *causes* for their actions, and to deploy the notion of “free will”?

One such context is that of *blame*. If I desire to prevent future beatings *by means of violence* rather than by collaboratively addressing the causes, then the interdependent notions of blame and “free will” become useful to me. In order to justify a violence that could not be justified in relation to the causes of the events, I must expel the causes from the debate: “free will” achieves this, by constituting the agent as making decisions in an independent, uncaused way. My refusal to collaborate with the target of blame is justified by an account in which the agent *cannot be reasoned with*: what is the point in trying to collaborate with something that chooses evil independently?

Consider the familiar claim that “for any interventions to work, prisoners have to want to change” (O’Connor, 2006, May 14, ¶ 81). This claim—from a public speech by New Zealand’s Minister of Corrections, in which he argued that some prisoners “by their own stubbornness, spurn a genuine chance to create a better life for themselves” (O’Connor, 2006, May 14, ¶ 85)—works not only to absolve psychologists of any responsibility for ineffective interventions (*we do not need to worry about our interventions when they make our patients demonstrably worse; rather, and in spite of the outcome-independent good worth of our interventions, the patients choose to persist in their criminality, by means of that elusive free will that lies beyond the realm of psychological intervention*), but also to retrospectively absolve the community of responsibility for the production of criminality. The frequency with which indigenous

people find themselves locked up in colonial prisons is not something for which the colonial community can be held to account, because the actions of each individual are not part of the world of cause and effect within which it would be more difficult to justify violence: the construct of independent free will permits each individual to be independently blamed and independently victimised, without the overall project appearing as a project of violence against the indigenous community as a whole.

Once again, a critical account can subvert the traditional sequence of events: it is not that an objective blameworthiness arises and is responded to by blame; rather, a violent intervention is desired and enacted despite its being difficult to justify in terms of the various causes and effects that could be tabled in a collaborative discussion. In order to avoid this discussion, the interdependent notions of free will and of blame are deployed to justify violence.

A crucial distinction that I want to make here is the difference between the *de facto* assumption that human beings do what they do for reasons that potentially *could* be explained in terms of cause and effect—for “reasonable” reasons—as opposed to the assumption that human beings only behave reasonably when they are able to give an acceptable *account* of those reasons. The claim that “the possibility always exists for an explanation of interpersonal violence to be articulated in a way that constitutes the protagonists as embodying the effects of external factors” could even conceivably be argued in an empiricist epistemological framework: there is no personal characteristic, tendency or trait that *cannot* be positioned as an effect of some cause.

Of course, this can function as a kind of “universal excuse” that makes no sense in the social context of accountability: “society made me do it” provides no indication of a person’s accepting any responsibility for an action, let alone an assurance that it will not recur. However, in an empiricist epistemological framework, the social implications of a truth claim—however alarming—should be irrelevant to the “objective” truth of the claim. So the assumption that there is always a *possible*

explanation involving “reasonable” causes does not *require* a performative, constructionist or rhetorical epistemological framework to be “true”.

In a constructionist framework the claim’s truth status can be constituted very differently: it can consist of the claim’s *function* of subverting justifications for retaliatory violence. The issue of accountability is a distinct, separate issue: the acknowledgement of the truth status of a general purpose excuse (“my actions are effects of a history beyond my control”) in no way requires its universal acceptance as a reasonable response to a request for an explanation! If someone hurt me and offered “my genes and my upbringing made me do it” as an excuse, I may well be seriously concerned about the likelihood of their hurting me again; or perhaps someone else instead of me. However, the social activity of reassuring me about my future safety and the social activity of producing an account of causes to people interested in preventing violence are two different activities.

To reject variations of “society made me do it” as acceptable claims in contexts of interpersonal reassurances about future behaviour may be entirely reasonable; to *accept* such claims in contexts of producing knowledge that informs social policy may be just as reasonable. The “meanings” of such claims are contextual and involve their social uses and effects. I personally accept (a Butlerian variety of) the “deterministic” account, and yet this in no way negates the likelihood of my responding more favourably to someone who said, “sorry, I didn’t see you there when I lit the fuse”, than to someone who said, “the interaction of my history and the environment caused me to fire a rocket at you”. In a similar way, my accepting that I am a product of the past—that my history actually matters, and cannot simply be dismissed through “free” agency—in no way negates the fact that I can choose⁹⁶ between alternatives, and that I can give an account of relevant factors informing my choices. It only means that I cannot give a *full* account of *all* the relevant factors, as though every atom of my

96 That the “choice” is itself an effect of other factors does not make it any less of a “choice”, except in the (bizarre) traditional account that claims a decision is only a *proper* decision if it pops into the physical universe spontaneously from some other realm of pure psychic events. The “philosophical problem” here is a confusion of language games—a confusion between practices of personal accountability and practices of social theory—not some kind of “Real” problem attached to objective processes to which we are pointing with words like “cause” in both language games.

agency—every relevant factor impacting on my activity—were “in my head” and available for personal introspection. Nor do I expect the same of others, and so I cannot use their failure to provide accounts intelligible to me as part of a claim that they are an “evil” agent, in order to justify a violence against them that exceeds any violence I could justify against a “normal” person acting as a result of “natural” and potentially intelligible reasons.

If we acknowledge the truth of the claim that no person is separate from and therefore acting independently of the universe, we have not in any way impaired our ability to choose between “reasonable” and “unreasonable” accounts, nor in any way impaired our ability to assign responsibility as we see fit. We have, however, rejected the constitution of violence or “evil” as something that can be located in a person or group and therefore attacked by attacking that person or group. By rejecting this account we disarm one of the most ancient, effective and enduring rhetorical justifications for violence. Secondly, we position vengeance or retribution—whether legal or otherwise—as a reproduction, reiteration or new manifestation of the “original” violence, and so untangle this destructive cycle from legitimate punishment (i.e. aversive interventions with pro-social functions, rather than the antisocial infliction of suffering for its own sake).

The assumption that a reasonable account is always possible—even in the (likely, in the forensic domain) event that a subject is unable to produce one—is important, because it implies that punishment should only be used as per the *Code of Ethics* (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002), whereas the assumption that the absence of an acceptable account of reasons means that *there are no reasons* behind the “free will” of the individual implies a malicious psyche and invites a vindictive, retributive kind of “punishment”; one that confuses the aim of deterrence (applying new causal factors to an agency permeable by such factors) with the aim of harm (oriented towards the destruction of an agency that offends by its inherent nature). Butler’s recommendation that we acknowledge in each other—and in ourselves—a “region of existence that is radically unwilled” (Butler, 2005, p. 85) and her opposing this to the “ethical violence” of *demanding* intelligible accounts from each other, is much more than a

restatement of the “right to remain silent”. It reflects not merely a concern that a coerced account *might* represent injustice, but an acknowledgement that to demand an account (with the threat of violence if the account does not satisfy the interrogator) is already unjust, and violent, inasmuch as it articulates a violent theory of human agency; one in which people only have the right to be treated as people if they can defend this right with an account acceptable to us.

If my violence towards you depends upon the account that you give of yourself to me, then your self-knowledge develops in the context of this violence, and becomes itself an instrument of my control over you. If, on the other hand, I refuse to objectify you and I refuse to use violence in my attempts to control you, then what is the basis of my *demand* for a satisfactory account? I may attempt to elicit such an account with some form of seduction—promises of rewards arising from collaboration, and so on—but if you choose to remain silent, or to account for yourself in some way that makes no sense to me, how does this justify violence towards you? In such circumstances, the threat of violence makes the giving of accounts something of a sham in any case; a ritual of justification for violence, rather than a genuine attempt at understanding or learning through our encounter.

We see this sham in our courtrooms when young men—who know that they will most likely be sent to prison where their physical safety depends upon their appearing “hard” (Kupers, 2005; Man & Cronan, 2001)—are scrutinised for signs of the “remorse” that signifies their humanity. They know that their weeping might, at worst, be read as an implicit admission of guilt and so actually increase their odds of imprisonment (Jehle, Miller & Kemmelmeier, 2009), and, at best, it cannot be counted on to reduce these odds (Proeve & Howells, 2006). What they *can* count on is the fact that such weeping will likely make them more vulnerable to prison violence from prisoners who read it as weakness (Kupers, 2005; Man & Cronan, 2001), so they do the most reasonable thing in the circumstances for their own safety: they look hard and defiant. In this way the context of violent threat makes a farce out of the courtroom’s truth-seeking drama: the desired truth is coerced from the people in the community least able to account for their violence, in conditions likely to ensure the

politically useful reproduction of their offending and to justify the violence that this process requires.

One of the consequences of attending to *epistemological* violence and aiming to produce non-violent truths, is that the social effects of a knowledge claim are prioritised. It is fortunate that in this case “the empirical facts” *support* the elimination of aggression from our deliberations of personal responsibility: empiricist researchers must, like Libet, side with tradition *against* the logical implications of their research in order to maintain theoretical justifications for vindictive blame. This is very easy to do—traditional discourses of agency are embodied not only in forensic practices, but in the great majority of film and television accounts and so on—and to produce accounts of agency that do not justify violence is to go against “common sense” at present.

Nigel Latta (the previously mentioned public face of forensic psychology in New Zealand) provides, in a radio interview, an excellent summary of the popular account of agency in relation to criminal violence. During a discussion explicitly dealing with the issue of “excuses” (The Law Report, 2009, January 20, ¶ 63), Latta says (of Taffy Hotene):

He was a boy who grew up in I guess the most appalling circumstances. When he was I think six, one of his neighbours talked about hearing him screaming one night from the garage where something awful was being done to him, and he said it sounded like a cat screaming, it was that kind of stuff. The boy slept on a mattress under his house when he was kind of 6, 7, 8, because it was safer than sleeping in the house. He would forage in the street for food, he basically grew up in just the worst possible environment.

Not only are the horrific circumstances of his early childhood acknowledged, but—in the excerpt below—the possibility that we could take some responsibility for this is also raised; yet this acknowledgement is quickly followed by a contradictory denial:

You know, sure, society is to blame at one level for stuff that happened to that boy, because there were warning signs, and people didn't pick it up and could have done more to help him early on. *But the decision that he made each time that he committed a crime was his, and his alone* [italics added] (The Law Report, 2009, January 20, ¶ 63).

Here a psychologist seems to be arguing that despite our having some collective responsibility for the young boy's torture, we have *no* responsibility for the *effects* of that torture. Yet surely this cannot be the case: what if Taffy had killed *himself*⁹⁷ instead of someone else? If his parents were to argue, "We tortured this young boy until he killed himself, but nobody apart from him is in any way responsible for his suicide, because the decision to kill himself was *his, and his alone*", wouldn't it sound rather like his torturers were the ones making "excuses" for their part in the tragedy? What changes when he kills someone else, instead of himself? A great deal changes in terms of attribution of agency: his victimising another person makes him *fully* responsible in the popular account; just as his parents would likely be positioned as fully responsible if he had died from rather than survived their parenting (and their histories of abuse would become their "excuses"). What this suggests is that our talk about agency—or at least, our talk in forensic psychological accounts of it—functions quite independently of a coherent account of causality. How can relentless abuse be a causal factor in a child's decision to commit suicide, yet not be a causal factor in a child's decision to commit murder? It is no wonder that Libet's faith in "free will" was not shaken by the discovery that we can accurately predict voluntary decisions before they are "made" consciously: the notion of "free will" can probably survive any discoveries whatsoever about the effects of particular conditions upon particular actions, because it functions quite independently of any general account of agency (i.e. one that would deploy notions of cause and effect *consistently* for acts with which we can empathise and for acts that repel us).

Some account of the "fundamental attribution error" is probably familiar to any student of social psychology, and the more carefully worded "correspondence bias" is

97 as he did, eventually, after years of imprisonment (New Zealand Herald, 2009).

among the discipline's most robust empirical knowledge claims (Gawronski, 2004): "the tendency for people to attribute others' actions to dispositional factors is an extremely reliable finding ... in contrast, people tend to favor situational explanations for their own behavior" (Hansen, Kimble & Biers, 2001, p. 88). Dripps (2003) suggests that this tendency manifests as a "fundamental retribution error" in the judicial system, and recommends "a healthy dose of skepticism about intuitive judgements regarding personal responsibility" (p. 1389). However, like most of the scholars of law that I have read, Dripps accepts mainstream psychology's reflection of the popular account in which an agent can act independently of the environment, so that the determination of whether personal or situational factors are "more important" is not merely a rhetorical achievement, but can have some kind of objective validity.

I do not want to argue that accepting personal responsibility is *always* a good thing—it may not be good, for example, when victims take responsibility for their victimisation—but generally speaking it is likely to be hard for any collaborative project to succeed when all parties are denying responsibility for undesired outcomes. *Of course* people who commit serious violent crimes should take responsibility for these and work to ensure that they do not recur; and the same principle of taking responsibility applies to the wider community. If I savagely assaulted my child and he went on to assault another child at school, I would hope that he would take some personal responsibility for his actions and do his best to avoid future assaults; but if I refused to acknowledge my own violence, or to work to reduce it, and instead demanded that he take *full* responsibility for the assault, so that I could continue to beat him without being accountable for his violence as an effect of mine, then should I be surprised if he refuses to accept any responsibility at all? He followed my example of violating another person: would he not also follow my example of taking no responsibility? If we raise a child in conditions of deprivation and abuse, and are so invested in maintaining such conditions that we would rather treat the child's acts as the effects of a "free" agency than do something to address those conditions, why should that child not emulate us, by blaming *us* (or others), mirroring our behaviour of making excuses rather than taking responsibility?

It may be that violence constitutes itself as the effect of a “doer”, in order to suppress the alternate account in which the “doer” is an effect of violence. If violent deeds lead to violent identities, then violent deeds are problematised; but if violent identities can be blamed for violent deeds, then the occasional blood sacrifice of a “terrorist”, “offender” or other “monster” is all that’s necessary for violence to reproduce itself while pretending to prevent itself. Butler discusses the doer and the deed in relation to gender:

In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. The challenge for rethinking gender categories outside of the metaphysics of substance will have to consider the relevance of Nietzsche’s claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything.” In an application that Nietzsche himself would not have anticipated or condoned, we might state as a corollary: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results. (Butler, 1990, p. 33).

In an application that Butler may not condone, we could treat the “antisocial” identity in a similar way, rejecting traditional accounts in which an antisocial identity is “expressed” through violent behaviours, and supplanting it with a critical account in which the antisocial identity is “performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1990, p. 33). To the objection that “surely nobody would actively constitute an identity that was a target of violence and oppression”, we might offer the following precedent: “woman”; and the reminder that to “actively” constitute one’s own identity is not to do so “freely” in the simplistic sense of one’s actions being entirely independent of the effects of power.

The forensic domain is one in which the constitution of an “evil agency” is particularly important and obvious; however, the strategy of maligning the character of opponents

is extremely widespread: it is a familiar, ugly feature of parliamentary debate and political commentary here and overseas, and is easy to spot in academic literature too; especially *their* literature, of course! Reflexive attention to epistemological violence in the present text requires some careful consideration of how the mainstream “other” is constituted in relation to the critical “us” addressed by the text.

Just as there are ways of accounting for the violence of individual “criminals” that the present text positions as *violent*—inasmuch as they constitute problems in ways that suggest violent “solutions”—the notions of epistemological violence and epistemological terrorism position certain ways of accounting for larger social movements as similarly violent. It may be that Žižek’s (2008) account of the “objective violence” of capitalism, for example, can function as a rhetorical justification for the “divine violence” that he positions as a response to it. After writing of “the properly leftist project of emancipatory rage” (p. 187), he says that “in our own time, when this global rage has exhausted its potential, two main forms of rage remain: Islam (the rage of the victims of capitalist globalisation) plus ‘irrational’ outbursts by youth” (p. 187). The two “forms of rage” here correspond roughly to the identities of “terrorist” and “offender” that I have been discussing: there is an inversion of the traditional (in popular Western discourse) terrorist/victim or offender/victim binary, so that the “offenders” are the “victims” of “capitalist globalisation” or other forms of violence.

This tactic of calling familiar binaries into question by suggesting that they can work just as well when their poles are reversed is one that I appreciate as a rhetorical technique, but there is a danger that by simply *inverting* the binary of good and evil (in an effort to resist the powerful epistemological violence of the dominant account of “evil”) a reactionary epistemological violence will constitute, for example, the capitalist middle classes—“those who, while fully engaged in creating conditions for ... universal devastation and pollution, buy their way out of their own activity, living in gated communities, eating organic food, taking holidays in wildlife preserves, and so on” (Žižek, 2008, p. 27)—as “the exemplary figures of evil today” (Žižek, 2008, p. 27). To reconfigure “evil” as the character of *them*, they who civilify terrorists and

offenders in order to justify *their* violence, may not be to “stoop to their level” (unless we claim they are inferior to us) by moralising and positioning evilification as an activity of evil people; but it may provide justifications for violence like that of Al Qaeda or the street gang, by evilifying their victims (perhaps as “evilifiers”!), and this is a serious concern. Can a non-violent social theory criticise the good/evil binary *without* deploying the binary it claims to criticise?

The connections between violence and narratives of free will are intertwined with accounts of “evil”: yet other binaries in addition to “good and evil” may also play important roles. I have already discussed the possibility that a mind/body dualism may function as an “opium of the people”, making material violence seem less “spiritually significant” or otherwise worth resisting. In relation to violence, even the binary of “violator” and “violated” is not necessarily straightforward: Fassin and Rechtman (2009) for example discuss the “self-traumatized perpetrator” (p. 93) whose violence reflexively victimises the perpetrator as well as others, so that the “offender” may not only be a “victim” in relation to other forms of violence, but even a direct victim of the violence of the offence. From “good versus evil” to “true versus false”, our language very often achieves its effects by means of distinctions, separating a field of inquiry into positions along a scale produced from dichotomous poles. The final chapter of the present text turns to this binary logic, and to other aspects of our logic, as key elements of discourse that we can problematise in relation to epistemological violence.

The body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated

Plato⁹⁸

The soul is the prison of the body

Foucault⁹⁹

Discussion

The American Psychological Association's *Publication Manual* says, of the "discussion" section of a manuscript, that "readers should receive clear, unambiguous, and direct answers" (American Psychological Association, 2001, p. 27; 2010b, p. 36). In this account, to ask a question like, "what kinds of knowledge might be advantaged by the requirement for unambiguous answers?", can be positioned as an unhelpful vagueness, next to the clarity generated by providing readers with a direct *answer*; like, "the requirement for conclusions to be 'unambiguous' amounts to a requirement that conclusions can be fitted tidily into already-existing systems of knowledge", or, "the requirement for conclusions to be 'unambiguous' is to ensure that science continues to produce dependable knowledge, rather than speculative claims of dubious value", or something similar.

It is an interesting requirement, suggesting the assumption that ambiguity is antithetical to useful scientific knowledge. This is perhaps what science *means* in popular discourse: the very basis of the distinction between the "sciences" and the "arts" is that science deals in unambiguous fact, whereas art is "subjective". Either (in

98 Plato writes these words in the *Cratylus* (Plato, trans. 1892a, p. 343), attributing them to Socrates who in turn claims that "the Orphic poets ... were under the impression that" the soul is thus imprisoned. A similar metaphor of bodily imprisonment of the soul continues throughout much of the Western philosophical tradition, via the Christian account in which "what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh" (Galatians 5:17, New Revised Standard Version), through to the modern Cartesian "ghost in the machine" (Ryle, 1949), which reiterates if not imprisonment then at least *enclosure* of the psyche within the soma, as well as a subordination of body to soul inasmuch as the body becomes an object in relation to the soul's agency.

99 (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 30). In context: "The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body."

a scientific account) art is a “decorative” activity with nothing to say about truth, or (in a romantic account), there are truths that can *only* be evoked by art: “the very best in art is too spiritual to be given directly to the senses; it must be born in the beholder’s imagination, though it must be begotten by the work of art” (Schopenhauer, 1844/1966, p. 408). Thus, even in the terms of a representational account of truth, science can be constituted as a reduction (aligning with the reduction of qualitative to quantitative data) of a broader or more ambiguous “truth” to a narrower, less ambiguous “fact”. In an empiricist context this can be a useful distillation of purer, more abstract knowledge from the muddled complexities of phenomena. In terms of non-violent truth, the issue of a claim’s “clarity” or lack of ambiguity is related to the issue of metanarrative, because ambiguity involves multiple interpretive frameworks.

In this context I want to begin by discussing Lyotard’s (1979/1984) recommendation of “paralogy”. The term itself is appropriately ambiguous: a “paralogism” in traditional logic is simply an *error* of reasoning (Kent, 1993), with “para-logical” meaning literally “beside” or “apart from” reason. I begin with paralogy not only because it is a notion that is relevant to others discussed in this chapter, but because it has informed the writing of my discussion, in that I have taken Lyotard’s arguments into account in relation to the text itself. As a reflexive theoretical concept that explicitly addresses the issues of reason, discussion and theory, it can be constituted as a technique for avoiding some of the pitfalls of metanarrative, and so for disabling some of the discursive tools of violence that are discussed later on.

**It is the rigid dogma that destroys truth; and, please notice,
my emphasis is not on the dogma but on the rigidity**

Alfred North Whitehead¹⁰⁰

Paralogy

Lyotard's deployment of a term with a traditional meaning involving "error" is important for reason and debate, in roughly the same way that "madness" is important in a context of violent psychological norms. If we acknowledge violence operating by means of psychological *norms*, then we are effectively pointing to the possibility of an *abnormal* psychology as a healthier ideal. In other words, while many forms of "madness" may be considerably less healthy than normal forms of subjectivity, if we are aiming for a minimisation of a violence inscribed into normal forms of subjectivity, then we are acknowledging the possibility that *some* forms of madness may be *healthier*. Even if this claim is rejected with an appeal to historical context (e.g. it could be argued that it would be anachronistic to call an eighteenth-century person who was "healthy" in terms of today's norms "healthier" than his or her contemporaries, since in their terms the person would be a lunatic, and so would be treated accordingly) so that the social fact of "madness" precludes the possibility of psychological health, at the very least it suggests a more cautious and respectful approach to difference; a reluctance to read difference as inferiority without making an effort to suspend normal evaluative criteria and read the difference "in its own terms". Paralogy's *willingness to occupy the position of "error"* suggests a willingness to question even those assumptions that it is "unreasonable" to question: reason *itself* is suspect, since it is not merely "facts" that can embody traditions that we may want to let go, but the logic out of which these facts are built. Lyotard's paralogy is therefore a subtle reiteration of a traditional meaning: "paralogy" is still in some respects a kind of error; but via this particular deployment of "paralogy" error itself takes on a slightly different meaning. Error can be useful, or even necessary, if it enables the framework within which truth and error are established to be usefully transformed.

100 Whitehead (1941/2001, p. 165)

In *Postscript to Terror and the Sublime*, Lyotard (1988/1993) writes: “As for a politics of the sublime, there is no such thing. It could only be terror. But there is an aesthetics of the sublime in politics” (p. 71). The “sublime”—etymologically “under the threshold”, but here evoking our own presence at that location, gazing upwards at what lies beyond—has been used since Kant to designate “the relation of an inner-worldly, empirical, sensuous object to *Ding an sich*, to the transcendent, trans-phenomenal, unattainable Thing-in-itself” (Žižek, 1989, p. 203). Gazing up at the night sky, and sensing for a moment the horrific scale of what one is seeing, it is possible to feel at the same time a mixture of joy and despair. Žižek (1989) describes the reason for the sublime’s ambiguous intensity of pleasure and distress: “it gives us displeasure because of its inadequacy to the Thing-Idea, but precisely through this inadequacy it gives us pleasure by indicating the true, incomparable greatness of the Thing, surpassing every possible phenomenal, empirical experience” (p. 203). The sublime is thus constituted not merely as an experience of that which cannot be described or “put into words”, but rather as an experience suggesting something “beyond experience”; something that *cannot be experienced*. The Real beyond experience is not experienced; but, in a terrifying and ecstatic glimpse of the *inadequacy* of one’s experience of it, it casts its shadow upon the experiential field.

What can we make of the distinction between Lyotard’s (1993, p. 71) “politics of the sublime” (which “could only be terror”) and his “aesthetics of the sublime in politics”? He writes about “the unrepresentable Idea of freedom” (p. 71) and “the danger of confusing transcendental freedom ... with ‘empirical freedom’ (if there is such a thing)” (p. 70). The idea of the sublime itself sets the stage upon which this distinction can be articulated in terms of language and the claim of some language to be more than language: whereas an “aesthetics of the sublime” acknowledges and even celebrates the limits of language and representation—with sub-limity proclaiming itself “beneath” a kind of upper limit for logic in this respect—a “politics of the sublime” seizes the sublime as a representation of transcendent reality and attempts to

found a system of knowledge—and so a social order—upon this Truth¹⁰¹. In a politics of the sublime, reality *itself* is imagined to have been glimpsed, rather than the gulf between the glimpse and the reality to which Kant's sublime attests: an Idea like freedom is “grasped”, and so becomes attainable via political projects that aim to align the world with the Idea. The world has little say in this: or at least, its relativistic truths are to be ordered into their proper relationships with Truth, either through education or—when people refuse their education—through terror (in Lyotard's sense of “eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game” (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. 63). “Only a transcendental illusion ... can hope to totalize [language games] into a real unity. ... [T]he price of this illusion is terror. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us our fill of terror” (Lyotard, 1988/1993, pp. 15-16).

Metanarrative takes up and then *refuses to let go* the opportunity for any narrative to define relationships between other narratives: the “hall of mirrors” one sees from a position between two mirrors, reflecting each other, can be a metaphor for the way that one representation or account of events can always become part of another representation or account. Metanarrative denies this and insists that its frame is the outermost frame: the real mirror on the wall with reference to which all the mere reflections of mirrors inside it can be properly understood. Since there is no *natural* outermost frame—no story that can depend upon the structure of language itself to ensure that it will never be “re-storied¹⁰²” as something else in a different account—a story that positions itself by narrative alone (i.e. in terms of its own truths) as meta-narrative is never secure, as the meanings of its own justifications can always be re-storied later, or elsewhere. The only way to *ensure* its status as meta-narrative over all other accounts is through violence: the violence of terror to silence those who might

101 Žižek (1989) distinguishes as “fanaticism” this “insane visionary delusion that we can immediately see or grasp what lies beyond all bounds of sensibility” (p. 204), from devotion to the properly *sublime* object of ideology in relation to which it is more the ideological form—“the fact that we continue to walk as straight as we can in one direction” (p. 84)—than any particular content that is seductive. For this reason “perhaps the greatest danger for totalitarianism is people who take its ideology literally” (p. 28): fanaticism pushes ideological faith beyond the sublime and into the ridiculous.

102 “Re-storying” is important in narrative therapy: clients are helped to re-story problematic accounts relevant to their lives, including their own life narratives (White & Epston, 1990).

re-story it, and the iterations of this violence in terrorist psychological theory and the production of terrorised forms of subjectivity.

Parker (2005) discusses the Lacanian idea of *points de capiton* or key “recurrent signifiers that exemplify wider patterns of structural ‘repression’”, pinning “the fabric of the signifying system in place” (p. 169), as an upholsterer’s *points de capiton* attach fabric to furniture through the stuffing. There is already a suggestion of violence in this metaphor of an otherwise movable, negotiable fabric of meaning having its non-negotiable points of fixed meaning forcibly driven through it, anchoring the entire field of discourse by the device of key terms with rigidly defended meanings. Laclau connects these issues of metanarrative, signification and politics when he argues that a *point de capiton* or “Master-Signifier” (Laclau, 2000, p. 70) is vulnerable to being particularised because it must give up or deny its status as a signifier of a particular thing in order to take up or arrogate to itself a universal signification: “the hegemonic relation ... requires the production of tendentially empty signifiers which, while maintaining the incommensurability between universal and particulars, enables the latter to take up the representation of the former” (Laclau, 2000, p. 57).

Perhaps in this context a master-signifier (like “God”, or increasingly “democracy”) can only be non-violent to the extent that it is *explicitly acknowledged as an empty signifier* for that which cannot be positively known: a word the meaning of which is produced collaboratively and endlessly, with no account arrogating to itself a “Truth” grounded in some claim of having grasped the actual referent. Laclau and Mouffe constitute their “radical democracy” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) in roughly these terms by proposing as a Master-Signifier (“democracy”) precisely the signification of these conditions within which signification remains open: “The dialectical paradox lies in the fact that the particular struggle playing a hegemonic role, far from enforcing a violent suppression of the differences, opens the very space for the relative autonomy of the particular struggles” (Žižek, 1989, p. 88).

Inasmuch as Gandhi's assumption—that non-violence and truth are inseparable—links truth *itself* to non-violence, there is a possibility here for non-violence—or the violence against which it may define itself—to function as a Master-Signifier in a metanarrative evaluation of all knowledge claims and political activities in terms of their non-violence. This is a troubling possibility in which the pinning down of “violence” in the form of a universally applicable definition could function as a pinning down of the social practices of “definition” itself, suggesting the violent imposition of particular interests upon a universal field of discourse. However, to the extent that non-violence is constituted—with reference to epistemology and epistemological violence—as that which resists this sedimentation of narrative into metanarrative, it approaches the same non-violent *emptiness* of signification as Laclau and Mouffe's radical democracy: an emptiness or openness¹⁰³ that offers a space within which people can speak, rather than claiming to speak for all people.

In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) attends to the issue of universality in terms of the contrast between a principle or a claim of non-violence. Butler writes, “I doubt very much that non-violence can be a principle, if by ‘principle’ we mean a strong rule that can be applied with the same confidence and in the same way to any and all situations” (Butler, 2009, p. 166). I suspect that it could be, but not without violence: we would be following in the tradition of Christendom, the God of which could “be applied with the same confidence and in the same way to any and all situations”, or modern secular capitalism, the “democracy” of which can be similarly applied, if we were to march under a banner of a universal non-violence that we claimed to *know* in a privileged way, rather than leaving non-violence open as a signifier of such importance that collaborative social practices depend upon a humility of partial knowing, or a willingness to be taught by others. Butler distinguishes the *claim* of

103 It is interesting that the penis/vagina can metaphorically suggest presence/absence or presence/lack as in the Freudian account; but there is a *privileging* of “presence” here that aligns with the sexist good/evil binary (inasmuch as “to be” is coded as *better* than to “not be”). If the yoni instead of the phallus were privileged as a symbol, this social esteem for the feminine could involve profound changes to metaphor and so to logical rationality. There is no reason why presence could not be knocked off its perch and positioned differently as a static “already (just) happened” or “nearest instant of history”, of the *past*, in contrast with a dynamic, empty, life-giving *potentiality*: a symbol of an unknown future perpetually being born. This aligns with Laclau and Mouffe's privileging of emptiness or *open*-ness. To the extent that gender is implicated in the signification of *difference* itself, the relationship of violence to the privileging of presence may be an important area of study.

non-violence from a “principle” of non-violence in relation to an acknowledgement that:

The struggle against violence accepts that violence is one’s own possibility. If that acceptance were not there, if one postured rather as a beautiful soul, as someone by definition without violent aggression, there could be no ethical quandary, no struggle, and no problem. Such a position of virtue or principle of purity would disavow or repress the violence from which such positions are wrought (Butler, 2009, pp. 171-172).

“Indeed, non-violence as an ethical ‘call’ could not be understood if it were not for the violence involved in the making and sustaining of the subject” (Butler, 2009, p. 170). It is precisely because the norms from which we emerge as subjects are already violent that the constitution of *others* as the embodiments of violence—either by means of evilification, or by the reciprocal constitution of one’s self as “pure”—is an epistemologically violent act: it denies the activity of violence in one’s own subjectivity and by doing this it distorts a potentially pro-social concern with violence against one’s self into a “moral sadism” of violence against others: “a mode of persecution that passes itself off as virtue” (Butler, 2009, p. 177).

Butler theorises an “important distinction between moral sadism and responsibility” (Butler, 2009, p. 177). Responsibility (obviously the preferred option in this account) “seeks to protect the other against its own destructive potential. In the name of preserving the precarious life of the other, one crafts aggression into modes of expression that protect those one loves” (p. 177). The distinction does not depend upon this crafting of aggression into means of protecting those one loves: the “moral sadist” does this; or at least attempts to do this, by attempting to produce such fear in potential assailants that they will choose not to attack. Rather, it is a commitment to the minimisation of one’s own destructive potential that Butler positions as the important distinction. It is not a matter of siding with the moral majority against criminal or terrorist violence, or siding with radical revolutionaries against capitalist

or patriarchal violence: Butler's "responsibility" opposes itself to the operation of *violence*, regardless of whether or not one approves or disapproves of the ends it claims; even regardless of whether one is its victim or its agent.

However, the operation of violence in our own agency appears as the site at which we can most effectively challenge its reproduction: in relation to the violence of others, we can call for non-violence; in relation to our own violence, we can respond to that call. Furthermore, these two cannot be disentangled: part of our "response" to the call for non-violence consists of how we make that call to others; how we position those others by the way we address them, the way we constitute this "violence" from which we ask them to refrain, and the way our address—even the tone of our address—challenges or reproduces the social power relations that any specific form or act of violence may attempt to reproduce or to challenge.

In terms of epistemology—or simply in terms of narrative—this reflexive concern to protect not only one's self from the violence of the other but also the other from one's own violence is *paralogical* to the extent that one's own logic may enact a violence toward the other: it is not enough merely to "reason with" the other, if this reasoning is to be a reason-ing of others that attempts to force them into the framework of one's own logic. Paralogy does not merely allow the other to speak in order to demonstrate the other's irrationality or inferiority along some egocentric dimension of validity. Instead, paralogy attempts to *hear* the other, as if s/he were not other: "irrationality" becomes a *different* logic that must be understood before it can be evaluated in relation to a specific question. Instead of an egocentric or ethnocentric evaluative framework in which validity translates into "what is true for me/us (and so *must* be true for *everyone*, however *you* may feel about it)", validity itself is allowed to be questioned, so that the criteria of validation can take into account the radically different epistemological or ontological constructions of a radically different community. Paralogy aims at a validity incorporating "what is true for all of us": a validity that must constantly adapt to the movement of the facts it validates, rather than posing as an independent logic that transcends the world that it evaluates.

Paralogy thus establishes a space of communicative non-violence: it does not involve a commitment to walk away from an interaction with revised truths—let alone a revised account of “truth” itself—in response to the other’s account. What it does involve is a commitment to that possibility: a refusal to determine *in advance* the terms within which meaning must be produced in the interaction, since such a pre-determination amounts to a rejection of the possibility of *co*-producing the terms of understanding. This “space of communicative non-violence” is radically non-violent inasmuch as it suspends the very certainties that function as justifications for violence: Gergen (2007) writes of a Celtic tradition in which the chieftains of four warring provinces established a “Fifth Province ... a magical place where chieftains could speak in peace with each other and attempt to resolve their conflicts. The Fifth Province was a zone in which contradictions could coexist, ambiguities flourish; and the imagination could soar into new spaces of possibility” (Gergen, 2007, p. 378). Since our technologies have empowered us to perform “magic” in so many other domains, it can be argued that the “magical place where [people can] speak in peace with each other” is achievable too, through discursive technologies, if these are researched and developed carefully and collaboratively with the aim of deconstructing accounts that justify violence, and constructing alternate accounts that encourage peaceful communication.

In the context of theory development, and taking into account some of the issues around textual violence that have been touched on so far, all this suggests a reluctance to “close” avenues of inquiry with final answers (“capitalist democracy is the ideal form of large-scale social organisation”), or rhetorical questions that invite such closure (“what alternative to capitalist democracy has been shown to minimise violence?”); even when the closure is constituted as a provisional, “for the time being” kind of resolution (“capitalist democracy is the best form of large-scale social organisation that we have so far discovered”). What all of these formulations have in common is that their focus on “what we know”—important as this can be in many contexts—has a kind of built-in social conservatism inasmuch as the “what we know” or the framework of established *answers* represents a theoretical embodiment of established relationships of social power. Simply by shifting attention from the known to the unknown (“OK, if capitalist democracy is the best form of large-scale social

organisation that we know of ‘so far’, how might we learn about the next and even better arrangement?”) a rhetorical invitation for change can be produced.

Violence plays a role in the production of stable, hegemonic metanarrative, to the extent that such stability depends upon social interactions in which privileged voices (invested in amplifying the privileges offered by the status quo) use their privilege to exclude underprivileged voices (invested in altering the terms of privilege). The structure resembles capitalism: in a kind of Orwellian double-speak, the market becomes more “free” as the prisons and police become more numerous, and the enormous systematic violence required to sustain the hugely disparate privileges of a “free trade” economy is strengthened. In the constitution of the market’s “freedom”, privileged voices speak their truth: the *free* market *removes constraints* upon certain activities of wealth accumulation; yet the same economy might be called “forced trade” or the “involuntary market” by the millions who could simply drop their tools and help themselves to nearby resources were it not for the threat of violence. If a market offers more freedom to a privileged few, it will be constituted as a “free market” in popular discourse to the extent that such discourse is regulated by the same field of power relations that regulates the economy. In this account, the reproduction of a specific discourse of economic “freedom” is sustained by violence *against* the democratic pressure of a sea of voices that might say something else if they were not *compelled* to speak in certain ways. In this context postmodern theory around metanarrative and paralogy, together with Foucaultian accounts of disciplinary subjectivity, suggest that a minimisation of textual violence may involve an opening up of epistemological possibility or a thickening of description, rather than an effort to produce a stable consensus of “this is what we know”, given that such consensus is always dubious when the people involved are subject to violence.

In the discussion to follow, then, I want to highlight some interesting themes or issues around violence and truth that seem to be promising in terms of their potential to *open up* areas of inquiry that are discursively “closed off” by some of the particular ways that psychology is positioned in terms of its relationship with these issues. Since a production of *questions* is the aim here, I will move through a wide variety of

material, in an effort to map out some potentially fruitful lines of inquiry, rather than to identify one or two as “the” most promising avenues for further research.

From souls in prisons to souls as prisons

The strange transformation of the psyche from prisoner to prison in the twenty-three centuries between Plato’s “the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated” (Plato, trans. 1892a, p. 343) and Foucault’s “the soul is the prison of the body” (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 30) has been documented and produced by a long literary tradition. If we wanted to read it as a development or progression, we could trace a burgeoning reflexivity in Plato’s writing about the “soul” through to a dizzying complex of multiple layers of reflexivity in Foucault’s more contemporary account. Between these historical poles are some familiar stories of reflexive “revolution”.

Perhaps most familiar is the prototypical empirical Copernican revolution, involving the reinterpretation of objective cosmic movements as subjective observer movements. Kant explicitly invoked the metaphor of the Copernican reflexive turn in his own revolution, writing of his suggestion—that we replace the assumption “that all our cognition must conform to the objects” (Kant, 1781/1998, p. 110) with the assumption “that the objects must conform to our cognition” (p. 110)—that it was “just like the first thoughts of Copernicus” (p. 110). First the subject observing the movements of objects discovers that it is actually the subject who is moving; then another layer of reflexivity extends subjectivity to not only these movements but all such “observation”. The linguistic turn introduces yet another layer of reflexivity by inviting us to attend to the language within which all these accounts of relationship are articulated. So whereas Copernicus and Kant were both critical of understanding—Copernicus of our understanding of the heavens (in this case literally the “understanding” or physical relationship of observer to heavens was called into question); Kant of our understanding of “understanding” itself (phenomenological relationships)—and both attended to the subjective aspects of what they understood, Wittgenstein identified yet another objectification of subjective activity, in the action of producing accounts of these relationships.

Attending to the actual event of uttering the word “understanding” or writing it onto paper, he declares that “the whole idea of understanding smells fishy here” (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001, p. 94^e). Asking that we “try not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all” (p. 52^e), he makes the radical claim that “it is no more essential to the understanding of a proposition that one should imagine anything in connexion with it, than that one should make a sketch from it” (p. 102^e).

Understanding in this account is not a mental state involving proper relationship—a kind of mirroring or accurate representation—of states of affairs beyond the subjective understanding; instead, it is a *word* that we *use* in social interactions (including even the linguistic and so *social* interactions of writing and of “talking to ourselves”) and by ignoring these linguistic contexts and activities we are effectively ignoring *what we are doing* in the account of understanding, and so—as we did prior to Kant and Copernicus—ignoring an aspect of our own activity, even as we carry it out. Finally, Foucault’s account in which the subject who “uses” language becomes also an *effect* of language layers on so much reflexivity that the ancient story of the soul in a bodily prison can be turned into its opposite: the body’s material energies held captive by a socially produced “soul”. Interestingly, the metaphor of *imprisonment* stays constant.

What are we doing, in Wittgenstein’s sense, with these reflexive turns? Are we increasingly “taking responsibility” for things, by theorising our own agency in our accounts of other things? Or does asking the question in this way—as if to seek for “what we are really doing” rather than to decide what we want to do, and to build the account accordingly—enact a refusal of responsibility, by constituting an account that takes up a relationship of “accuracy” to its object, rather than attending to what it is doing in the production of the account? Perhaps an answer to this question, if we are to stay reflexive, should not have the form, “actually, *this* is what is really the case”, but rather, “which of these accounts (of the history of accounts themselves) might produce better outcomes?”. We can ask about the truth—and so the non-violence—of the accounts of progress and revolution that inform our psychological history. Although we continue to give accounts of “how things are” (perhaps one day we will not, but for now this is how we use our language) we can work to do so in ways that are mindful of the effects of the accounts.

That we have progressed in terms of what we *can* do is probably not something that we need to doubt: even the most skilled orator in Plato's community could not give a speech that would, within seconds, be heard by hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. Even the greatest javelin thrower or archer could not hit a target, in the dark, on another continent. In this relatively uncontroversial account of progress—one that says nothing about the “quality” of what we do now in relation to what we did then, but only that in terms of our quantitative sense of what we *can* do, we have made enormous progress—the development of theoretical reflexivity can be positioned as another development of *technology*, a theoretical technology, giving us access to new kinds of power. It doesn't make much difference to Plato's inability to speak simultaneously to audiences in Greece and China, if we claim in the objectivist sense that the physics of sound and electricity “were the same” in his time: they were *not* the same in the sense that the language game of “physics” did not exist in its modern form, and this “real” fact—the absence in Plato's environment of the physical manifestations of the modern discourse of physics—meant that he *could not* build a microphone, launch a satellite, and broadcast his speech to China. The non-existence of the modern discourse of physics embodied in the texts of Plato's community was just as much of a practical impediment to his ability to speak to China as if the “laws of physics” in the objectivist sense *were* different back then: in terms of the implications for human action, the question of an account's “representation” of how things “really are” can be deceptive, inasmuch as it forgets that the account *is part of* “how things really are”.

In this context, the psyche that is “theoretically” trapped in a body is also “physically” trapped in a body: the penitent who, for the sake of his soul, had to endure public floggings at every church service (Given, 1997), endured a subjective agony that had a physical, bodily form; a form that articulated aspects of discourse and theory. The witch writhing in flames on the stake could not “think her way out” of her suffering: yet her suffering was theoretical—an effect of discourse—in the sense that her identity as a particular kind of psychological subject (or object) was constituted by particular theories of subjectivity. In the moment of unbearable pain, as her flesh blistered and burned “around” her, the bodily *prison* for her spirit was a *real* prison, not “as well

as” but *because of* the theoretical account; much as the limits to the physical range of Plato’s oratory were real because of the theoretical accounts of the day.

In this context the development of psychological theory is not the development of increasingly accurate (in the positivist narrative) or perhaps inaccurate (in other accounts) representations of what the human soul “really is”: rather, the development of psychological theory is the development of the psyche. The reflexive turn by which Foucault announces that the soul is a *prison* for the body is, therefore, not only empowering as reflexive turns always are to the extent that they say, “what seems to be happening to us is often what we ourselves are doing”, but also functions as an implicit turn to the question of epistemological violence. By constituting the psyche as a prison, but rooting this “nature” in contingent historical circumstances, Foucault is not encouraging violence by positioning the prison-soul as “natural” or healthy: rather, he seems to be discouraging it by suggesting that this is a violence from which we can turn to something else.

The metaphor of the prison that remains constant across the (otherwise very different) Platonic and Foucaultian accounts perhaps articulates the limits of a framework of possibility constituting agency in terms of “subjects” and “objects”, or “masters” and “slaves”. In this framework that takes violence for granted as part of an inevitable struggle for authentic being—for Hegelian “recognition”—possible relationships are those of domination, subordination, or an unstable cooperation that waits to resolve into domination or subordination as soon as the interests of one party become incompatible with those of another. The metaphor of prison suggests a particular kind of violence: not the chaotic violence of criminal individuals nor even the bloody horrors of warfare, but the deliberate, systematic and *controlled* violence whereby a structure has been carefully and methodically constructed in order to maintain a violent relationship over an extended period of time.

In the Hobbesian state of nature (Biletzki, 2000) one does not simply lash out in response to the nasty brutishness of another and—in this moment of fearful primitive

rage—inflict a prison upon him or her. One plans a prison in advance of its use, considering not only how the person’s body will be held in one place—perhaps for the rest of the person’s life—but also how, as the captor, one will be able to come and go at will, in order to supply the captive with the necessities for bodily survival, to interrogate the person, or otherwise take advantage of the body’s captivity. These considerations are then manifested as the construction of strong walls, the manufacture of secure locks, perhaps shackles and cages and so on, all of which require time, energy and other resources. Prison therefore—this persistent metaphor in Western accounts of the subject’s relationship to her or his embodied being in the world—is a metaphor for sustained and calculated violence.

Philosophical zombies

For centuries Western subjects have identified with our¹⁰⁴ souls: the bodies in which we dwell may pass away, but—so we have been told—we will go on. Or not: in either case the Cartesian assumption of a distinct psychological agency—in which the mind can observe and control the body as a separate object—can be maintained. In this way the question of the soul’s fate after the body’s death suggests a symmetrical question of the body’s fate after the soul’s death. By articulating a form of this question, the “philosophical zombie” (Zimmerman, 2006) reiterates this dualism in terms of the tradition of philosophy of mind. The philosophical zombie is a thought experiment in which we are asked to ponder how we might distinguish a philosophical zombie—an otherwise fully functional human body lacking consciousness or “mind”—from a normal human being. The zombie is more or less a natural robot: it represents a strictly biological account of the human body—including its brain, with its neural networks enabling the production of speech and so forth—without the magic of mind “in the machine”. Thus the zombie “feels” nothing if we poke it—it lacks a consciousness with which to experience phenomena—yet it may cry “ouch!” and frown at us, just as a carefully programmed robot might, in this case as a purely physical reaction due to inevitable causal chains of biochemical activity, and all despite its lack of a psychological “interior”.

104 “Our” here means “mine and those of other Western subjects”: it is not meant to exclude readers in other traditions.

Here the very possibility of the “philosophical zombie” can represent an articulation in philosophical theory of an important implication of the traditional dualist account: it seems that the difference between the “zombies” whose flesh we can manipulate like any other objects and the “real people” to whom we owe sympathy and ethical obligations hangs precisely upon the question of the “soul”. What kind of soul must be assigned to a body in order to exempt it from objectification and violence? As Zimmerman’s (2006) account of the “zombie wars” suggests, the philosophical zombie is a thought experiment with debated and contested implications, ranging from claims of irrelevance through to resolutions like “such zombies may actually exist” (perhaps in the form of “psychopaths” or, in an extreme articulation, the solipsistic and itself rather psychopathic, “everyone except me is a zombie”), or the “panpsychic” alternative, “zombies are impossible because all matter has some kind of consciousness”.

How does the kind of psyche we assign to a body render that body more or less vulnerable to violence? This kind of question problematises and politicises the psyche as an instrument of power. The traditional Platonic account’s Foucaultian inversion—in terms of which we can be our bodies while our souls stand apart from us as our “prisons”—subversively redeploys the ancient metaphor, making our experience of imprisonment no longer something that we must accept passively as part of the structure of nature. We experience what we ourselves are doing: to know this is to be able to ask more questions about it, and so perhaps to transform it.

To imprison people is, most obviously, to prevent their escape: it is to remove or reduce the possibility of their doing anything beyond the bounds of the prison, and it simultaneously makes them much more vulnerable to us by removing from them their simplest means of avoiding something we might want to do to them (i.e. the simple act of moving further away from us). Perhaps less obviously—and yet perhaps also more importantly—it can represent a physical embodiment of social alienation: a geographical removal of the prisoner from social support and the placement of physical barriers between such support and the prisoner. Illegal imprisonment highlights this function: the kidnapper’s imprisoning of the victim may be primarily to

maintain a separation of the victim from potential social support. It keeps the interactions of the captor and victim at a distance from the victim's family and other community members who might intervene on the victim's behalf if they were present.

In some respects even these different functions of imprisonment can be reduced to a single function of imposed separation: the prison isolates the prisoner in order to separate him or her from the *field of possibilities* that lies beyond the prison. The metaphor of imprisonment can therefore represent a primitive account of *alienation*: a physical, geographical alienation prefiguring the more sophisticated Marxist, psychoanalytic, and other theoretical accounts. A prison can be a symbol not only of a systematic or calculated violence, but more specifically a violence that operates by means of alienation: popular discourse around the *re-integration* of prisoners into "the community" can be read as a discursive analogue of the geographical and physical exclusion of certain individuals or groups from the community so constituted.

Whether the terms of the account are physical or social, a forceful intervention keeps the prisoner separated from the field of possibilities beyond the prison. In this context the body as the *prison* of the soul is that which alienates the soul from the field of possibilities beyond the body. The body itself is problematised in this traditional account as the instrument of alienation: free of the body, the soul could perhaps interact with other souls in less restricted ways; could even perhaps exist in a heavenly paradise.

Conversely, after Foucault the soul as the *prison* of the body is constituted as that which alienates the body from the field of possibilities beyond the soul. The *soul* now is problematised as the instrument of alienation: free of the soul, the body could perhaps interact with other bodies in less restricted ways; could even perhaps exist in an earthly paradise. If the metaphor of imprisonment—with its implications of alienation—stays relatively constant, what specifically is changed by this subversion of the traditional dualism? What political aims are enunciated by the constitution of the psyche as the instrument of alienation?

In the context of Butler's critique of the "natural", Plato's account of an alienating violence in the natural world of physical bodies—a world that presents itself to us as enduring and powerfully resistant to political change—can be deployed in conservative projects that aim to maintain the status quo. Foucault's locating the alienating violence in the psychological world suggests, in terms of the nature/culture binary, a greater potential for change. The difference between the account of souls in prisons and the account of souls as prisons may therefore align with some of the differences between conservative and radical political agendas.

One aspect of the critical questioning associated with postmodern scholarship is the interrogation of *binary* logic in the research tradition of deconstruction (Burman & MacClure, 2005; Hepburn, 1999). Accounts of alienation are interesting in this context because they suggest the establishment of a binary. Mind and body, individual and society, and so on; the various accounts of alienation take a binary disjunction and establish it as a permanent condition. Attending to alienation can therefore represent a kind of interrogation of binary logic: a logic embodied not only in the prison, but in many other cultural, linguistic and psychological institutions.

The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition of the normal man. ... Normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last fifty years.

R. D. Laing

Alienation

Among its many meanings, the term "alienation" has familiar associations for critical theorists, as part of a Marxist account. A quick review of Hegel's notion of "alienated labour" can be useful for understanding its psychological significance for Marx. For Hegel, social power relations involve a dialectical struggle for recognition of self in the other: it resolves as a division into master and servant roles; a division that aligns

in some respects with the rigid subject/object disjunction. The master gains a partially satisfying sense of agentic subjectivity by bending the servant to his¹⁰⁵ will: satisfying for the master inasmuch as the servant's bodily movement represents an extension of the master's "self" into the world (like the master's own body, the servant's body moves in response to the master's desires), but only partially so because (according to Hegel, 1807/1977), what the master really wants is for a proper subject—*another master*—to recognise him.

In this account the very act of conquering another in order to extend one's self into the world renders that part of the world unworthy of conquest, since it becomes mere physicality rather than subjectivity, and the extended "master" consciousness finds itself alone; perhaps even in danger of the ultimate alienation (isolation) of solipsism. Furthermore, the "slave" consciousness comes to achieve a kind of material self-recognition: by means of the bondsman's *labour* in the material world, the slave's subjectivity increasingly attains a recognition of self-in-the-world that is denied from the idle master. This labour "produces a visible and legible set of marks in which the bondsman reads back from the object a confirmation of his own formative activity" (Butler, 1997b, p. 36). The prince commands, "make me a fine sword" and recognises the presence of his "self" in the world, as a servant hastens to comply and a sword materialises. Yet, the craftsman recognises *more* of his "self" in every detail of the sword: countless decisions into which the master had no direct input are reflected in a new configuration of matter that can be read together as the *servant's* signature upon the world, even if it bears the master's name on its inscription. When the prince smiles and says, "surely this is the finest sword ever owned by any prince!", the servant is receiving a kind of recognition from a proper, "free" consciousness, whereas the master still wanders alone in a netherworld of manipulable objects.

105 The master and bondsman are both male in the traditional account: it is also a myth that, in my view, is patriarchal not only because it articulates a masculine understanding of the options for interpersonal relationship (rule or be ruled), but also because it rhetorically justifies a binary segregation of society into *two classes of people*, one to rule and one to be ruled. There are of course many other ways it could be read in terms of this coding of male/female as master/slave (e.g. the master's longing for recognition from another master could be read as a homoerotic longing or as a longing for emotional intimacy from another "proper subject") but the explicit account (involving a literal fight, surrender, and ensuing labour) is quite sexist enough in terms of its implications for a group who tend to be physically smaller and less muscular, and so I think my use of sexist language is consistent with the story in several ways.

Perhaps this narrative of fulfilment in slavery may offer to workers an even more refined “opium” than “servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh”, “knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance” (Colossians 3:22 & 3:24, King James Version)? Or perhaps it is a useful narrative inasmuch as it articulates a truth about the historical origins of social power relationships (more so than the myth of the social contract). In relation to Marxist accounts of alienation, a crucial point is that even in the violence of servitude, the servant’s *labour*—a kind of technical *mastery* over material objects—offers some hope of fulfilment; some kind of subjectively meaningful existence in the world.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism destroys this hope: capitalist practices of production reduce the worker to a machine or energy source; one that can be *exchanged* for any other equivalent worker. The proletariat in a capitalist democracy sees nothing of his or her will in the products of his or her labour: she or he can die without the quantity, quality or character of the products being affected in any way at all. It is like a sadistic backlash of the alienated “master” consciousness that—resentful of the slave’s fulfilment in labour—captures the technical skill of the medieval craftsman in the technical equipment of a privately owned factory, thus reducing the workers to the objective, quantifiable energy of their labour. “See, you *are* mere objects: just as I use the physical energy of the coal I toss into the furnace, I use the physical energy of your body to make myself more powerful, and like the lump of coal, when you bum out, I will have another tossed into your place”. The end product is alienated from the personal subjectivity of the labourer, inasmuch as the labourer could be anyone. The product is designed by others and made for others; the labourer is nothing but labour: the product “belongs to another; it is the loss of his self” (Marx, 1844/1988, p. 74).

The structural violence of capitalist social power relations manifests objectively as the commodities produced by one’s energy, but subjectively the violence is experienced as a sense of alienation from one’s own labour: the illusion that is so important to capitalist democracy—that one’s not wearing physical chains or being compelled to work by a visible whip-bearing overseer means that one’s activity is “freely willed”—

collides with the experience of working hard all day and yet not seeing anything of one's self take shape in one's labour. If I am free, how is it that I toil all day as others direct me, to fulfil plans that others have made, in order to produce wealth for others? In this sense the alienation unique to capitalist practices of production depends upon the contrast of an ideologically constituted subjective freedom with an "objective", tangible, material demonstration of slavery: the modern individual subject's "free will" cannot be denied (that would be too radical a departure from tradition), and so its empirical absence is theorised as a distance; not a real absence (of the form, "the individual free agent does not exist"), but merely an absence from what one's body has produced ("the individual free agent is alienated from the products of its activity", and so perhaps "the individual free agent is alienated from the body it inhabits"). Violence is theorised as making use of the subject's body, and Marx gives a much richer and more nuanced account than the traditional one in which the body is used "against the will of the subject", but still not quite an account in which violence produces the subject in order to make use of the body.

A German word that Marx used¹⁰⁶ where translators have written "alienation" was "Entäusserung": literally "en-outer-ing", "making externally manifest", or "externalising". Marxist accounts of alienation deal most explicitly with the issue of labour, but—to the extent that one's labour is one's activity in the world—they are structurally similar to psychoanalytic accounts inasmuch as they constitute a separation, foreignness or discordance between the speaking self and the embodied self: the "free" subject struggles for words to make sense out of the body that surely cannot be directed by an agency beyond the subject (since this is *my* body, not the employer's), yet somehow fails to manifest the subject's desire in the world.

In this context it may be worth noting that this disjunction between an external world and an internal agency can produce a sense of "safety" inasmuch as the alienated subject cannot be touched, no matter how badly his or her body is violated: my enemies may oppose my will, even to the extent of doing terrible things to my body; but at least my will itself remains inaccessible. This idea can be a point of connection

¹⁰⁶ He also used "Entfremdung" which can be translated as "estrangement" (Braybrooke, 1991, p. 68).

between psychoanalytic accounts of alienation and Marxist accounts in which religion's function as "the opium of the people" (Marx, 1843/1977, p. 131) can be a communal analogue of the individual subject's experience: in a dualist account of souls and bodies, one's body can be tortured to death and yet this literally doesn't matter in the realm of the spirit, since the spiritual matter of desires, decisions and destinies is radically separate from the physical matter of objects. More than a point of connection in the sense of a coincidental similarity, this point of connection between psychoanalytic and Marxist accounts of alienation suggests theoretical relationship.

"This is not surprising, since psychoanalysis came into being as a psychological practice to address the particular forms of alienation that capitalism produced" (Parker, 2007, p. 178). As an account of the structure of the *individual* psyche, psychoanalysis can function as an individualisation—and so in some respects a de-politicisation—of the Marxist account of alienation. Nevertheless, Freud's theory was an important acknowledgement of socially produced psychic elements (e.g. the "superego") and a shift from a straightforward disjunction of conscious self and external world towards a richer account in which the "unconscious" can be read as blurring the self/world binary, inasmuch as parts of the "self" are positioned as inaccessible to other parts of the self: still present in the psyche, but not present in the rational, decision-making "consciousness" so important to the agentic dualism. This is still an account of alienation; but now we are alienated from ourselves.

I have argued throughout this thesis that an alienated *agency* can function as an enabling condition for the reproduction of violence, if the subject experiences such a sense of disjunction from his or her environment that the subject's agency or will is experienced as free in the sense of being *uncaused*: free from the kinds of causal factors that the subject would likely attribute to the behaviour of objects (i.e. non-subjects). The subject/object binary can be a dynamic, contextual distinction—like "speaker/listener"—in which the grammatical distinction reflects the directionality of the verb used to constitute some aspect of the relationship: "the leaf absorbs energy from the sun" and "the sun pours energy into the leaf" are alternate accounts with alternate grammatical constructions of subject and object. However, if we

permanently divide the world into two ontological orders of “subject” and “object” in which subjects act and objects are acted upon, this disjunction can alienate human subjects from their contexts in several ways.

“The important point is that, on this understanding, if determinism is to be avoided and agency preserved, the will must somehow be ensconced in a space to which power does not gain access. Only thus, it has been supposed, are human subjectivity and agency safeguarded” (Stern, 2000, p. 110). This is important because it produces an extremely uncritical politics of individuality in which the power to exert influence over subjectivity—rather than just bodies—is denied. “To paraphrase Foucault, now that we have cut off the head of the monarch, we must decapitate his counterpart in the domain of causality as well” (Kaufman-Osborn, 1997, p. 670). There is no sovereign subject, unilaterally acting upon a subordinate world of objects: the world of objects is the world in which subjectivity, too, is embodied.

I have focused so often upon the alienation of the agentic subject from the world of objects because the traditional account of free will is so useful to violence (for obscuring its effects, and for the production of blame, which often amount to the same thing), and because I find it remarkable that this usefulness for violence is sufficient to sustain the account, despite the obstacle it provides for scientists—empiricist or otherwise—who are attempting to construct coherent theories of social behaviour. “I do not know of anything so disastrously affected by the tradition of separation and isolation as is this particular theme of body-mind. ... The evils which we suffer in education, in religion ... in the materialism of business and the aloofness of ‘intellectuals’ from life, the whole separation of knowledge and practise: all testify to the necessity of seeing mind-body as an integral whole.” (Dewey, 1927/2008, p. 27). Whereas I find a Butlerian account of subjectivity more convincing even in “representational” terms, it is more convincing still when considered as a form of social action and in terms of its effects. “A dialogical self can only operate within a linguistic field of enabling constraints. To be an actor in such a field *is to be constituted as such* [italics added]” (Stam, 2003, p. 98). Theorising the constitution of subjectivity enables attention to a set of social effects upon the subject that are not

available to traditional theory, and this is important not only for professional theorists, but for every subject for whom the experience of individualistic agency can produce or contribute to an experience of alienation from the world.

Alienation plays a role in numerous accounts of psychopathology, from, for example, Clark's (1963) study in which "alienation" in prisoners was correlated with a tendency to blame others, through to Schmid's (2005) argument for movement towards an account of psychopathology *as* alienation. Indeed, Smith and Bohm (2008) point out that "early psychiatrists were actually called 'alienists'" (p. 6): a name explicitly suggesting the patient's alienation from social psychological norms.

In psychoanalytic accounts the subject may be not only alienated from the established norms of his or her community, but even from internal aspects of the self, so that one may observe aspects of one's own psychology with the same sense of foreignness or distance as one might observe the activities of a community with different behavioural norms. "The repressed is foreign territory to the ego—internal foreign territory—just as reality (if you will forgive the expression) is external foreign territory" (Freud, 1933/1986g, p. 484). Not only "territory" but agency specifically is theorised by Freud as located sometimes beyond the bounds of the ego: the super-ego "enjoys a certain degree of autonomy, follows its own intentions and is independent of the ego for its supply of energy, [and] a clinical picture forces itself on our notice which throws a striking light on the severity of this agency and indeed its cruelty, and on its changing relations to the ego" (Freud, 1933/1986g, p. 487). The super-ego then—explicitly acknowledged as a social production (Freud, 1926/1986f)—is not only an external source of agency, but a *cruel* external agency lodged within one's psyche.

Of interest in terms of the discursive production of dichotomies is the account of difference between the "external foreign territory" (Freud, 1933/1986g, p. 484) within which the "reality" of the political context is positioned, and the "internal foreign territory" (Freud, 1933/1986g, p. 484) within which unconscious aspects of the psyche are said to operate. Does the production of a new disjunction between the

“foreign” and the known *within* the individual offset the transgression of the self/world binary (e.g. by the superego) by retracting the I (Latin “ego”) a step back from this socially contaminated unconscious; or is the transgression of the self/world binary such a significant departure from Cartesian “free will” that even Freud’s original psychoanalytic accounts can be used to subvert the reproduction of social violence in personal subjectivity?

If Freud thickens our description of alienation by contributing a richer story of its intrapsychic manifestations, Lacan adds more layers of alienation to this account, so that world and person are divided not only from each other, but into multiple orders that are separated from other orders of psychological reality. The symbolic, linguistic order of structural meaning precedes the subject and provides the speaking positions—and the words—that subjects must take up (Lacan, 1957/2001c). The *ego* however is alienated from this symbolic order by its location in the “imaginary” order of images (most famously the visual *mirror* image of one’s coherent self, Lacan, 1949/2001b) which is incommensurable with the symbolic order and into which the individual has invested his or her desire; and yet even this “desire” is distinct from and incommensurable with the “demand” associated with the “Real” (that which resists symbolisation, Žižek, 1989). The individual thus has a Real body in a Real world, yet the subject is profoundly alienated from this Reality: firstly by an imaginary ego that represents an unconscious image of the body (structured by, but not located within, the symbolic order); and then even more radically by the subject’s location in the symbolic order itself, which cannot even manifest the *ego’s* desire as speech, let alone the demands of the Real. In the Lacanian account, a traditional binary subject/object disjunction fans out into an array of alienations that leaves us wondering, “when I speak of myself, who is the ‘I’ who speaks, and who is the ‘me’ that it speaks about?”. Given the central role that Lacan gives to the phallus and the “Name-of-the-Father” (Lacan, 1960/2001e, p. 343) for signification and the subject’s place in the symbolic order, these questions may be particularly important in relation to gendered subjectivity.

It is remarkable that Lacan retained Freud's very strong emphasis on sexuality and gender as key to the development of subjectivity, yet neither theorist translated this focus on gender into an explicit political effort to *change* the social power relations they documented as formative of the subject. In this respect, a pattern of repressing or failing to address a crucial binary—with a key role in the various accounts of alienation—is repeated:

Marx defined the origin of the exploitation of man by man as the exploitation of woman by man, and he affirmed that the first human exploitation stems from the division of labor between man and woman. Why did he not devote his life to resolving this exploitation? He perceived the root of the evil but he did not treat it as such. Why? (Irigaray, 1991, p. 167).

Psychoanalytic accounts of our alienation from ourselves acknowledge that the separation of humanity into masculine/feminine orders plays a key role in the production of these circumstances and yet they seem to treat the constitution of this male/female binary as if it were a more or less inevitable context within which other political activity must be understood, and so to pass over it and concern itself with addressing its effects. What if the male/female binary were treated not merely as an *opportunity* for exploitative violence, but as having been produced *by* violence, precisely in order to create that opportunity? What of the other binaries examined so far: how do they function in relation to violence, and if they produce conditions favourable to violence, how may violence function to produce them?

One of the most interesting examples of binary logic is the binary in which “logic” itself is one pole of the dichotomy: the ancient distinction between *mythos* and *logos*, or (roughly) myth and reason. Lacanian theory can raise questions about how language itself—not merely the words “in” language, but the *structure* of language—is implicated in the production of specific forms of subjectivity. Rational logic, as a broad language practice or “way of using” language, is structurally dissimilar to more ambiguous mythological (and *para*-logical) narrative forms. If a refinement of

theoretical reflexivity can be constituted as a technological achievement, the privileging of *logos* may be an important aspect of the development of this technology.

**I am haunted by the idea that this break in human civilization,
caused by the discovery of the scientific method,
may be irreparable**

Max Born¹⁰⁷

Mythos and logos

Although the familiar story of Western historical progress has the ancient world dominated by myth, with the Greek philosophers initiating a slow but steady ascent of logic and reason (Lincoln, 1997), even in ancient Greece the terms *mythos* and *logos* “were sites of pointed and highly consequential semantic skirmishes fought between rival régimes of truth” (Lincoln, 1997, p. 363). According to Lincoln (1997), a careful reading of how these terms were used in ancient texts suggests that *logos* was associated with rhetoric and the clever or deceitful use of language to argue, seduce and persuade. *Mythos*, on the other hand, denotes speech that is “raw and crude, but true” (p. 355). In this account “logic” is a sophisticated, refined use of language; but in no sense “more true” than myth; and indeed there are indications in the most ancient texts that “authorial and authoritative voices most often characterize [*logos*] as unprincipled and treacherous” (p. 353). Eventually though—and increasingly, right up to the present day—the technologies of logical argumentation and “rational” rhetoric are more highly esteemed, and the language of myth is denigrated, so that today “myth” can mean simply “untruth”¹⁰⁸.

107 (Born, 1965, p. 6). Max Born was awarded a Nobel Prize for his work in quantum physics.

108 *Mythos* is scorned as “myths told to impressionable children by timid old women” (Morgan, 2000, p. 159). *Logos* controls truth by excluding difference as falsehood: logocentrism represses the mythical; but “all language touches the sphere of mythos” (Morgan, 2000, p. 288).

There are several implications of this binary that may be important for psychological theory around violence. Van Binsbergen notes that “the tension between *mythos* and *logos* is congruent with that between oral literature and writing” (Van Binsbergen, 2009, p. 6). This in itself could raise important questions about the psychological significance of the replacement of oral wisdom traditions with literary traditions involving rational written accounts. The *mythos/logos* binary also resembles that between art and science: art, like myth, does not attempt to “spell everything out”. Instead, rich symbolism leaves a space—sometimes a very large space—for subjective interpretation. Science and its language of rational philosophical argumentation are antithetical in the sense that they regard the closure of this space as a crucial aspect of truth: to leave the account ambiguous is to leave “room for error”. Another interesting binary in this context is that between *poetry* and *prose*.

Prose is almost literally “straightforward” language: prose comes from *prorsus* (Burrows, 1989), meaning “straight forward” (the direction). This accords neatly with the idea of *logos* as instrumental reason: one sets out to achieve something with one’s language, and prose aims directly at that goal. Poetry, on the other hand, is more ambiguous: there are aesthetic aims, so that the language invites evaluation *as language*. Ambiguity in poetry, as in other arts, is often prized rather than scorned as a weakness. There is more, however, to this family of binaries—myth and reason, art and science, poetry and prose—than the linguistic or narrative issues of ambiguity and paralogy versus efficiency and logic. Weber’s account of the *disenchantment* of modernity theorises what could be described—but only by transgressing the bounds of language appropriate to the rational empiricist tradition—as a progressive disappearance of wonder or of “spirit” in the world produced by the West.

Max Weber is a significant figure in the development of sociology and other social sciences: his definition of the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory” (Weber, 1919/1991, p. 78) explicitly attends to the violence that orders modern political arrangements, arguing that “organized dominance, which calls for continuous administration, requires that human conduct be conditioned to obedience towards

those masters who claim to be the bearers of legitimate power” (p. 80). One of the aspects of modern consciousness that Weber considered to be most important was the *disenchantment* of the world by rationalisation (Kontos, 1994). Prior to rationalisation the human experience of the world is one of immersion in an enchanted universe full of spirit and meaning: after rationalisation “the world is matter to be moulded and mastered” (Kontos, 1994, p. 232). Weber summarises the end result of a culture of advanced modernity: “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved” (Weber, 1905/2010, p. 128).

In these accounts that challenge or invert the modern privileging of logos over mythos, the mythos/logos binary can almost be read as a truth/fact binary: myth articulates deep “truths” that resist quantification or reduction to unambiguous prose; rational accounts deal with the technical “facts” that empower people to act upon those truths. The progress of science becomes a hegemony of cleverness achieved through a marginalisation of wisdom: a wisdom tradition that took the dreams of human beings seriously becomes a psychology in which “dreaming has come to be defined by the non-conscious electrophysiologic correlate of dreaming that is called REM sleep or rapid eye movement sleep” (Pagel, 2008, p. 48).

Calling into question the binary of mythos and logos may be useful for critical inquiry in psychology: not merely the psychological facts, nor even the logic of psychological theory, but logic *itself* can be “historied” or constituted by narratives that position it as a social production, and so as a potential target for research and intervention. An account of the possible violence of psychological theory is thickened by additional frameworks of interpretation, and an important constraint upon these frameworks is enacted by the exclusion of mythological accounts. Not insignificantly, every *non-Western* culture on earth appears to us as having, or as having had, a narrative tradition of mythological accounts that articulated the truths sustaining particular forms of social life together: by framing the West’s obsession with power as a virtue, so that logical rationality becomes “better” or *more true* than the language of myth, every non-Western tradition of wisdom is subordinated to Europe’s. In what ways

does the liberal West “value other cultures” when their deepest and most valued truths are positioned as *false* by a science that cannot see any truth beyond the “facts” that enable material control? How might this inability to recognise myth as anything other than non-fact affect the West’s consciousness of its *own* myths?

Paralogy can be read as a use of language “apart from logic” that does not have the negative connotations of illogicality or irrationality, but rather the positive connotations of an effort to set aside for a moment the entrenched habits of a language that has been shaped by power in order to serve that power. If the reproduction of particular arrangements of power depends upon a degree of stability or persistence of meaning, then a group desiring to establish hegemonic political control must control the field of discourse: otherwise, the justifications for violence are continually vulnerable to re-framing in new, critical accounts. If “meaning is use” and language embodies and enacts forms of social life, then the stabilisation of *meanings* can be constituted as identical with the stabilisation of the social order: and this stabilisation—this elimination of change and so of unpredictability—is what we might expect to see in a world emptied of spirits and reduced to manipulable matter. Enchantment and mystery are the stuff of a subjectivity beyond the grasp of rational knowledge and so beyond the grasp of political *control*: mechanical predictability is the aim of a particular logic of power and control, that desires to “know” the psyche by possessing and dominating it. To not know, even to *refuse* to know another human body as an entirely physical and controllable object, may be a prerequisite of knowing another human being as a spirited subject. In these terms, the paralogical account of another is part of the discursive space of that other’s agency: the single “true” rational empirical account, by reducing the other to the inflexible facts of a violently stabilised discursive hegemony, drains the soul from the other and reduces her or him to an object.

Philological zombies

In this dichotomous story of political freedom in paralogical ambiguity and political domination through totalising metanarrative, capitalist democracy is an interesting

form of government. The “free” market of information—guided by the invisible hand of violence—ensures that those to whom violence gives disproportionate control over the field of discourse will tend to have control over the formation of majority opinion; not only through the communicative advantage that a highly educated billionaire has over an illiterate labourer, but through the development of an education system aimed at the production of “evidence based” mass conformity, and so voters with the right beliefs. Perhaps the ideal system for violence would be an elimination of parliaments and other specialist groups for political decision-making: a “pure” democracy, with every citizen able to vote directly on every decision through the Internet, could—combined with a capitalism equally “pure” in its support for power to amass more power—act as a kind of social superconductor for discursive violence, ensuring that within one or two generations, any subject with an unpredictable “spirit” could be swiftly and efficiently corrected or eliminated. Could there be an end to history after all, with “the last man” or “the last woman” *dying with* human history, leaving behind a vast network of biological machines, a *single* biological machine, reproducing individual humans in their proper places, as a body reproduces its cells? Here the nightmare of the “philosophical zombie” comes true, through an infatuation with *logos*: a *philological* zombie—highly literate and completely unconscious—inherits the disenchanting earth from a people who once had souls.

Perhaps such a grim myth, of material triumph at the cost of spiritual death, is just one more variation of an old myth—a dualistic myth of free spirit and determined body—and if so, perhaps it is an example of the discursive persistence I have associated with violence? Yet as a persistent *myth* rather than a reproduction of a particular rational account, it may involve narrative elements that are harder to control, and the alternate myth of spiritual triumph through material triumph—Fukuyama’s (1992) and Kojève’s (1980) story in which the struggle for mutual “recognition” can be achieved *through* domination and violent subjugation—is supportive of violence inasmuch as it provides a teleological justification, agreeing with Callicles that we will all be fitter, in the end, if we accept that “the survival of the fittest” is natural and that the pleasures of the masters are, as pleasures, no less and perhaps even more legitimate than the pleasures of the slaves. The constitution of fitness in terms of willingness to objectify and dominate others is very debatable, but at least this account resists the evilification of

the “fittest” that is a feature of so much “slave morality”, resentfully positioning the masters as deserving of the vengeance of the slaves.

To the extent that all of these accounts depend upon binary dichotomies—between social orders consisting of individuals who are either masters or slaves; individual orders consisting of processes that are either psychological or physiological; psychological orders consisting of structures that are either conscious or unconscious, and so on—they are all susceptible to metaphorical relationship with each other and with other binary dichotomies. Even the relatively complex binary of alienated prisoner and alienating prison can be, as we have seen, applied to the dichotomy of mind and body, with its poles oriented in either direction. We can use a neural metaphor for this binary thinking: the “opponent process” perception of colour, for example, in which the firing rates of neurones sensitive to dichotomous questions (e.g. “red or green”) are combined with other binary measures (e.g. “light or dark”) to produce a visual gestalt (Neitz & Neitz, 2008). In this account the duality we experience as a kind of omnipresent “form” or generally applicable metaphor (i.e. a means of interpreting any object whatsoever, by constituting it as a distinct “thing” so that its this-ness and the rest of the universe’s that-ness become a linguistically divisible binary pair) is given a kind of a priori status inasmuch as its form, as a “natural” feature of neural activity, is inescapable: to attempt to constitute something as “not binary” is merely to set up another binary (between binary and not-binary). The integration of multiple dichotomies into a visual gestalt can also serve as a metaphor for the development of the rest of the “natural” number sequence: duality (me-Mother) becomes, by its dichotomisation as a pole of a new duality (*us*-Father), the concept of trinity, and so on.

Whereas foregrounding the importance of duality in this way could suggest a privileging of the *logos*, the neural metaphor is instead (unsurprisingly) ambiguous in this regard: *ambi*-guity itself invokes the duality of ambivalence, and we can imagine any *individual* neurone—with its axon quietly asserting “this” or screaming “that!”—as a rather inadequate perceiver of reality, without the assistance of other neurones *paralogically* incorporating its this-that judgements into their own, different frames of

reference. Thus the brain can be a useful metaphor for the workings of language inasmuch as it provides a “natural” justification for the suspicion of *absolute* binaries that imagine themselves to pass final judgements: the totalising “God Neurone” that imagines itself to be the supreme pinnacle, the *centre* of the entire neural network, incorporating the activities of all the billions of other neurones into its own masterful, metanarrative declaration of “yes!” or “no!”.

In this paralogical account, interdiscursivity and intertextuality make it impossible to contain the effects of a discursive intervention once it enters the public domain of language use, and absolute judgements of the worth or otherwise of a claim represent a naïve logocentrism. Nevertheless, it can be useful to note that some elements of discourse lend themselves easily to abuse in a wide range of different social situations, while some others seem better suited to pro-social, non-violent interventions. For example, it is easy to find numerous examples of discourses of racial inferiority being used in projects of violence (genocide, slavery, abuse of minorities, and so on) but not so easy to find examples of such discourses being put to constructive, pro-social uses: we can therefore position discourses of racial inferiority as epistemologically violent, even though “discourses of racial inferiority” covers an enormously broad range of accounts (anything that compares any two ethnic groups along any significant dimension and finds one to be inferior to the other). While specific claims are likely to be less dubious than broad generalisations—so that a claim like “accounts of the moral and intellectual inferiority of African races were epistemologically violent in the context of their deployment as justifications for slavery in America” is more secure than “discourses of racial inferiority are epistemologically violent”—broad generalised evaluations of some elements of discourse may still be useful when such elements are easily adaptable to different contexts, and widely used.

Whilst I am arguing that they can be useful, I am also arguing that such evaluations cannot discount the potential for different uses in different contexts, let alone the potential for new effects to emerge as other discourses continually evolve, shifting their relationships to any given element, and so the implications of that element’s deployment. “Love your enemies” and “do good to them that hate you” (Matthew

5:44, King James Version) may in some contexts be a courageous articulation of non-violent political aims; yet it can just as easily be used violently, as when it is used by an abuser as part of an effort to silence a victim, or as a tactical move in a larger plan of violence (e.g. paired with St. Paul's "...for in doing so thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" since "vengeance is mine...saith the Lord", Romans 12:19-20, King James Version), or via association with unspoken elements of the same discourse (e.g. by bringing into play the violent patriarchal assumptions upon which the authority of a scriptural reference may depend). All these qualifications do not, however, make the evaluation of an element of discourse a pointless or futile exercise, and in this context we may ask, are there discursive elements that appear as the favourite weapons of violence? Do some ideas serve violence particularly well, so that supplanting or subverting these ideas may be particularly useful in projects that aim to minimise violence?

If we are looking for a "favourite weapon" then the more familiar and the more significant to more people, the better: in this context binaries that seem to have nearly universal significance are ideal targets. Pleasure/pain may seem an obvious choice—it aligns with the motivational vector informing *all* behaviour in strict "behaviourist" accounts¹⁰⁹, and it also aligns reasonably well with the "happiness" and "unhappiness" that inform so many other accounts¹¹⁰—but I think the binary of *good* versus *bad* is even more important: "good pain" (e.g. in massage) is pain to be *desired*; and "bad pleasure" (e.g. the use of heroin) is pleasure that we *avoid*, perhaps because we pay for it later with a greater pain, or settle for it in lieu of a greater pleasure. "Good food" may be healthy more than it is pleasurable; "bad food" may be unhealthy—or even simply unpleasant—without actually being painful. Ethics and morality—two frameworks within which the *ought* steering our decisions is articulated—both speak of the "good life" and of "bad choices" in ways that seem to supersede all the other

109 I have used the rather loose metaphor of alignment with a "motivational vector" because, as Malone (1978) notes, strict behaviourism does *not* theorise in terms of internal psychological experiences of "pleasure" or "pain".

110 Discourses of happiness and unhappiness are politically important. Ferguson (2006) discusses "the happiness industry" (p. 2) with its thousands of self-help texts supporting growing armies of thousands of cognitive behavioural therapists, all working as a response to the "genuinely shocking" (p. 3) levels of depression and chronic anxiety in the community (one in three families affected in Britain) by avoiding "hard questions about the kind of society that gives rise to such levels of misery" (p. 3) and suggesting that unhappy individuals need to be cured so that they can get back to work.

dimensions of evaluation: good and bad function as highly significant poles in a very wide range of discursive constructions. I am not arguing here that it is “the most” important binary, but the binary of good and bad seems to have the potential to lend its weight to the penetration of the field of signification by one or more *points de capiton*, through its ability to function as a point of reference in so many different narrative frameworks. In other words, if “terrorist” is only meaningful in a very specific set of discourses, *bad*, on the other hand, is meaningful in a enormous variety of contexts: so, by a metaphorical coding of the “terrorist” as an example of “badness”, the term can be inscribed with a meaning that continues through multiple interpretive layers. Borrowing the metaphor of the *point de capiton*, we can imagine ourselves locating the meaning of “bad” as a point in multiple fabrics or layers of meaningful discourse, and then driving a pin through these points in order to ensure that the solutions appropriate for something coded bad in one context can be carried through to terms coded bad in others.

The good/bad binary is distinguished by Nietzsche (1886/2006) from the good/*evil* binary in terms of another dichotomy that Nietzsche constructs between his (roughly Hegelian) “masters” and “slaves”. Whereas the masters oppose good to bad in a fairly straightforward way that aligns with desire or admiration and revulsion or contempt, “slave morality” consists of a social colouring of this dichotomy so that the “bad” is attached to the terrible desires of the masters: “According to slave-morality, therefore, the ‘evil’ man arouses fear; according to master-morality it is precisely the ‘good’ man who arouses fear and seeks to arouse it, while the bad man is regarded as the despicable being” (Nietzsche, 1886/2006, p. 197). With Callicles, Nietzsche contests the “evil” of cruelty if it is “good” for the cruel, positioning Christian morality as a triumph of weakness over strength, and so providing a discursive resource for supremacist justifications for violence. What can we do with this crucial binary of good and evil, in order to subvert its violent deployment? If evilification creates “evil” in order to violate it, can this violence be subverted while at the same time doing justice to the immense human suffering informing the constitution of cruelty as evil?

**But of the tree of the of the knowledge of good and evil,
thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof
thou shalt surely die**

Genesis 2:17 (King James Version)

Deconstructing good and evil

Gergen (2007) abstracts the rhetorical evilification that I am problematising from the various contexts of its usage that are familiar to us, using the metaphor of a dance. Writing of “the hardened shell separating the good within from the evil without” (p. 370) and its justification for “virtuous action that invites, perpetuates, and intensifies what we understand to be evil” (p. 370), he claims: “Herein lie the seeds of the limitless extension of justified retaliation so familiar to the contemporary world. Once this dance of death is under way, it is not ‘the other’ who is the major enemy, but the tradition of choreography” (p. 370). Choreographing this “dance of death” involves the assignment of dancers to specific positions and acceptable ranges of movement: a deconstruction of good and evil can function as an effort to unsettle some of the traditions informing this choreography.

Gergen identifies three promising approaches to practical conflict resolution that “attempt to move beyond ... traditions of rational argument” (p. 375) by emphasising the relational *process* rather than the “content” of disputed claims. *Appreciative Inquiry* (p. 375) encourages participants to focus on the potentials for positive relationship; the *Public Conversations Project* (p. 376) not only avoids discussion of contested issues prior to the building of positive relationships but even begins by making it difficult to identify “which side” of the conflict the participants occupy at the outset; and *Narrative Mediation* “approaches a conflict as a social construction” (p. 377) so that the participants confront the conflict together as “a common object against which they main join in resistance” (p. 377). These practical approaches to conflict resolution may also be useful sources of ideas for non-violent theory development, inasmuch as some of the techniques that are effective in face-to-face encounters may be adaptable to techniques for reading and writing theory; but I want

to take up a suggestion Gergen makes elsewhere in the text, that “our first task is to inquire into the origins of good and evil” (p. 368). In order to attempt to disrupt some of the potential violence *of* such an inquiry, I want to take a paralogical approach, in two respects.

Firstly, in heading this section “*Deconstructing*” *Good and Evil* I am suggesting not a “destruction” so much as an account of how the terms are constructed.

Deconstruction suggests a particular approach to analysis informed by Derridean theory (Derrida, 1967/1997): an examination of a term’s construction by means of an account of the selective disjunctions, omissions and exclusions that produce it as a distinct textual entity. Often, deconstruction involves an interrogation of binary logic (Burman & MacClure, 2005; Hepburn, 1999; Spivak, 1997). So, before attending to “good and evil” as a *singular* binary construct or pair-of-opposites, I would like to comment briefly on the traditional habit of staying *within* the binary, and attempting to effect changes by inverting it. This is very easy to do: an account of the Inquisition’s positioning itself as “good” in order to torture the “evil” slips effortlessly into an account of the *Inquisitors* as the “evil” party. As has been discussed elsewhere in the present text, even to constitute the victim in a particular moralised way can be to enact an inverted evilification through an account of innocence that implies its concentration in particular subjects (i.e. if the innocence of one person makes her or him an especially *unsuitable* target for violence, this can imply that other subjects *lacking* such innocence are more suitable targets). Even the good/evil binary itself can be coded “evil” by a well-meaning critical account so that to deploy the binary is to find oneself at the bad end of it in terms of that account.

To argue this is not to suggest that we should be any *less* concerned about the victimisation of groups or individuals who tend to occupy the privileged, “good” end of the binary: to do this (e.g. by positioning indigenous criminal populations as the innocent victims of colonisation, and the Western victims of their crimes as the evil exploiters meeting with a natural retributive justice) is merely to take the epistemologically violent binary and turn it on its head, directing its violence at a different group and so reproducing its violence. I remember a tourist from the United

States telling me of her distress when she found so many people in other parts of the world dismissing or even *celebrating* the September 11 attacks with remarks like, “oh well, it’s about time they got a taste of their own medicine”. Such a callous refusal to grieve for the victims of this violence due to their being “on the wrong side” may appeal for its justification to the United States’ refusal to grieve for foreign victims (Butler, 2004a; Butler, 2009), and yet it negates its own implicit criticism of that behaviour by reproducing it. An effective *criticism* of the constitution of one group (Al Qaeda, for example) as “evil” has to involve more than an unreflexive inversion of the violent binary. However violent the production of goodness in such a binary may be—and the crusade of the good West against the evil barbarians does involve a violent account of the good—a non-violent critique of the “good” does not dismiss the calls for compassion and respect that claims of goodness involve in the traditional account; nor does it dismiss criticism of the *violence* of the group positioned as “evil”: it sharpens the criticism of such violence by not contributing to its reproduction.

A radically different account of goodness or innocence may be required, that either subverts the existing binary by accepting its terms while carefully and explicitly positioning all people as “good” (perhaps with *impersonal* foes like “violence” condemned to the evil pole), or else attempts to relativise the binary until it is so questionable that it loses its rhetorical effectiveness. Calling the binary itself into question involves moving beyond “how do we eliminate evil?” (which suggests “by increasing the good”, leaving the constitution of “evil” intact, along with its social effects) to the different question, “how do we eliminate evil *and* its inverted form, the moral ‘good’ which depends upon evil and *functions to sustain it?*”. The spectre of nihilism haunts these debates: conservative voices who see merit in traditional accounts of good and evil warn us of the “slippery slope” down which we are likely to slide if we let go of our rigid ethical categories: in this account, from denying that it is helpful to position even the worst forms of violence as *evil* in terms of the traditional binary, it is a swift and inevitable descent to, “the worst forms of violence aren’t evil in the traditional sense, so let’s all reproduce them!”. This fear perhaps depends upon a psychological assumption that others would be cruel were it not for the threat of retaliative cruelty, which may appear as a self-evident truth for those of us who experience our potential for cruelty as being held in check by repressive force.

I do not want to dismiss justifiable concerns about the deterioration of pro-social behavioural norms, but I do want to voice a suspicion about the structure of a prohibition that attaches danger to the project of inquiry. It is not the constitution of “dangerous knowledge” with which I am concerned—I am happy to concede, for example, that it would be unwise to teach an angry child how to make a potentially lethal slingshot from a strip of rubber and a ball bearing, and that a set of rhetorical tools for dismantling the justifications of important moral truths could represent a similar arming of unprepared people with dangerous equipment—but rather the way this account of the “slippery slope” positions the conservative champions of the good (and vanquishers of evil) as the wise elders at the top of the slope: if we question our established knowledge of good and evil, we may fall from the state of grace that is allegedly produced by this knowledge. In this way the slippery slope can be read as a strange inversion of the slippery snake that, in the ancient Biblical myth, brings about our fall from grace via the *knowledge* of good and evil. Now, it is the *forgetting* of good and evil that represents the ultimate forbidden fruit: tempting us with a hedonistic paradise of anarchic play, one bite and we would find ourselves in a nihilistic hell of unrestrained violence. In this account, order and truth (good) stand at the top of the slippery slope, while anarchy and ignorance (evil) lie at its base.

In trying to arrive at a broadly useful account of a dichotomy that interpenetrates so many discourses, we approach a *point de capiton* that resists our efforts to position it in ways that are useful to us: an inertia rooted in countless well-established usages anchors the good/evil binary to these meanings; meanings and metaphors that exceed any rational account of “how the good/evil binary works”. This is why the second respect in which I want to attempt a paralogical inquiry is by engaging with a *mythical* account—a powerful and often unconscious shared narrative constructing “collectively recognised truth” (Van Binsbergen, 2009, p. 12)—rather than an account that constitutes the issues in familiar rational terms.

In a brief discussion of Pope Ratzinger’s essentialist account of gender, Butler mentions that “the doctrine of sexual difference he defends is rooted in the story of Genesis” and suggests, “Perhaps one needs to start with the status of the story of

Genesis itself and to see what other readings are possible” (Butler, 2009, p. 117). I agree: as a mythical account that explicitly identifies “the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17, King James Version) as the origin of violence—and furthermore an account that associates this catastrophe with the discovery of *gender*—it would be an interesting account to examine even if it were not the very first account of human social relations in what was the most important written text for more than a thousand years of Western cultural development.

Any genesis account or aetiological myth can have a special narrative importance for a community, as a narrative justifying key social practices and institutions (Van Binsbergen, 2009). Psychology has worked hard to position itself as a *science* in the respectable modern sense of the word: for this reason the examination of a Christian text in a psychological thesis can seem inappropriate, as though it were impossible to acknowledge the West’s Christian heritage without contaminating one’s research with the smell of burning heretics. There are some parallels here with Burman’s argument that “psychoanalysis is the repressed other of psychology” (Burman, 2008, p. 176), inasmuch as modernist secular rationalism tries to distance itself from its own history, with the distancing an effort to deny how much that history continues to structure the present: in this sense Christianity is the repressed other of secular modernity. It is not even “other” in many parts of the modern West: most of the US soldiers who represent the front line of “good versus evil” in Western accounts of international politics identify as Christian (Segal & Segal, 2004), and so the Biblical account of the origin of evil in the book of Genesis is not merely something that may structure their understanding through unconscious cultural transmission. As a text that many of these soldiers actually read, psychology cannot simply ignore it as a pre-modern relic, as though it had no bearing on contemporary subjectivity: better to read it, as Butler suggests, *differently*, than to distance ourselves from violent readings in the hope that they will simply go away.

The Genesis account

As not only the Christian West's foundational story of how evil came into the world, but also as an explicitly *epistemological* account—linking suffering and violence to “the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17, King James Version)—I consider the Biblical myth's account of our *simultaneous* discovery of good and evil *and of our sexual difference* to be one of the most interesting and important stories in our literary tradition. Irigaray's constituting “the origin of the exploitation of man by man as the exploitation of woman by man” (Irigaray, 1991, p. 167) resonates with this mythical account of a simultaneous production of “sin” and the significance of gender. Can the myth be read as a kind of social dream—a symbolic articulation of a repressed truth about the origins of social violence—or does its status in a patriarchal tradition make such a generous reading dangerous?

Reading a myth as a social dream implies a psychoanalytic reading. One of the immediately striking qualities of the Biblical story is its consonance with psychoanalytic accounts; particularly Lacanian accounts. In both the Genesis account and the Lacanian account of subject formation, a phallus introduces the significance of sexual difference, and by this knowledge initiates the male and female subjects as simultaneously gendered, guilty, and morally accountable beings. I say “a phallus” because the serpent is the most obviously phallic thing¹¹¹ that the story could have employed without resorting to an actual penis: not only do many snakes have phallic diameters and glans-shaped heads, but some even stand erect when aroused.

So, a phallus convinces the innocents to take the knowledge of “good and evil” into themselves, and immediately “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7, King James Version). Why does “the knowledge of good and evil” lead immediately to a specific awareness of their sexual organs, and a shameful need to *cover* these markers of difference? Is it simply a shame of sexuality, perhaps referring to the incest taboo that Lévi-Strauss (1967/1969) treats as a primal instance

¹¹¹ Freud (Freud, 1900/1995) writes that in dreams the snake is “the most important symbol of the male member” (p. 341).

of distinguishing the permitted from the forbidden?¹¹² Or can the shameful covering be read as a repression: a necessary repression from consciousness of the political implications of a binary division of society into categories of good and evil? For a species divided physically into a larger and more muscular biological configuration, and a smaller and less muscular biological configuration, what political consequences might result from a “knowledge of good and evil”, if such knowledge can produce or enable “the knowledge of legitimate violators and the legitimately violable”? *Any* category of legitimately violable persons (“evil others”) functions as an implicit endorsement of violence itself, to the extent that “evil” is precisely the object towards which an otherwise immoral violence becomes acceptable: a refusal of violence involves a denial of legitimate violation. In this context—in which the concept of “evil” can function as a justification for the violence necessary for the maintenance of exploitative hierarchical social structures—the myth’s linking of “the knowledge of good and evil” to both the origin of social violence *and* a new awareness of sexual difference invites critical attention.

If—as Irigaray (1984/2004) argues—many other kinds of oppressive social power relations can be traced to the production of oppressive gender relations, then the Genesis account exists in a complex reflexive relationship with the reproduction of violence in gendered subjectivities: every infant learns that people without the phallus can literally get fucked, and the Biblical narrative can function as a justification for these political conditions; yet at the same time, it can unconsciously articulate the infant’s grieving for a lost paradise before violation *itself* was legitimated by the constitution of categories of legitimate violators and victims. What happens to this grief if it is foreclosed by a language that normalises the structural violence of gender?

Here, a psychoanalytic reading of the Genesis account—positioning the knowledge of good and evil as a primal epistemological violence—takes up a patriarchal text, even agrees with its importance, but subverts its traditional meanings when these meanings are “false” according to the criterion of non-violent truth. Myth is inherently

112 “Considered in its purely formal aspect, the prohibition of incest is thus only the group’s assertion that where relationships between the sexes are concerned, *a person cannot do just what he pleases*” (Lévi-Strauss, 1967/1969, p. 43).

paralogical inasmuch as its constitution as myth (rather than, for example, as an historically accurate account) invites a multiplicity of interpretation: a single “true meaning” reduces myth to mere allegory. Alternate accounts need not refute their alternatives; they can supplement them, simultaneously adding to them and making them more complete by enriching the context of their interpretation. For instance, an alternate reading of the Genesis myth can be produced without contradicting the earlier reading: since a paralogical reading practice treats a text as something with which one is interacting *now* rather than as a repository of fixed meaning, both readings can be narrated without their difference requiring them to speak against each other.

Such a reading could attend to the *externality* of the fruit that Adam and Eve take into themselves, and its ingestion as the production of their alienation from the universe symbolised by Eden. In this account the phallic serpent represents not so much the signifier of sexual difference as a symbol of patriarchal desire. The infant is shameless: its desires are its own, and there can be nothing “unnatural” about them as the infant is a manifestation *of* nature. The serpent, however (or the desire of the father) does not want to have to recognise the infant’s desires as having the same legitimacy as its own, and so it lies: rather than acknowledging its own desire as a natural, embodied desire like that of the infant’s, it posits an *objective* good and evil against which desire must be measured (and in terms of which, the infant must learn, it turns out that the patriarch’s desires are often “good” whilst the infant’s are “evil”). If the infant must *learn* which of her or his desires are “good” and which are “evil”, then pleasure and pain can no longer be trusted: desire to seek one and avoid the other can now be shameful, and in this account the fig leaves protect these shameful personal desires from a disapproving gaze. But more importantly—as discussed in the present text in terms of alienated agency—the *external* standards of good and evil, once accepted by the subject, alienate the subject from a unity with the natural world that is only possible when one’s agency is experienced as natural. The concept of evil and the requirement that the subject account for his or her behaviour in relation to this concept initiates “sin”¹¹³ by demanding that the subject be constituted as a separately

113 “Christian theology has ... valued oneness in the form of salvation as unification with God ... especially in depicting sin as alienation, separation from God” (Cooper-White, 2008, p. 4).

accountable agency: an agency that cannot fall back on the universal excuse that “as one part of the whole, and connected to it in all directions, I am always doing the only thing I *can* be doing, unless everything else were also different”, but—alienated by the concept of evil—must admit, “I did it, there was no good reason: punish me, Lord”. The punishment, and any violence operating by means of this punishment, no longer enacts the father’s (or anyone else’s) *desire* (e.g. for an obedient child): instead it becomes an objective *justice*, so that the libidinal order of “good and bad” and the social symbolic order of “right and wrong” are disconnected.

The political subordination of the infant to violent authoritarian power relations does not encourage the infant to experience her or his desires as “natural” nor invite the infant to find ways of acknowledging such desires and integrating these with a non-violent community: instead, a pre-established order of right and wrong desires is inscribed upon the subject; the body’s desires are only legitimate to the extent that they conform with established social power relations. Adam and Eve “hid themselves” (Genesis 3:8, King James Version) from God as soon as their knowledge of good and evil made them ashamed of their nakedness: this can be read as the infant’s taking refuge in an alienated, individualistic form of subjectivity—involving lies and “private thoughts”—as a means of self-protection from a community that will punish unacceptable desires with violence.

And so on. Whereas this (still very norm-sceptical) account perhaps lacks the previous account’s explicit engagement with what is arguably the most obvious political manifestation of violence (its masculinity; although the phallic *serpent* as the teller of the destructive lie about the need to know good and evil can be read as an acknowledgement of patriarchy), it has the advantage of fitting better with the myth’s Christian narrative context: the God/human symbol of Jesus is a symbol of redemption, in terms of re-unity with God, but explicitly through removal of personal guilt (1 John 1:7, King James Version). Here the obliteration of alienated subjectivity is constituted as achievable by identification with a human being who refuses all the alienating effects of “sin”: the belief in a personal agency separate from “God” or nature; the acceptance of the institutionalised violence that depends upon the

reproduction of such alienation; and the personal shame that represents an internalisation of the fear of such violence. Of course, the form of the tradition's invitation to identify with this God/human symbol is open to question, when it is so tightly discursively linked to the visual symbol of the instrument of his death by torture, thus reminding us of the political consequences of our taking the "invitation"/(threat) seriously.

In either case, the tree itself (of the knowledge of good and evil) is an interesting mythical signifier. A tree can represent the connection of multiple superficial and seemingly dynamic factors (leaves shifting in the breeze) to a deeper stability (the trunk and roots). Here Lacan's *point de capiton* or "quilting point" has a similar geometric structure: if we imagine its location in a horizontal plane of fabric (e.g. the surface of couch upon which we might lie down), again the multitude of threads that can be shifted some way in this or that direction are anchored to a fixed point of reference. "As Lacan points out in *The Formations of the Unconscious*, the sedimentation of meaning effected by the *point de capiton* is of a mythical nature" (Stavrakakis, 1999, p. 60). Metanarrative is still narrative, but it constitutes itself otherwise, as grounded in a fixed reality: the "mythical nature" of the *point de capiton* serves—like the mythical tree of the knowledge of good and evil—to ground a libidinally invested social production in a fixed and objective nature. In the terms of this metaphor, attempting a discursive intervention to shift the rational meaning of "evil" in any of a wide range of different contexts can be like bending the branch of tree into a new shape: the term is anchored in a mythological structure offering a powerful resistance to such change.

The face of God disappears forever in showing itself

Jacques Derrida¹¹⁴

Textual fetishism

Engaging with a myth that is so intimately associated with Judaeo-Christian discourse risks, as mentioned earlier, the possibility that the reproduction of elements of texts with long histories of violent usage—even in an effort to alter their meaning through “re-storying” as a kind of reiterative “disarming”—may function simply to reproduce those traditional violent meanings, inasmuch as the earlier contexts of interpretation can still inform readings of the re-storied elements. Žižek (1989) points out that, due to the inability of logos to fully circumscribe mythos, “theoretical interpretations of myths” can be read as “new versions of the same myth” (p. 172). This is part of the significance and importance of myth: it continues to function as myth regardless of how it is interpreted in terms of commentary. Perhaps a myth—like those of the “social contract”, the Hegelian “struggle for recognition”, or the Biblical “Garden of Eden”—can be so dangerous that it simply should not be told. Yet, if a myth can continue to order social life “beneath the surface” of rational causal accounts in the sense that its status as cause or effect of tradition is ambiguous (e.g. the Genesis account could be constituted as a “social dream” in the sense that a violent patriarchal society dreamed it as a post hoc explanation for established conditions, much as the social contract was “signed” long after the allegedly contractual relationships were in place), an attempt to suppress the account may not be the most efficient way to reduce its effectiveness. As Butler’s treatment of hate speech like “queer” suggests, appropriation and reiteration can disarm effects that suppression can even serve to amplify (inasmuch as “we don’t say that” or “we don’t talk about that” can be read as a strategy for avoiding engagement with what is *true*).

When we continue to ritually affirm our status as souls in the Christian framework at funeral services—deeply significant social events—does the explicit claim to be rational secular scientists distance ourselves from this interpretive framework precisely in order to *maintain* it, as a discourse that “we don’t talk about”? What does 114 (Derrida, 2001, p. 135). Derrida is writing here about the face of the Other in Levinas.

all this mean in terms of the relationship of the modern “rational” West to its (enormously large, in the United States at least) Christian communities who *do* talk about the Bible, every day of their lives; whose members can become presidents and commanders-in-chief of huge modern armies?

Could the “backwardness” ascribed to the fundamentalist’s literal reading of a text represent a projection of the positivist *rational scientist’s* literal interpretation: a naïve hermeneutics in which the West’s spiritual texts are being read as if they were empirical “factual” accounts; a naïve hermeneutics that science has helped to *teach* the Christian right? If a community’s forms of life are precious to it, but ridiculed in the light of “superior knowledge”, is it reasonable to expect that community to be receptive to the knowledge with which they are ridiculed, and to build it into their accounts? How can we enter into constructive dialogue with, for example, Muslim communities, if we cannot even account for the deeply held values and beliefs of our own ancestors and large portions of our own communities without positioning them as inferior and ignorant? Does our posture as the community with privileged access to truth *depend upon* precisely the narrow prosaic literalism that we constitute as a contemptible ignorance in others: a kind of textual fetishism?

In anthropology, fetishism—a term with a long etymological history suggesting something artificially produced (Ellen, 1988)—referred to religious practices (in non-European cultures) involving the endowment of material objects with spiritual or magical significance. A small carving, charm, or perhaps a decorated piece of a human or animal body might symbolise protective power, and so its placement near a precious site might serve to protect that site (Graeber, 2005). Marx adopted the same critical “outsider” gaze in relation to Western culture, and wrote about *commodity* fetishism (“the fetishism of the commodity and its secret”, Marx, 1867/1990, p. 163), as “the veneration of a material object (money, gold), which ... is endowed with supranatural properties” (Žižek, 1997, p. 99). Freud began by agreeing with other theorists of sexuality that sexual fetishes “are with some justice likened to the fetishes in which savages believe that their gods are embodied” (Freud, 1905/1986a, p. 297), since an object was endowed with “unnatural” significance, and—arguing that “no

other variation of the sexual instinct that borders on the pathological can lay so much claim to our interest as this one” (Freud, 1905/1986a, p. 297)—eventually related sexual fetishism to the castration complex, theorising that the fetish is the “vehicle both of denying and of asseverating the fact of castration” (Freud, 1927/1997, p. 208). Lacan completed fetishism’s theoretical journey from condescending anthropological accounts to critical accounts of subjectivity by theorising the fetish as an element of normal sexuality—in some respects connecting once again with Marx’s questioning of the assumption that “the fetishist Other is always ‘lower’” (Žižek, 1997, p. 98)—suggesting that the physical penis could function as a fetish for the symbolic phallus, for heterosexual women (Lacan, 1958/2001d).

In all of these accounts of fetishism, the constitution of an object (be it a religious object, commercial object, or sexual object) as a fetish positions the significance attached to the object as inappropriate, but more importantly, as something that is done despite some degree of rational acknowledgement that the object is “merely” an object. The account of fetishistic reification is roughly, “we create things, and then, because we don’t understand how we did it, we end up treating our own creations as if they had power over us” (Graeber, 2005, p. 411). Žižek, however, analyses the “fetishist misperception” (Žižek, 1997, p. 101) as a *double* reification: whereas we can easily position as foolish (especially when it is another’s foolishness) the veneration of an object so that the social, cultural and interpersonal relationships it symbolises are imagined to be literally embodied *in* the object, “an even more tricky ‘fetishist reification’ is at work when we (mis)perceive the situation as simply involving ‘relations between people’, and fail to take into account the invisible symbolic structure which regulates these relations” (Žižek, 1997, p. 101). First—like subjects obeying a king and forgetting that it is precisely their obedience that *makes* him king—we misperceive a material thing as containing within itself the social relationships it symbolically represents. But secondly, and more subtly, we misperceive these “social relationships” as some other objective realm that *can* be “misperceived”: what Žižek (1997) calls the “bizarre category of the objectively subjective”: what the fetish objectivizes is ‘my true belief’, the way things ‘truly seem to me’, although I never actually experience them in this way” (p. 120). In this way we can “know” that money has no special, magical powers beyond what we endow it

with: and yet, by our veneration of it, demonstrate that this is a fetishistic “knowledge”; we have at our disposal all the *logical* explanations of what is going on, yet our behaviour seems grounded more in our *mythical* understanding than the accounts we give in logical terms, because our talk of the symbolic order’s arbitrariness never translates into the behaviour we might expect if we really experienced it that way. In our readings of texts—any texts—a *textual fetishism* can be constituted as an analogous double misperception in our practices of reading.

The Genesis account can be a textual fetish in this sense, if we imagine that having announced the death of God (Nietzsche, 1882/2009), we are *no longer* fetishising the Bible as a sacred or magical thing—an idol—and can rationally discuss the social relationships that are signified in the text. As with other texts, the widely proclaimed “death of the author” (Barthes, 1968/1988) frees us—in this textually fetishistic account—to arrive at a reading that reveals or exposes the social relationships embodied “in” the text. Yet, this is Žižek’s “objectively subjective” (Žižek, 1997, p. 120) at work: what do we imagine is “in” the text at all? The text is an object in the world, like a bird’s feather, a drop of rain or a bar of soap: what we *do* with the object is what constitutes its meaning. There is nothing *inside* the text to be taken out of it: what Socrates “really meant” does not determine our reading of Plato, any more than what Plato “really meant” determines our reading of Nietzsche, or what Nietzsche “really meant” determines our reading of Butler.

Thus, for social science to scrupulously *avoid* discussing what is arguably still the most influential text in our culture is somewhat suspicious. Perhaps, as the bourgeois subject “believes” rationally that “money is just a kind of voucher” (Žižek, 1997, p. 120) and yet demonstrates through emotional and other acts that it really does appear “as a magical object endowed with special powers” (p. 120), the Bible is being similarly fetishised. A religious community treats it not as a text that they use in particular ways, but as a kind of magical object that “contains” a certain truth. A rational scientific community *claims* to know this—argues explicitly that the text was only written by men and so on—and yet, by dismissing its contents as the truths of these primitive superstitious authors, enacts the *same* fetishism of the meaning “in”

the text, only now believing that not God, but some primitive superstitious man has placed his magic in the book. Perhaps logocentrism can be likened to a fetishism of the word: a forgetting that words on a page are—like plates on a table or lilies on a pond—material objects that we relate to as part of our relationships with each other; their magic is only what we do with them.

In the introduction to his chapter on fetishism, Žižek (1997) writes about “the negative link between visibility and movement” (p. 87), or the inverse relationship (Heisenberg’s 1928/1930 “uncertainty principle” again) between how quickly something is moving and how well we are able to see it. “In terms of its original phenomenological status, movement equals blindness; it blurs the contours of what we perceive: in order for us to perceive the object clearly, it must be frozen, immobilized—*immobility makes a thing visible* [italics added]” (Žižek, 1997, p. 87). This can be read in the context of the ocularcentric bias in objectivist modernity—the equivalence of “*Discipline and Punish*” and “*Surveiller et Punir*”¹¹⁵—as a way of relating textual fetishism to *control*. The lively person is much more difficult to control than the individual we have fixed in place by means of a prison or some other form of physical violence. Similarly, the living meaning of a text—the meaning produced from it by people who are less constrained by the effects of textual fetishism—is much more difficult to control than the meaning that has been fixed in place by the authority of metanarrative or some other form of epistemological violence. Ironically, there is a sense in which this dynamic of subordination through symbolic stasis is acknowledged in the very text that is so often accused of inspiring literalism: the ethics that Levinas founds upon the *unknowable* irreducibly “Other” face of the other that one encounters socially, is—as Derrida points out in the quotation that heads this section (“The face of God disappears forever in showing itself”, Derrida, 1967/2001, p. 135)—derived from the Biblical (or rather Talmudic) account in which the importance of God’s remaining “hidden” is emphasised repeatedly. Whereas the traditional Judaeo-Christian God is far from being an “empty signifier” (He is very obviously male), nevertheless both the Christian (Taylor, 1990) and Buddhist (Foshay, 1994) traditions of *via negativa*—the refusal to produce an account of what God or

115 *Surveiller et Punir* is the original title of Foucault’s (1975/1995) text: *Surveiller* means roughly to “supervise”, which suggests ocularcentrism in both the French (with *surveiller* related to surveillance) and the English translation (super-*vis*e being literally to over-see).

Truth *is* but only to continually produce accounts of what it is *not*—have often been discussed in relation to Derrida’s writings (Foshay, 1994 ; Taylor, 1990), and can be constituted as early efforts to avoid the violence of claiming to *know* the contents of a “master signifier” of such totalising significance.

Yack (1999) argues for a similar approach in relation to social justice. Rather than establish a positive conception of “justice” and then work to police it, he suggests “injustice as a *via negativa*” (p. 1106), in part because “when theorists of justice treat injustice as nothing but the violation of justice they are ... attempting to train us to treat as unjust only those actions that harm the good of the community as they reconstruct it” (p. 1115). This is, of course, congruent with the approach of the present thesis, seeking as it does to define truth in terms of the violence that it is *not*, rather than to circumscribe a positive account of justice that truth is to uphold. That the representational account of truth *does* suggest a positive “accuracy” in relation to an objective reality places a degree of control over all truth-effects in the hands of the group who have the greatest control over the “objective reality” in which truth is said to be grounded.

As ancient and ubiquitous terms with deeply entrenched meanings, “good and evil” will probably resist their dislodgement. Being able to account for their effects and to engage with texts without fearing and/or fetishising them are related practices, inasmuch as a consistent non-violence must “remember itself” continually as a social interaction, and not forget itself by seeking a knowledge that is said to be contained “within” a text; whether that text be a book, some other part of the environment, or “the environment” as a whole.

Ethics would not be based upon the recognition of the other, which is always self-recognition.

Ethics would begin with the recognition that the other is not an object of cognition or of comprehension, but precisely that which exceeds my grasp and powers.

Simon Critchley¹¹⁶

Veritas nos liberabit

If we begin with the assumption that violence should be minimised, then engaging with contemporary social theory—in which accounts of the social production of culturally and historically specific regimes of truth constitute “truth” itself as vulnerable to violence and as a possible site of its enactment—raises crucial questions around the relationships between violence in a community and the production of theoretical accounts of that violence. Discussing some of the ways that violence can act upon and by means of theory can build reflexive accounts of reflexive interactions between violence and theories of violence, so that we do not presume to describe it from an impossible objective distance. In this context of reflexive interaction between a social science that aims for truth and a violence that aims to reproduce the conditions of its own possibility, contemporary theories of language enable the production of an ethical account of truth; a “Gandhian” account in which truth and non-violence are the inseparable faces of a single theoretical object.

In this context, the work of Judith Butler offers to psychological theory a valuable set of theoretical resources that attend explicitly to the relationships between violence, language and subjectivity. Butler writes of a complex intertextual intersubjectivity in which our speech and writing are not only means by which we act upon the actions and subjective experiences of others, but are also means by which we enact our own subjectivities, speaking or writing ourselves into being at each moment as we engage with the discourses that embody and enact our social and political relationships. “We” do not exist independently of the text that we produce: we are the text, inasmuch as it produces us simultaneously as it produces the positions of the others we address with

116 Critchley, 1999, p. 14

it. Butler informs me that my textual agency involves an intensely ethical encounter with you, who are called into being in particular ways by the shared meanings that the text brings into play.

Taking up Butler's theory as a practice, and attempting to trace the action of violence in the discourses, institutions and practices that surround and inform our prisons, a jarring inconsistency takes shape in this encounter between her refined sensitivity to violence and the gratuitous violence of our "justice" system and its epistemological and other discursive supports. Even to speak of "non-violence" in the texts of a rational, empirical psychology can seem as unscientific as, for example, talk of spirituality, mythology, or a truth beyond facts. To claim a scientific truth, psychology must be careful to avoid mentioning Psyche as a metaphor of the *soul*, with all the potential such mention has for reminding us that this is the science of human beings.

How can we "really listen" to the voices of others, we might ask, if the listening itself is vulnerable to the effects of what it hears? Doesn't this involve a vulnerability in which to "really listen" to the voice of one who claims to *really know* could, at any moment, harm one's ability to hear other voices? Isn't this trusting vulnerability precisely the kind of danger that knowledge of the other is supposed to avert, by making the other known, predictable; no longer really "other" at all? Yet, to what extent could this bleak account of dangerous others and violent science be precisely the account that is *produced by* the violence it constitutes as such: perhaps not explicitly, but implicitly, unconsciously, or mythically, in texts written in concrete and razor wire, the raped bodies of children, the snarl of a "fuck the world" tattoo inscribed visibly on the body of the subject whose identity already bears the inverted form of the inscription? If psychological texts are technologies through which violence reproduces itself, how can we read them without answering their call to construct our account and experience of the world in their terms? Can the technological power of psychology be turned upon itself; not upon Psyche, but upon the positive, *present* psy-discourse that stands in her place? Have we assumed that the god of reason's asking us to *know ourselves* was also a self-serving request for us to submit to *his* practices of knowing, when all along he was suggesting to us the very

paradox that *undoes* reason: the vulnerability of knowledge itself to the voice of the other?

Perhaps to ask such questions—involving stories of gods and ancestors—is to invoke a grand narrative that gathers together “The West” as if it were one vast Judaeo-Hellenic organism, imposing a metanarrative violence upon the multiplicity of little questions and little truths that we struggle to voice beneath the trumpeting of such grandiose philosophising. And yet, if we ask “big questions” paralogically—acknowledging them explicitly as local and specific linguistic engagements with *no possibility* of hegemonic truth (inasmuch as truth is non-violent and hegemony is violent)—might their being voiced function as the explicit acknowledgement we need in order to attend to the effects of the implicit, even mythological narratives that inform so much of our practice: maybe nothing keeps a myth alive so effectively as its being banished from the respectable discourses of science?

In this context, we might theorise a logocentrism ordering Western thought by inscribing—through the Christian *Logos* or Word of God—a Jewish experience of terrible suffering upon the master signifier of Truth in rational Greek thought, so that everything we know hangs upon the truth of innocence tortured; and in the same moment, acknowledge the potential for terror in treating such a theory as though its truth extended any further than its effects upon the reader or the hearer, and reminding ourselves that to theorise a bleak and violent world can be to construct such a world. Here, paralogy suggests a kind of sacrilege: a willingness to call the most sacred truths into question, and ask why they are sacred. If a sacred truth is not a violent truth, perhaps it may be better protected by allowing it to be articulated in whatever loving form the context invites, than by defending one fetishised account of it, as though the theoretical object were the truth itself. Could paralogy offer us a way to treat myth carefully, attending to the effects of its truths?

Butler's careful writing practice and her Levinasian ethics—her privileging the encounter with a radically unknown Other as a source of meaning—might, perhaps, provide psychology with resources to transform the discursive technologies of the rational empiricist tradition into a therapeutic art: not only a way towards healing broken hearts, but a way towards a reflexive healing of a Western *wisdom* tradition that seems everywhere to be condemning itself for its own violence. Is it possible to theorise this epistemological violence—to write about it, speak about it, and make it explicit—without at the same time evilifying the communities and persons in and through which this violence has been enacted?

If we want to minimise violence, I think we can answer *yes*, and seek to honour our ancestors even as we deconstruct their truths to make new ones: deconstruction is not destruction, and transforming our textual practice is not identical to dismantling the scientific institutions our forefathers established. If “we” are theorists informed by a Western psychological tradition, a non-violent engagement with this tradition—a respectful engagement—may be a critically important gesture of non-violence towards the others within ourselves; a gesture upon which the possibility of non-violent encounter with the Other may depend.

If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other.

Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power.

Emmanuel Levinas¹¹⁷

Knowing facts versus knowing people

If hearing another's voice involves a response to a subject whose voice matters in a way that the noises of an object do not, can the question of whether or not the speaker has been heard be determined without the involvement of the speaker? Even if the speaker is involved in validating the dialogue, under what conditions can such involvement be treated as non-violent? How important might the *purposes* of a dialogue be to the *meanings* of the interactions that take place as part of it?

What are we *doing* when we know in advance of meeting someone that she or he may exhibit this or that kind of behaviour, and so fall into this or that category of persons? Mainstream psychology has sometimes attended to this objectifying scientific gaze; for example, Rosenhan's (1973) classic study, *On Being Sane in Insane Places*, in which the researchers' having been diagnosed as "schizophrenic" seemed to be sufficient for their clinicians to reduce their activities to "behaviours" with pre-determined meanings and to exclude them from practices of recognition as social subjects:

The encounter frequently took the following bizarre form: (pseudopatient) "Pardon me, Dr. X. Could you tell me when I am eligible for grounds privileges?" (physician) "Good morning, Dave. How are you today?" (moves off without waiting for a response).

Yet the scientific Western gaze is not necessarily, let alone entirely malevolent. The animal in the researcher's laboratory may enjoy some degree of respect, if the researcher is devoted to studying the animal because she or he has a genuine interest in or even an affection for it: scientists may study animals (or rocks, or sound waves,

117 Levinas, 1947/1989, p. 51

or whatever) because they experience these things as wonderful. We may hope to achieve success as scientists by producing some new account of the object of study that makes its wonder more accessible to others, and this perhaps can represent a kind of continual striving—or at least hoping—for the kind of difference that *doesn't* fit with established theory: for the kinds of developments of radical new practices and forms of relationship that have been constituted as “new paradigm” discoveries. The fascinated gaze of the objectivist psychological researcher who wants to know more about people because she or he thinks that people are wonderful may not be a malevolent gaze. Far more problematic is the calculating gaze of the slave-trader whose “fascination” with human livestock is *explicitly* grounded in the desire to use them in particular already-determined ways. In both cases the object of study may be “listened to” in the limited sense that her or his words may be taken up as resources in the projects in which they are objectified: but the chances of the Other’s story being *heard*—in the sense of its being given the legitimacy necessary to contribute to the governance of the project in which its story is produced—seems far smaller if the Other is not merely an object (with an object’s potential to inspire wonder; even to become a subject) but a *commodity* the use value of which has been established elsewhere.

If an animal in a laboratory appears to be demonstrating the behavioural equivalent of “I hate it in here: please let me out,” it seems rather easier to imagine the fascinated researcher letting the animal go, than the tester of cosmetics or other researcher whose interests are explicitly commercial. The objectivist psychological researcher whose interest in “finding out about” people is grounded in a sense of wonder may inadvertently reproduce various forms of epistemological violence—as we all are likely to do, participating in our language communities whose languages were established in violent traditions—but the sense of wonder is a chink in the metanarrative armour: an acknowledgement of the mystery that a psyche must be said to represent if it is to retain the possibility of a voice, rather than to be reduced to the comprehensively known object of a calculating, instrumental human science.

**I'm not sure non-violence saves the purity of anyone's soul,
but it does avow a social bond, even when it is violently assaulted from elsewhere.**

Judith Butler¹¹⁸

*FAQ*¹¹⁹

Q: Doesn't critique enact its own epistemological violence upon the readily identifiable practitioners of the violence being critiqued?

A: Butler's comment above is important in this context, because the violence enacted by social critique is often a *moral* violence, positioning another group as morally inferior to the critical group. Butler's comment can remind us to focus on what is being *done* with the critique, rather than to reify the identities performed through this doing. Gandhi's non-violent resistance in the face of brutal state repression may have been a performance of a morally "pure" identity; but he no more "had" such an identity in an objective sense than the soldier firing into the crowd "was" a violent oppressor. Arguably this deliberate performance of a resolutely non-violent identity was an important part of the action that worked to "avow a social bond" (Butler, 2009, p. 118), but it is this kind of *action* and its effects for which we can strive, regardless of moral posturing. In other words, we can work towards untangling violent critique (e.g. a criticism of mainstream psychological practice that positions a clinical psychologist as a pitiable dupe of the state or an unprincipled hired gun for the "norm police") from non-violent critique (e.g. a criticism of mainstream psychological practice that shows how certain discourses can work to implicate the most intelligent, highly principled and compassionate clinical psychologists in the reproduction of oppressive norms) by attending carefully to how our criticism of a practice and our practice of criticism positions or constructs the persons involved.

118 Butler (2009, p. 178).

119 FAQ ("Frequently Asked Questions"; sometimes pronounced similarly to "facts", as in "check the FAQ's") sections are de rigueur for websites, but not so common in doctoral theses. I am presenting this last section as a FAQ list partly because it really is a response to readers' feedback; but also because I want to resist tying things up as a "conclusion" or reducing them to a "summary", while still addressing the need to recall key issues developed in the thesis, and describe their usefulness for further research and other psychological practices. As with other FAQ sections that appear simultaneously with the texts at which the questions are directed, the "Frequently" in FAQ should not be taken too seriously!

Another way to reduce the violence of critique is to avoid constructing the issues in terms of absolutes. Though I have often deployed the convenient contrast between “violence” and “non-violence” (e.g. the constitution of “non-violent critique” in the previous paragraph), I have tried to frame this project in terms of violence *minimisation* rather than a binary choice between clearly “violent” and “non-violent” alternatives. This does not reflect an objective situation along the lines of “a certain amount of violence runs through all social action; we can only aim to reduce it, never eliminate it”. On the contrary, the aim of *eliminating* violence completely would be commendable *except* for its potential to open up (rhetorically) space for assumptions, implications or claims of its having actually been achieved (“this practice is non-violent!”), effectively reducing vigilance against subtle still-present forms of violence.

This aim of continually optimising our practices by reducing their violence suggests that we might avoid producing accounts of “perfect” non-violence; however, we can also resist arguments of the form “violence is inevitable”. Like many of the naturalising arguments that Butler challenges, these can work to discourage transformative action by constituting it as a futile struggle against natural laws or conditions. As in so many debates, awareness of the present “in the moment” activity of language can be useful here; a kind of waking up from the traditional game in which we “do objectivity” by writing as though we are studying objective states of affairs and then conveying the truth of these states in our words. “Critique” has no objective nature against which we can determine whether or not it is “necessarily” violent. To constitute it as such is to discourage the development of non-violent critique, whereas to constitute it as having the potential to avoid violating people is consistent with our aiming to *minimise* this violence.

Q: Doesn't much of this theory demonstrate a rather extreme and dangerous relativism?

A: Even the staunchest supporters of objectivism speak and write in order to achieve particular ends. Even supporters of the most extreme relativism potentially can be

called upon to account for these ends and the language practices we choose to employ. The difference here between objectivist discourse and relativist discourse—or at least, the discourse employed in the present thesis that might be constituted by critics as “relativist”—is that the relativist discourse reflexively *acknowledges* itself as having been deliberately assembled in order to achieve social ends: objectivist discourse *denies* this by claiming a connection with something higher than the person using it (be it God, Reality, or some religious or scientific ritual that reveals the truth about God or Reality) and thereby makes the social effects of the claim irrelevant to its already-established truth status. One *takes responsibility* for a truth claim by admitting that it has been put together deliberately in order to achieve something: one *denies responsibility* for it by claiming merely to be “reporting the facts” in a conscientiously disinterested way. This conscientious “reporting” is quite explicitly championed in positivist research traditions as the replacement of subjectivity with objectivity; yet rhetorically in terms of accountability this is to replace “I did it because I desired these outcomes of my doing it” with “I was just following orders”.

The insinuation that relativism is like nihilism capitalises on the fact that both relativism and nihilism are likely to reject objectivist moral arguments (which makes them “similar” roughly as chalk and cheese are similar for both being solids). Nihilism can be supported by objectivism: the objectivist nihilist can claim “there is no God, no purpose, no value” as a starkly realistic account of “how things really are” and can continually refute objectivist rebuttals as failures to perceive or to accept this awful reality. The relativist nihilist, however—if his or her “relativism” treats language use as contextual performative action rather than as representation of objective states of affairs—is acknowledging that nihilism, like any other set of claims, is informed by particular desires and constructed to achieve particular ends, and can be held to account for these.

Our pervasive dominant metaphor of language use as representation lends credence to the traditional criticisms of “relativism” as irresponsibility: if some statements are accurate reflections of objective reality while others are not, then it is socially irresponsible to call *all* truth claims into question, as this misguided attempt to “level

the playing field” deprives the more accurate truths of the higher ground they rightly deserve. However, if the making of a truth claim is always a social action with the involvement of human agency, then to constitute a truth claim as having arrived intact from a world beyond human subjectivity, without being “corrupted” by this subjectivity, is a rhetorical denial of responsibility; not a special revelation. In this case, on the contrary, it is socially irresponsible to exempt certain claims from rigorous critical scrutiny by constituting them as superior to ordinary claims, by virtue of these “higher” claims having been established by the proper authorities, or the procedures approved by these authorities.

Q: What is novel about the theory developed in this thesis, and how is it relevant and useful to psychology?

A: I have argued for non-violence as a *truth* criterion, and that its being treated as an epistemological issue—as a criterion of truth, rather than an ethical issue distinct from the issue of truth—can inform a coherent approach to validation in a constructionist research context, or any other research context that acknowledges language as social action rather than as representation of objective circumstances. Traditional accounts of validity tend to treat ethical issues separately from the issue of a claim’s “truth” which is constituted (often implicitly) as the extent to which the language of the claim accurately represents a state of affairs that is objectively “so”. Through challenging the ability of a truth claim to mirror reality in this way, the performative effects of language can be foregrounded, which in turn enables us to untangle the extent to which positivist truth claims empower us to manipulate the objects they involve from the extent to which they harm people. Writing “truth” as “non-violence” articulates a very strong anti-violence position in social research because it constitutes violent claims as *false* claims, rather than as claims that can be true irrespective of their violence.

In the course of developing theoretical resources for justifying and practising this anti-violence approach to validation, I have introduced a framework for writing about and

problematizing reflexive epistemological violence, in terms of the dialogical relationships between violence in the accounts that theorists produce and the various forms of violence that can impact upon us as theorists. Theorising these relationships required texts that could enable us to document activities of violence that are not widely discussed in popular literature—so that we could address the violence embodied in forms of personal subjectivity, for example—and Judith Butler’s work was identified and discussed as a useful body of theory in this respect, because of its careful and consistent attention to violence, and its rigorous engagement with contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship. When psychology engages with Butler’s theory at all, it is typically addressing gender: the present thesis has demonstrated that her work can be useful for addressing epistemological violence, not only as it operates through accounts of gender in psychological texts, but also through accounts of offenders in the forensic domain, through individualistic accounts of agency throughout the discipline, and potentially through many other violent accounts in other traditional areas of psychological research.

All of this can be useful for psychology. In the most straightforward practical terms, and with minimal theoretical justification, simply attending to the issue of epistemological violence in psychological theory can highlight potentially useful avenues of intervention and inquiry. Disrespectful language in forensic texts was presented as an example of a problem that is foregrounded by non-violent epistemology, and yet the avoidance of which can be justified in terms of already existing best practice guidelines. At a more explicitly theoretical level, the constitution of agency in psychological explanations for action was also discussed in terms of the social effects of various accounts. Treating epistemological violence as falsehood becomes more important here, because our psychological accounts of agency are implicated in so many powerful and firmly established social and political traditions that our challenge to the violence of these hegemonic institutions requires engagement with the rhetorical power of terms like “truth”, rather than merely challenging the terminology used to discuss a particular unpopular group.

This theory is also relevant to psychology as an academic discipline through its challenge to traditional assumptions about psychology's relationship to other sciences. With non-violence as a *truth* criterion, the traditional conceptualisation of psychology as a science that must conform to the accounts of the physical sciences is called into question. When the truth of a claim depends on its effects upon the people it concerns, there are many contexts in which the traditional positivistic approach to the assessment of truth—assessing the extent to which a claim empowers us to predict and control the objects it involves—may indeed produce truth in its newer sense, incorporating non-violence. However, validation can no longer be achieved by impressing or terrorising onlookers with displays of power (demonstrating “science” with a spectacle like the detonation of a nuclear weapon) as though a claim's endowing us with greater technical power established its truth. Our endorsement of the claim, like our endorsement of any other action, has social implications. So, it becomes a matter for *social* sciences to establish in collaboration with affected communities—and in collaboration with rather than in deference to the physical sciences—by researching the effects of the claim. If truth is not consciously and deliberately produced in a framework that prioritises its historical effects over its decontextualised material effects, our “truths” may become increasingly socially and ecologically disastrous, because their violence, unchecked, can feed back reflexively through economic and other social processes into increasingly violent regimes of truth production.

Q: What are some areas of psychological theory development for which the resources developed in this thesis might be particularly useful?

A: Some of these areas are already explicitly addressed in the thesis: most obviously the areas of epistemological and methodological theory, but also theories of subjectivity and agency, and any research around groups who are subjected to epistemological terrorism. The theory can also support a wide range of anti-violence projects by enabling new ways of identifying and critiquing violence. Another interesting possibility that I did not have time to address adequately in this thesis but which overlaps with several of its recurring concerns is the theorising of *emotion* in

relation to epistemological violence. The idea of anger as an instrumental performance to control other people is already familiar in family violence literature and has been discussed in this thesis. If fear, unhappiness, and other “negative” emotions are similarly theorised as performances, what are some of the implications of such theory? For example, does theorising unhappiness as an attempt to elicit rescue from others collude with violence by pressuring people into “doing happiness” in conditions of oppression; or does it encourage greater awareness of those conditions by identifying “doing unhappiness” as an ineffective technique for addressing them? What makes an “emotional” performance (e.g. “doing anger”) different from a “rational” performance (e.g. “doing critique”)? Does constituting a performance as an “emotion” reduce one’s accountability for the performance? What are the implications of these debates for people assigned to the traditionally “more emotional” or “less emotional” genders? What are their implications for the host of psychological disorders in which emotional regulation deviates from one or more established norms? The sensitive, personal aspects of research around “emotion” suggest a methodology careful to minimise violence in all aspects of the research, including the ways emotion is constituted in theoretical accounts. So, the theory developed in the present text could contribute to research around emotion as social performance, both by contributing theoretical resources out of which to build such accounts, and also by informing a reflexive theorising that attends carefully to the effects of these accounts.

It could also be useful to develop a detailed and nuanced account—consistent with contemporary social theory—of the truth tradition I have discussed in this text as “positivist” truth, theorising relationships between the principles of empiricist research, the facts produced through this research, and the masteries of environments to which such facts contribute. The particular fields of mastery with the greatest political importance seem continually to be shifting from gross control over bodies (e.g. through the development of advanced weaponry) to fine control over subjectivity (e.g. through the proliferation of psychological disorders and treatments), so however dubious its scientific status may seem to physical scientists, empiricist psychology is a very important part of the empiricist scientific tradition. Psychology is a politically influential discipline, as we are called upon to order the minutiae of daily life so that they produce the normal subjects demanded by our economies and

dominant social institutions. As we produce accounts of these phenomena, we can prioritise the production of truth—which is, at the very least, non-violence—over the production of more and more effective technologies of control. This untangling of truth from power and control is increasingly important as we turn these technologies upon ourselves.

Appendix

Table 1, below, is a verbatim reproduction of a table from New Zealand's *Code of Ethics* (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002, pp. 5-16) for psychologists, with the addition of a fourth column to the three that the Code of Ethics Review Group has already provided. In addition to the "Value Statements", "Practice Implications" and "Comments" columns, I have appended a "Forensic Implications" column with my own comments. I have only modified the original (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002, pp. 5-16) table by deleting some of the less relevant rows (e.g. those pertaining to the treatment of animals) and appending the extra fourth column.

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
1.1. General Respect Psychologists respect the dignity of persons and peoples with whom they relate in their work and are sensitive to their welfare, and rights.	1.1.2. Psychologists recognise the basic rights of individuals to food, clothing, shelter and freedom from intentionally inflicted pain.	In any circumstances where such basic rights may be compromised, as part of a psychological practice, psychologists should consult with senior colleagues before proceeding. Ultimately, they must be able to justify the decision made.	Legal punishment can violate these rights if it intentionally inflicts suffering with no demonstrable therapeutic benefit. In this context, conforming treatment programmes to a punitive imprisonment context can be ethically problematic.
	1.1.3. Psychologists seek to obtain as full and active participation as possible from all persons in decisions that affect them.	This applies to research participants, clients, students, supervisees, employees, colleagues, employers, third party payers, and the general public, as appropriate.	Assuming prisoners count as "persons", psychologists are confronted with a very difficult task in determining the extent to which a prisoner's "participation" in mandatory treatment programmes is "full and active", given the potential consequences of refusing treatment.
	1.1.4. Psychologists use language that conveys respect for the dignity of others in all written or verbal communication.	This includes avoidance of demeaning descriptions or comments.	The issue of whether descriptions like "rapist", "murderer", or even "offender" convey "respect for the dignity of others" is discussed in <i>Legal and Criminal Violence</i> .
1.2. Non-Discrimination Psychologists recognise that all persons and peoples are entitled to equal benefits from the contributions of psychology.	1.2.1. Psychologists seek to prevent or correct practices that are unjustly discriminatory.		Psychologists "seek to prevent or correct" the practice of imprisonment, given that it is "unjustly discriminatory" against e.g. Māori.

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
	1.2.3. Psychologists seek to avoid, or refuse to participate in, practises that are disrespectful of the cultural, legal, civil, or moral rights of others and/or practises with any form of discrimination.		See above. Individualistic psychological theories of criminal behaviour are also ethically problematic, inasmuch as they can pathologise specific populations (e.g. by positioning Māori as disordered rather than disadvantaged). Psychologists should be just as sensitive to discriminatory practices in forensic contexts as in other contexts.
1.3. Relations between Maori and Non-Maori Psychologists practising in New Zealand recognise that the Treaty of Waitangi sets out the basis of respect between Maori and non-Maori in this country.	1.3.1. Psychologists, individually and collectively, seek to be informed about the meaning and implications of the Treaty of Waitangi for their work. This includes an understanding of the principles of protection, participation and partnership with Maori.	Te Tiriti o Waitangi is given priority as the text that was offered to and signed by the majority of the Maori signatories.	Once again, the treatment of disproportionate numbers of Māori in prison is problematic in this context. Our treatment of Māori once they have been convicted of crimes not only violates our Code of Ethics, but also New Zealand's foundational legal charter, inasmuch as it reproduces an international pattern of subjecting indigenous peoples to harsh "treatment" that does not serve their best interests.
	1.3.2. Both non-Maori and Maori psychologists who work with Maori seek advice and undertake training in the appropriate way to show respect for the dignity and needs of Maori in their practice.		
1.5. Children / Young Persons Psychologists recognise a responsibility to promote the welfare and best interests of children / young persons.	1.5.1. In any work where children / young persons are involved, psychologists recognise that the interests and welfare of children / young persons are paramount, and therefore given precedence over other considerations.	Such an implication is spelled out in relevant legislation.	The extent to which it is in the "interests" of young persons to submit to groups in the community that support their own interests with violence is debatable, even in the context of effective punitive interventions. Ineffective punitive interventions (e.g. "boot camps") are more clearly unethical, and violate principle 1.5, along with principles 1.1, 1.2 and

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
<p>1.7. Informed Consent Psychologists recognise that obtaining informed consent from those with whom they are working is a fundamental expression of respect for the dignity of persons and peoples.</p>	<p>1.7.1. Psychologists accept the obligation to obtain or negotiate informed consent in a manner consistent with the principles of this code.</p>	<p>Some individuals or groups have less power than others, permanently or temporarily, placing them in a vulnerable position and increasing the responsibility of psychologists to protect and promote their rights. In exercising this responsibility psychologists seek to collaborate with the persons involved in devising and implementing appropriate safeguards.</p>	<p>1.3. Ethical practice in such contexts therefore depends upon careful attention to psychologists' roles and responsibilities in relation to the young people and the ineffective aversive treatment contexts.</p> <p>Advocacy can take place not only in relation to the specific persons and/or circumstances threatening a particular child's welfare, but also in relation to psychological theory threatening large numbers of children. Theory that positions disadvantaged children as "bad" or as an external threat to "society" threatens their welfare and best interests, and so the ethical requirement that psychologists advocate for young people can extend to practices of theoretical debate.</p> <p>Prisoners are among those who "have less power than others, permanently or temporarily, placing them in a vulnerable position and increasing the responsibility of psychologists to protect and promote their rights". Collaboration with the prisoner population is therefore a requirement of the Code of Ethics, yet in popular discourse collaboration with the prisoner population suggests <i>unethical</i> conduct. Ethical practice is relatively easy when the Code of Ethics happens to accord with popular sentiment; when it does not, ethical practice may require a degree of courage. As in other contexts, psychologists working <i>with</i> a relatively powerless population <i>for</i> a relatively powerful one must attend carefully to ethical principles.</p>
	<p>1.5.2. Psychologists advocate for a child / young person who is directly their client, or part of a client group, in situations where that child's / young person's welfare and best interests are threatened.</p>	<p>Psychologists should discriminate between the needs and the wishes of children / young persons: wishes should be heard, understood and taken into account, within the context of their needs, general welfare, and wider social environment.</p>	

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
	1.7.4. Psychologists ensure that informed consent is the result of an agreement to work collaboratively and they take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under conditions of coercion or undue pressure from them.	It is recognised that in certain work settings, psychologists are required to conduct assessments where consent may not be readily forthcoming (e.g., child protection work, forensic work).	The recognition of such practical requirements in no way weakens the requirement that psychologists practise ethically: the requirement that psychologists “work collaboratively and...take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent is not given under conditions of coercion” would be meaningless if psychologists simply proceeded as usual in situations where “consent may not be readily forthcoming”. A decision to practise in the absence of consent entails a special obligation to practise with extreme care that the non-consensual interventions are genuinely therapeutic; at the very least, they should not do harm.
	1.7.9. Psychologists accept that there may be some exceptions and/or limitations to a person or persons giving explicit informed consent. The major exceptions/limitations are:	In such circumstances informed consent procedures are carried out with those who are legally authorised to represent their interests (e.g., parents of children, legal guardians of mentally incapacitated persons).	Again the constitution of “legal requirement” as an “exception / limitation” to the requirement of obtaining informed consent is not a license for psychologists to give priority to the demands of power over the demands of ethical practice. Rather it is an acknowledgement that there are contexts (e.g. forensic settings) in which it may not be possible to obtain informed consent, and in such contexts a psychologist’s failing to obtain such consent does not <i>in itself</i> constitute unethical practice. As with diminished capacity and so on, the <i>principle</i> maintains its priority and it is practical limitations that are being acknowledged: where such limitations can be addressed, they should be addressed.
	(a) Diminished capacity: Where a person is judged incapable of giving explicit informed consent themselves.	As in some treatments or assessments contracted by the Courts (e.g., those carried out under criminal, mental health or family law). Psychologists inform the client of these limits at the commencement of their work (see 1.6.4).	
	(b) Urgent need: Where a situation arises when it is impossible or impracticable to obtain informed consent in time to prevent harm or injury to the person, persons, family, whanau, community group or some other person.		
	(c) Legal requirement: Where a psychologist’s actions are mandated by law.		

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
<p>2.1 Promotion of Well-being Psychologists recognise that a basic ethical expectation of our discipline is that its activities will benefit members of society or, at the very least, do no harm.</p>	<p>2.1.1. Psychologists assess the potential harm and benefits involved in their actions, to predict the likelihood of their occurrence and proceed only if the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms. They endeavour to correct any harmful effects that have occurred because of their activities.</p> <p>2.1.2. Psychologists use the most respectful and effective interventions or strategies for those with whom they are working.</p> <p>2.1.3. Psychologists who conduct psychological assessments select appropriate procedures and instruments and are able to justify their use and interpretation.</p> <p>2.1.4. In reporting assessment findings and recommendations to clients, research participants and/or professionals, psychologists provide appropriate explanations of findings, interpretations and limitations. They endeavour to see these are not misused.</p>	<p>This requires an understanding of cultural needs and acknowledgement that such information is part of all aspects of psychologists' work.</p> <p>This involves, but is not limited to, selection of procedures and instruments with established scientific status, currency and cultural appropriateness and which the psychologist is trained to administer. Any reservations concerning the validity or reliability of an assessment procedure, arising from its administration, norms, or domain-reference, should be made explicit in any report.</p> <p>(a) Uninterpreted data from assessments is not normally released to persons who are not specifically trained in the use and interpretation of the instruments concerned. (b) In respect of children/young persons especially, it should be recognised that they have the capacity for considerable change through their development. Labels about their current level of skills or emotional maturity can stereotype them and impede their future capacity to mature. Caution should be exercised in using diagnostic labels.</p>	<p>Psychologists working in forensic settings are careful to untangle their support for therapeutic psychological interventions from support for counter-therapeutic prison conditions in which such interventions may be conducted.</p> <p>Where all available interventions or strategies are disrespectful or ineffective, psychologists develop respectful, effective interventions.</p> <p>Risk assessments that assign individual risk-of-offending scores to members of at-risk populations (e.g. Māori) are problematic in terms of our being "able to justify their use and interpretation". If psychological accounts of dangerous individuals do not explicitly attend to the social factors informing their "dangerousness", then such accounts invite racist interpretations and other harmful effects.</p> <p>See above: i.e. in this context the claim—often reported in media accounts—that an individual is a "high risk offender" is a claim about the individual's relationship to specific treatments or lack of treatments, specific economic and other social conditions into which the person will be released, including social conditions created by media accounts.</p>

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
	2.1.8. When it is clear that the client is not benefiting, a psychologist initiates a termination of the professional relationship.	Such termination of a professional relationship is, where possible, negotiated with the client. When appropriate help is given the client to find alternative sources of assistance.	Where numerous terms of imprisonment have failed to address an individual's offending behaviour there is a clear need for an effective alternative: psychologists' ethical responsibilities in relation to these circumstances are most evident in contexts of public education and policy development. It would be unethical for a psychologist to maintain an individual's need for psychological services (assessment, etc.) by supporting counter-therapeutic interventions that reproduce offending. On the other hand, it can be ethical for psychologists to continue doing their best to treat individuals in such counter-therapeutic contexts.
	2.1.9. In a professional relationship, psychologists do not foster dependence on the psychologist.	This applies to clients, supervisees, and students.	Government organisations (e.g. the Department of Corrections) can be "clients".
	2.1.11. Psychologists try to stop clearly harmful activities being carried out by another psychologist or another professional.	When these activities come to the attention of psychologists, the psychologists' actions may include: talking informally with the psychologist or member of another profession, formally recording concerns, obtaining objective information and, if possible, the assurance that the harm will discontinue and be corrected, reporting to the appropriate regulatory body, authority, and/or committee for action.	"Clearly harmful activities being carried out by another..professional" encompasses punitive forensic interventions. In relation <i>only</i> to their effects upon offending behaviour, they are perhaps "arguably harmful activities" rather than "clearly harmful activities", but the ethical requirement to avoid "harm" is not limited only to the issue of re-offending. Infliction of distress, disruption of positive or potentially positive relationships, exposure to prison violence and a host of other routine harms in forensic settings are all ethically problematic.

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
2.4 Vulnerability Psychologists especially provide responsible care to individuals and groups who may be disadvantaged and/or oppressed.	2.4.1. Psychologists recognise the vulnerability of some individuals, groups, or communities and take appropriate action in relation to this.	Psychologists recognise that special vulnerability may occur with political or social oppression, age, ethnic origin, ability to communicate, sensory impairments, economic standing and need for support from others.	A prisoner's ethnicity, socio-economic background and early exposure to serious domestic violence may make that person "vulnerable" in the terms of this principle, even <i>before</i> the individual's offending and/or imprisonment greatly increases his or her vulnerability to abuse and decreases his or her access to social supports.
	2.4.2. Psychologists recognise that vulnerability is increased by unfamiliar cultural settings, unfamiliar clinical settings, unfamiliar language, overwhelming numbers of staff, and/or lack of advocate support.	Psychologists should recognise the need for support people, advocates, aides and appliances, accessible surroundings and interpreters where indicated, when working with people with disabilities. (See also 1.4.1).	Courts and prisons are likely to involve, for first-time prisoners at least, "unfamiliar cultural settings, unfamiliar clinical settings, unfamiliar language, overwhelming numbers of staff, and/or lack of advocate support".
	2.4.3. Psychologists endeavour to put in place supports for individuals, groups, families or communities so that their vulnerabilities are lessened.		In forensic settings, "supports" consist of individuals or groups who are there <i>for</i> the prisoner: psychologists who "counsel" prisoners are very limited in terms of their ability to provide this kind of support, unless they are hired explicitly for this purpose, rather than to assess and treat the prisoner as required by the Department of Corrections. Nevertheless, if a psychologist's efforts to establish more effective supports are fruitless, the provision of some kind of counselling or other personal support may be the best way for a psychologist to attend to this ethical requirement.
	2.4.4. Where it is impossible to lessen vulnerabilities, psychologists should make allowances for this in their work with individuals, groups, families or communities.		See above.

Table 1 continued...

Value Statements	Practice Implications	Comments	Forensic Implications
	2.4.5. Psychologists should not use aversive strategies except as a last resort and after demonstrable efforts to identify other less intrusive alternatives have been made. Any use of aversive strategies should occur in the context of a positive intervention programme.	If possible, informed consent should be obtained (see 1.7). Ongoing evaluation and supervision should occur to ensure that the aversive strategies are still justifiable.	"Aversive strategies" applies to broad contexts of treatment as well as to specific intervention programmes or techniques.

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