

The Philosophical Discourse of the Enlightenment: Totalitarian Ethics or Relativist Politics?

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Abstract:

This paper examines the philosophical discourse of the Enlightenment as totalitarian and relativist. This simply means that the subject is a discussion of the way the poststructuralist/ postmodernist thinkers (J.F. Lyotard, M. Foucault, J. Deleuze, J. Derrida, [...]) write about the Enlightenment thought and modernism compared with the way the supporters of Enlightenment (Jürgen Habermas, Colin Davis, Immanuel Kant [...]) write about the poststructuralist intellectuals. “Totalitarian ethics” connotes the absolute, classical, logocentric, metaphysical and grand forms of knowledge. However, “relativist politics,” refers to the gesture of revising these absolutist ethics by adopting the aesthetics of difference and multiplicity. The assumption is that this discourse is regarded as authoritarian, absolutist and ineffectual since it abuses, betrays, and finally rejects the “other.” Accordingly, two fundamental questions crop up: What sense should be given to the “totalitarian ethics?” In what way can it be argued for the relativist politics of an absolutist discourse? To unmask these blind spots, first, the Enlightenment discourse needs to be addressed in order to discover its most “sublime and metaphysical ideals.” Significant consideration is given to Kant and Hegel. Second, the analysis is directed to show how the intellectual trajectory of the postmodern thought devalues, attacks and finally proves that these ethics are “intellectually empty and morally dangerous.” To justify this claim, careful attention is paid to J.F Lyotard, J. Derrida, G. Deleuze and M. Foucault. Crystallizing the missed connections between these ‘loving paradoxes: absolutism/relativism’ reveals the possible, striking and hidden overlaps. In line with the previous findings, the ultimate conclusion the paper draws is that the philosophical discourse of the Enlightenment is totalitarian and relativist as it represents an “unfinished project” of Enlightenment to borrow the term from J. Habermas.

Key Words: Enlightenment, postmodernity, philosophical discourse, relativism, totalitarianism

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1.1 Introduction:

This paper addresses the missed encounters between the poststructuralist intellectuals and the Enlightenment Supporters. What does one thought know about the other? In what way does one accuse the other? Before unmasking these blind spots let's first highlight this opposition by referring to two missed encounters. The first is traced by Davis (2004) as follows:

In the early 1980, it was proposed to hold a conference in the US to bring together Foucault and Habermas. Foucault died before arrangements for the Conference could be finalized, but the failure to stage an encounter between Habermasian critique and Foucauldian genealogy is perhaps not only due to the circumstantial reasons. Habermas and Foucault even differ in their accounts of how the conference came to be proposed and what was to be its subject. (p. 50)

The second, Davis, (2004), informs, is:

The dialogue between Habermas and Derrida is no more successful. In long foot notes in his books *Limited Inc.* and *Memoirs pour Paul de Man*, Derrida has expressed his anger at Habermas's misrepresentation of his views with unusual frankness (Derrida, 1990, p. 244-247). Habermas accuses Derrida of a “performative contradiction” because he uses the tools of subject-centred reason in order to convict it of being authoritarian (Habermas, 1987, p. 184). Derrida in turn finds a performative contradiction Habermas in that he purports to give a rational discussion of Derrida's views without any apparent effort to find out what they are or to understand them. (p. 50)

These passages from Davis's *After Poststructuralism* (2004) envision the tension that governs the introductory account of this issue. The word “tension” means the fundamental incompatibility between Jürgen Habermas (1929-), the defender of the Enlightenment thought, and Derrida, M-Foucault, (1926-1984) J. F. Lyotard (1924-1998), the supporters of the poststructuralist thought, upon the very project of the Enlightenment. In fact, there is, on the one hand, Jürgen Habermas who identifies the project of the Enlightenment as a process without a final point rather than a single identifiable event. Consequently, being similar to the human nature that is characterized by the “forward stepping,” the process of the Enlightenment remains an unfinished project, open-ended without a final destination. Habermas, (1987) suggests that this project is misrecognized, attacked, abandoned but finally and unexpectedly rediscovered. In other words, “The postmodernist thinkers are entrapped within the habits of thoughts they wanted to abandon” (p. 309). On the other hand, there is a powerful critique to the project of the Enlightenment as a grand narrative. Referring to the crisis of knowledge in the highly developed societies, Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida Launch a sharp attack against the terrorist, totalitarian and logocentric Western philosophical tradition.

The possible reconciliation between them seems daunting. Habermas's repudiation of Poststructuralism and Derrida's and Foucault's great doubt about totalitarian projects “avoid genuine dialogue; and the meeting of minds; or at least the softening of opposition, which occurs

in Habermas's appreciation of Foucault's essay on what is Enlightenment turns out to be one more missed encounter" (Davis, 2004, p. 50). The opponents misread each other, and more strikingly, accuse each other of incompatible understanding of key terms (Davis, 2004, pp. 109-110). The absence of a common philosophical ground upon which they can meet and discuss their issues can only aggravate the assumption that their partial agreement about a few concepts is ironically based on false assumption.

1.2 Grand and Totalitarian Ethics of the Enlightenment:

1.2.1 J.F. Lyotard: *The Crisis of Knowledge*

Let's investigate the arguments of the poststructuralist intellectuals, and show how they are only used to debunk the classical grand authoritarian narratives of the Enlightenment. The point the researcher hopes to achieve is to prove the illegitimacy of the counter arguments of the Enlightenment supporters from a poststructuralist perspective. Lyotard deploys the crisis of knowledge in the highly developed societies which generates another crisis of ethics and politics. In this way, he asserts that the crisis of narratives fundamentally stems from the domination of the scientific discourse which might be regarded as the product of the Enlightenment/modernist thought. Examining the condition of knowledge in the postmodern context, Lyotard attacks the Enlightenment/modernist narratives with its totalitarian values, rationality, logic, reason throughout which the hero of knowledge works towards a good ethico-political end-universal peace. Lyotard, (2004b) suggests that the logic of the Enlightenment has already lost its own credibility and legitimacy:

The classical narrative function is losing its functions, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, perspective, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valences specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. (p. 124)

The technological transformations, according to Lyotard, can be expected only to have a considerable impact on knowledge since there is an emergence of a new: informatics, visual image, new channels, computer language, and sophisticated machines. Following this, there will be suppliers of knowledge/ producers on the one hand and users of knowledge/ consumers on the other hand:

Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold; it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself; it loses its 'use-value. (Lyotard, 2004, p. 125)

Lyotard satirically undermines the Enlightenment promises of equality, freedom, science as vocation and politics as emancipation. He claims that the Enlightenment project promised utopian ideals to humanity but tragically introduced imperialistic and terrorist agendas. Referring to the trial of the king during the French Revolution, in December 1792, Lyotard (2004a) notices that the Enlightenment has already begun with a crime, the execution of the king, the execution of the word of God and the exclusion of the other:

When the head of Louis XVI was cut off in January 1793 in the place de la Révolution, God was the one whose word was cut off. The republic [...] can only be founded upon a decide; it begins with nihilist assertion that there is no other. Are these the beginnings of an orphaned humanity? (p. 186)

Is this the promise of the Enlightenment project? Is this the freedom that the reason, the ethics and the values of the Enlightenment are expected to introduce to people? Is this the right sort of humanism?

Do we need to recall these well known things? [Lyotard ironically reminds us that] Obviously, they must be recalled for the benefit of our adversaries. Their interest in consensus is surely not wholly republican in nature; it is also in the interest of the system [...] in the interest of its calculations which Baudelaire called ‘prostitution.’ (p. 186)

Living under the previously described conditions of knowledge, the intellectual is no longer to be a happy writer. The projects of reason, equality and freedom, to which he is supposed to expose, are identified with the system's interests and its totalitarian agendas: “The intellectuals are called upon by the system to make public proclamations; for the sole reason that they know a little better than others how to make use of language to restate the urgency of consensus”. (p.188)

Lyotard accuses the Enlightenment projects for being totalitarian and utopian. Its classical discourses of ethics and reason have been already retreating for the benefit of the scientific discourse. In the Postmodern context, the states are no longer conflicting over the ethics, values [...] (a fact that Habermas fails to recognize) rather they are fighting for the control of the information. It seems clear that, to Lyotard’s mind, the one who has a direct access to the information is the one who has the power to decide, the political power.

Knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided? In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever question of government. (Lyotard, 2004b, p. 128)

Following this reading, the social relationships are no longer based on a theory of communication (as Habermas and Kant do believe) but on a theory of games and interests. Our duty, as players within the system with games, is to accept the principles of the game. Being a good player, to Lyotard, is to know how to refute the classical form of knowledge.

1.2.2 Michel Foucault: the Enlightenment’s Totalitarian Discourse

Michel Foucault adapts a genealogical strategy and an archaeological method to deracinate the assumptions of the Enlightenment thought. The deployment of a genealogical strategy allows Foucault to argue that the history of peoples and even the history of knowledge is characterized by a constant struggle between different powers, which keep trying to impose their own will to truth. Being against the totalizing discourses, the grand systems, synthesis, or ideologies that dominated the modern thought and practices, this method helps Foucault rediscover the origin of these struggles. It also led to the rediscovery of the fragmented, subjugated, local and specific knowledge, the knowledge of the marginalized individuals or groups. The logical implications of

these immediate findings are that Habermas and before him Kant fail to consider these assumptions/realities: differences and cultural specificities of social groups and people in general, the ever-changing condition of knowledge, concepts [...]. The crisis of modernity, Foucault admits, lies in its failure to recognize the discourses of the marginalized or repressed categories.

It might be recognizable that Nietzsche's thought has decisively influenced Foucault's genealogical strategy. In that, Foucault argues, following Nietzsche, that those who have power, those who establish rules and set political agendas, own history. Foucault thus asserts that those who establish rules change ethics and values for their own benefits. Law as Nietzsche reminds us is "the calculated pleasure of relentless. It is the promised blood, which permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes, of violence" (Foucault, 2004a, p. 78). This scene of violence keeps repeating throughout the history of humanity and thus:

Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violence in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination. (2004a, p. 78)

A good genealogist for both Foucault and Nietzsche is the one who rediscovers the structures of thought, the *épistèmes*, the layers of knowledge and consequently is going to decentre the "totalitarian and terrorist" principles of the Enlightenment.

It might be argued that Foucault has changed his critical views concerning the Enlightenment in his article "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?" (1984) in which he discussed what he believed to be the significance of Kant's (1784) "What is Enlightenment." In fact, Foucault assumes that the Enlightenment can be seen as a process that releases us from immaturity. It might present the conditions to escape spiritual, institutional, ethical and political immaturity. By the term immaturity, Foucault simply means to follow the other and not to think freely and responsibly. While paradoxically Foucault, with Kant, are encouraging us to think and to have the courage to use one's own understanding "Dare to think, have the courage, the audacity to know" (Kant, 1991, p. 54), implying that men "must" participate collectively since they are at once elements and agents of a single process. Foucault genuinely claims that "by looking at it [Enlightenment] in this way, it seems to me we may recognize a point of departure: the outline of what one might call the attitude of modernity" (Foucault, 2004a, p. 45). By acknowledging the significance of Kant's thought in this way, Foucault can now portray himself as a thinker in the Enlightenment tradition.

This conclusion seems hasty and over generalized. The point behind this is that Foucault still accuses Kant of contradiction at two levels: political and critical. Foucault, first, believes that guarantying a free and public reason, as Kant announced, will certainly end up with a political problem. Foucault rises the question "How the audacity of reason and therefore criticism can be exercised in day light in the postmodern context?" (2004a, p. 5). This is the first contradiction. The second contradiction is that while Kant believes that criticism is practised in the search of universal values, Foucault assumes that "Criticism is a historical investigation into the events that

have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, saying [and] thinking (p. 50). Consequently, thinking blindly with Kant would lead only to the return of the most dangerous tradition. This deviation from Kant, although carefully read, is not welcomed by the enlightenment supporters since Foucault is still accused of the unhealthy genealogical and archaeological assumptions: "Revising the Enlightenment project in the light of his own concerns, [Foucault] endorses a critique which will be genealogical in its aims and archaeological in its methods (Habermas, 1993, p.103). He thereby appropriates the Enlightenment by turning it into something which Kant would not have recognized (Davis, 2004, p. 47).

1.2.3 Jacques Derrida: Logocentrism and Illusion

Jacques Derrida decentered the established canons of Logocentrism. Logocentrism, as being the logic of identity and non-contradiction which is deeply rooted in the Platonic metaphysics of sameness and presence, seems to be problematical in the postmodern context. Derrida refers to the term "Différence" which means both to differ/ to postpone and different, that is, not the same. This, indeed, allows Derrida to assert that reality and meaning are to be understood in terms of difference rather than identity and in terms of perpetual deferment rather than eternal presence. Drolet, (2004), proffers:

Derrida works on the assumption that traditional philosophy, in delivering a coherent comprehensive and definitive portrayal or account of a given work or philosopher's thought, is a kind of conjuring trick. Deconstruction, however, shows the failure of a work's attempt at representation and, by implication, the possibility of a comparable failure by any such work, or by any text whatsoever (Hoy, 1985, p. 44). It exposes traditional philosophy as illusory. (p. 23)

Building upon the Nietzschean thought reiterates the sense of difference by asserting that there is no return of the negative. The eternal return, to Derrida's mind, is the reproduction of becoming which might be seen as the other facet of being and deferring. The negative, which can be understood interchangeably with the classical and totalitarian thought of the Enlightenment, expires at the gates of being. In the very beginning of his article, "Dionysus and Zarathustra and conclusion," Drolet (2004) overtones his philosophy of becoming, being and multiplicity:

The lesson of the eternal return is that there is no return of the negative. The eternal return means that being is selection. Only that which affirms or is affirmed returns. The eternal return is the reproduction of becoming but the reproduction of becoming is also the reproduction of becoming active: child of Dionysus and Ariane. In the eternal return being ought to belong to becoming, but the being of becoming to belong to a single becoming active. Nietzsche's speculative teaching is as follows: becoming multiplicity and chance do not contain any negation; difference is pure affirmation; return is the being of difference excluding the whole of the negative. (p. 111)

Understandably enough, it is quite obvious that Deleuze is deciphering the classical thoughts of unity, sameness and the totalizing canons of the Enlightenment. Deleuze's critical views of the

modernist ethos should not be understood without taking into consideration his philosophical assumptions. Thus, in order to begin to assess the Deleuze's claims of difference, it will be methodologically necessary for us to understand what is to be a Deleuze's claim, that is, it will be necessary to understand what Deleuze is doing when he does philosophy. Then, philosophy, for Deleuze, is the project of being, becoming and multiplicity, that is, of creating, arranging and rearranging of perspectives:

[...] a philosophical theory is an elaborately developed question [...] it is not the resolution to a problem [...] but the elaboration of the necessary implications of a formulated question. It shows us what things are, or what things should be, on the assumption that the question is good and rigorous. (Deleuze, 1991, p. 106)

Accordingly, it is quite possible to announce that Deleuze's attack on classical philosophy is much more like his attack on the authoritarian thought of the Enlightenment. Deleuze, echoing Derrida and reinforcing Nietzsche, shows his deep doubt about grand narratives and their assumptions. The researcher is aware that the argumentation for the futility of the totalitarian thought of the Enlightenment might be attacked from another perspective. In that, it might be proposed that the poststructuralist intellectuals themselves do not agree about a common project/theory that is oriented against the most sublime ideals and values of modernity. Therefore, they are still attacking each other, accusing each other of misreading or misunderstanding of certain concepts. Therefore, their contribution to the poststructuralist project remains unequal. Seen from this perspective, the supporters of the Enlightenment project may claim that they are discovering a major weakness upon which they start their criticism.

3.1 The Unfinished Project of the Enlightenment

3.1.2 *Misleading Paths: Derrida on Foucault*

Let's examine this assumption, and refute it at a second stage.

Investigating Foucault's reading of the Cartesian Cogito "I think therefore I am," Derrida declares that Foucault falls in the traps of classical reason. He asserts that Foucault should read the history of madness by the language of madness, from

within madness and not from the position of reason. Foucault's obstinate determination to avoid the trap is probably his maddest aspect of his project as he announces that he is indeed writing the archaeology of that silence which is the history of madness. Derrida answers by raising a contradiction in the argument of Foucault "[B]ut, first of all, is there a history of silence? Further, is it not archaeology, even of silence, logic, that is, an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, syntax, a work" (Derrida, 1990, p. 89)? Derrida suggests that there must be a revolution against reason (the classical reason) in accordance with the Hegelian Law, (pp. 94-95) and that it is the meaning of history that should be investigated first. Derrida comes out with the conclusion that Foucault describes a history of decision, division and difference; he does not take a position, does not show his eagerness to change, therefore, and does not take the project of Poststructuralism further. He remains neutral. That is his problem. Foucault, in his own turn accuses Deleuze of reversing the Platonic philosophy and, thus, remains imprisoned at the centre of the classical western philosophy (Foucault, 2004b, pp. 161-165).

These charges and accusations might be used by the supporters of the Enlightenment to debunk the poststructuralist thought. However, seen in the light of the spirit of the poststructuralist principles, they will not fit their aims since difference, multiplicity, opposition within a form of unity, to recall Spinoza, is a fundamental assumption to Derrida, Foucault Deleuze, Lyotard and the others. The Enlightenment supporters might, therefore, investigate new areas to find out possible weaknesses and self-contradictions of their opponents, and thereby install their criticism. This is, indeed, the focus of the second part of this paper.

3.1.3 Colin Davis: *Derrida Misleading*

Let's begin the argumentation with Colin Davis's view, though long yet interesting, which sums up the opponents' counter claims. Davis, (2004) puts it as follows:

A series of damaging allegations is repeatedly made against post war French thought and more specifically Poststructuralism and postmodernism. They celebrate a decentering of the subject or death of man which denies human agency and freedom ;their anti-foundationally condemns them to a sterile relativism ; they are nihilistic and irrationalist; they can provide no basis for an ethics because they do not accept the universality of any values ; they are concerned with the abstractness of theory to the point that they allow no place for practice and no conceivable application to the world which common sense tells us we inhabit ; they denigrate and undermine all knowledge, belief and serious intellectual endeavor; politically, they are ineffectual and reactionary; and their rhetorical and terminological complexity only serves to mask their lack of real substance . French theory is too hard to read and too trivial to bother with. It has more to Fashion than serious intellectual enquiry, and it is of more interest to literary critics than do with to real philosophers. (p. 1)

Before analysing these arguments, a remark should be made first: Davis's voice suggests that he is an Enlightenment supporter. Underpinning his critical position helps assess his views objectively later on. Davis argues that Derrida's philosophy does not make any meaning/sense. His reading of *De la Grammatologie*, for instance, allows him to prove that it is a mixture of stories, theories, philosophies, meanings, and truths which does not end up with a specific conclusion. *De la Grammatologie* "was a heady mix of detailed interpretation and daring generalizations about meaning, truth and the history of philosophy" (Davis, 2004, p. 2). Undermining Derrida's thought is apposed with celebrating Kant's insight and coherence from another perspective. Unlike Derrida's nonsense theories and fragmented thought, Kant draws the contours of his thought: assumptions, ideals, aims, methods, by investigating the scope of our knowledge through his four famous philosophical questions "What can I know? What ought I do? What is a human being" (Kant, 1996, pp. 7-35)?

Davis states that Kant is a touchstone not only in the Enlightenment thought, but also to any one trained in philosophy in France. Derrida, Davis argues from within Derrida, himself justifies the fact "Whether one follows it or whether turns aside from it, Kant is the norm" (Derrida, 1990, pp. 81-89). And again "[The reference to Kant is what] guarantees and legitimizes the philosophical dignity of a discussion" (pp. 81-89).

Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987), Davis argues, is a serious and powerful critique of the poststructuralist thought. In that, it demonstrates Derrida's and Foucault's failures to establish philosophical norms of their own, that is, separated from the common philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment. More strikingly, Habermas proves that "in political terms, Poststructuralism is ineffectual or even reactionary" (Davis, 2004, p. 35). Accordingly, rather than depicting it – Poststructuralism- as a reactionary radical form of thought, Habermas places it in the philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment. In this sense, Habermas assumes that the Enlightenment project is a process with no final end, a process of ceaseless becoming, to recall Deleuze. Its aim is "to develop objective science, universal morality and Law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic [the aim of this being] the enrichment of every day life" (Habermas, 1993, p. 103).

Lyotard famously rejects Habermas's argument considering the book as a mere story. He argues that a story which wants to be more than one possible story among the others. To my sense, Lyotard's rejection of Habermas's argument is so simplistic if not "stupid." The point is that he does not even try to examine it and then refute it by showing its weak arguments; he rejects it simply because of its totalizing claims. Logically, Habermas seems to be more convincing. He assumes that the story of modernity/Enlightenment begins indeed, with "promising beginnings and [faced] wrong turns" (Davis, 2004, p. 36). Hegel's concept of modernity is a significant/ telling argument in Habermas's thought as he clearly states that "modernity [is not only the moment which we currently occupy] is the last stage in History," (Habermas, 1987, p. 7) and that philosophy is the child of that time. Philosophy comes back only in the end of "the happenings of the day," like the owl of Minerva, to bring back the world to our home and to make us feel satisfaction (Stern, 2002, pp. 9-50).

3.1.4 Jürgen Habermas: *The Unfinished Project of the Enlightenment:*

Back to Habermas's critique of both Derrida and Foucault, the unfinished project of the Enlightenment is therefore obvious. "Derrida's critique of metaphysics has not shaken itself free from the search for foundations," (Davis, 2004, p. 38) on the contrary he assimilates the literary discourse with the philosophical discourse "and there by levels the distinction between philosophy and literature [which] relieves philosophy of the duty of solving problems, and so it dulls the sword of the critique of reason" (Habermas, 1987, p. 210). Derrida, as seen in the beginning of this paper, is accused of being locked within a "performative contradiction" as he is using the very tools of reason to undermine reason itself. Foucault, like Derrida, remains within the habits of thought he wants to abandon. "In Habermas's account, he is unable to think through the aporias of his own approach well enough to provide a convincing justification for the privileged place accorded to his own genealogical approach" (Davis, 2004, p. 39). Like Derrida, Foucault does not move far away from his starting point.

More strikingly, he establishes a whole philosophy that has a genealogical design and an archaeological method without bothering himself to establish or even to think about pure foundations for him. It is only towards his late life that Foucault discovers the serious mistake he has already committed. He suddenly acknowledges the legitimacy and the need for re-reading Kant's Enlightenment since it presents realistic, rational and humanistic projects to both 'M'an and

philosophy. Habermas argues, at this level, that Foucault's and Derrida's deconstructionist thoughts have been ceaselessly attempting to destroy the Enlightenment and the modernist most sublime ethics and values. However, they paradoxically and ironically come back to recreate it after their attempts of criticism.

Habermas, like Hegel, wants to bring back the world to us, but in his own way. His purpose behind praising and defending the Enlightenment project is not to abandon it through revising its values, nor is it to debunk its ideals of reason, morality, freedom, and progress.

On the contrary, he endorses these values. To make progress with the unfinished project of modernity entails confronting the problems posed by Hegel and solving them better” (Davis, 2004, p. 39). Habermas wants to make the Enlightenment aware of its “wrong turns,” that is, “enlightening the Enlightenment about its own narrow mindedness. (Habermas, 1987, p. 302)

Deeply influenced by its humanistic ideals, Habermas neglects “the paradigm of self-consciousness, of the relation to self of a subject knowing and acting in isolation and proposes instead the paradigm of mutual understanding, that is, of the intersubjective relationship between individuals who are socialized through communication and reciprocally recognize one other” (Davis, 2004, p. 40). Within this strategy, Habermas suggests that the poststructuralist thought/enterprise will add nothing to the modernist project. Habermas unsurprisingly seems to be telling “his own story” of the Enlightenment, and that his own methods and tools will assure the possibility of completing this project.

It might be argued, against Habermas, that both Foucault and Derrida pay too much attention to the status of Kant and therefore their rejection of the Enlightenment project is a rejection of its foundations themselves. In this, Foucault, as seen before, has read Kant carefully and is aware of his debt to him, and yet he is fully aware of his strategic deviation from the Kantian version. In *Du Droit de la Philosophie* Derrida confesses that the Kantian legacy seems to be in all (Derrida, 1990, p. 83) what we learn, what we internalize how we argue and how we think about our philosophical exercises. Derrida admits that “We must still read Kant, turn to him, thematize the phenomenon of his authority, and, therefore, over canonize him” (Norris, 1990, pp. 194-207). The immediate implication of this is that Kant is to be given much more respect rather than too little. Christopher Norris accuses Habermas of misreading, misunderstanding and, therefore, misplacing both Foucault and Derrida. He argued that the two philosophers should not be read outside the context of the Kantian legacy since doing so would not give them their right of objective assessment. Habermas's answer is that they are merely reproducing that very legacy in a new fashion and without showing their own philosophical foundations. Habermas states that he is interested in the foundation, the origin and he does not care about the details. Once again he finds himself accusing Derrida of “performative contradiction.”

3.1.5 Habermas on Max Weber: The Instrumental Reason and Humanism

Habermas's arguments find their better illustration in Max Weber's thought of the instrumental reason as a vocation to human being. Working from within the autonomy of the Enlightenment and modernity, Weber questions the position of the vocation of the ‘instrumental

reason' / 'science' within the total life of humanity. Unlike the poststructuralist intellectuals who negatively depict the presence of the science / practical reason in human life, Weber assumes that science – the means of the progress of humanity- should have ethical and political values. Thinking with but also regulating the utilitarian views of the Enlightenment and modernity concerning the very function of practical reason, Weber proposes that its real value “lies in its capacity to clarify and inform value choices.” Weber aptly argues for this side by claiming that science should “engender human progress or the qualitative advancement of life” (Weber, 1992, p. 182). Nicolas Gane intensifies the idea. Weber argues that we should employ science to help tackle the practical and technical problems of our day. So that science *serves us* in the leading of our lives and not vice versa. Weber thus argues that “an ascetic ideal of science does not need to engender the further ossification of humanity, for if it is used responsibly, science would act as *our servant*” (p. 62). The implication of this is that the theoretical reason and ethics of the Enlightenment should not be rejected or betrayed, as poststructuralist intellectuals did, rather they should be carefully referred to as touchstone of progress and humanism. Once again Weber (1992) reminds that:

[F]or civilized man death has no meaning. It has none because the individual life of civilized man, placed into an infinite progress, according to its own imminent meaning should never come to an end; for there is always a further step ahead of one who stands in the march of progress. (pp. 139-40,357)

Once again and unsurprisingly enough, Lyotard rejects the argument regarding it as a mere totalitarian story among the other stories of the Enlightenment. The point behind this is that the instrumental reason would only lead to tragic conflicts about the act of possessing the scientific information. The one who has the information is the one who decides, the one who has the political power.

3.1.6 Inconsistent Stories of Poststructuralism: Picard, Barthes, Sokal and Bricmont

Colin Davis argues for the futility of the poststructuralist intellectuals from within their own theoretical edifice. He assumes that criticizing them from within their “stories/logic” and underrating their claims would save him of being accused of telling the same classical story. Therefore, if they are to criticize him, they are, indeed, criticizing their own stories of nihilism and meaninglessness. For this purpose, Davis refers to two fundamental instances. The first is the intellectual debate between the Racine expert Raymond Picard and Roland Barthes. While the second is of Alan Sokal's and Jean Bricmont's criticism to postmodernism. Davis argues that the weaknesses of the poststructuralist methods appear once having a glance on Barthes's and Picard's major disagreements. The two intellectuals, he informs us, keep exchanging charges in the light of their different readings of Racine's works. Picard accuses Barthes's analysis of Leading to nowhere and ending with no meaning. Barthes, in Picard's views, is saying anything “n'importe quoi” wondering at the same time: how can the same set of texts produce such variant and sometimes opposite interpretations? Picard concludes that the beginning of Barthes's reading, though has the aura of a deep remark, it ends up with total devoid of meaning. Barthes in his own turn accuses Picard of being so classical that it would be so difficult for him to follow his theory “Devoting himself to patient, painstaking scholarship, Picard pays no attention to the rapid changes

which were taking place in literary criticism at the time when he was writing” (Davis, 2004, p. 11). The result of this debate is that there is no meaning, no conclusion; the researcher is no longer able to tell the difference between the correct, the incorrect, the right, the wrong, truth and lies. In Picard's eyes Barthes is wrong, and in Barthes's eyes Picard is worse than wrong. But the idea might be that “Picard does to Barthes pretty much what he accuses Barthes of doing to Racine” (p. 17).

Davis's argument is Sokal's and Bricmont's criticism to postmodernism/Poststructuralism. In this, Alan Sokal published an article in 1996 “Transgressing the boundaries; toward a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity “in a journal” dedicated to the social sciences.” The article is cheerfully welcomed as it is in lines with the poststructuralist ends. “Shortly after its publication, Sokal revealed in a follow-up article that the previous piece was a hoax” (Sokal, 1996, pp. 62-64). The content and the details of the article are laughably wrong. It is only published because it showed a great doubt in the humanistic principles of the modern age and indicated “a profound malaise in humanities departments in general” (Davis, 2004, p. 22). The immediate conclusion he achieves is that the poststructuralist use of scientific methods to prove their arguments can only reflect their ignorance of the laws and the rules of science. In 1997, this conclusion is further proved by the publication of: *Impostures Intellectuelles* (by Alain Sokal and Jean Bricmont). “The book takes some of the best known modern French thinkers and claims that their numerous references to science are almost entirely meaningless, or at the ridden with error” (p. 22). The point behind this is the poststructuralist thought is more than being worse, so dangerous to the students of humanities that we need to read it carefully or even to avoid reading it at all. The French poststructuralist intellectuals, in Davis's and Habermas's thought, are taking the wrong path of the Enlightenment ideals. It is regarded, therefore, as one of the wrong turns of modernity to borrow the terms from Habermas.

4.1 Conclusion

Davis, Habermas, Sokal, Bricmont and many others behind them keep arguing for the demise of the poststructuralist thought or announcing the death of the Enlightenment ethics and values and their return in a ghost form. Their claims might betray the truth if ever there is any. Their arguments might be another story within other stories among other stories to think with Lyotard. But it is the duty of the younger generation of critics and of philosophy students to remain in a constant state of rediscovery of new stories of ghosts and betrayals.

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