

**LASTING LIGHT: Re-positioning the Legacy of the Enlightenment within  
Cultural Studies**

Nicholas Darcy Chinna

Bachelor of Arts in History and Communication and Cultural Studies

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Communication and Cultural Studies

This Thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University

**2013**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Signed.....

# **Lasting Light: Re-positioning the Legacy of the Enlightenment within Cultural Studies**

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation concerns a re-evaluation of the ‘Enlightenment’ and its historiography within cultural theory in relation to contemporary debates concerning the limits and possibilities of active and inclusive citizenship, participatory democracy and a pluralistic public sphere. I interrogate what the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment encompasses and how this period and its legacy have been understood in relevant areas of philosophy and social theory. My contention is that an overly reductionist and negative understanding of the Enlightenment has come to dominate cultural theory over the past thirty years owing partly to a simplified reading of theorists including Foucault and Derrida. Using the work of, among others, Jürgen Habermas, I hope to demonstrate that a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the Enlightenment and its legacy will aid contemporary social theory in formulating conceptions for a more just and equitable society. To this end, I show how contemporary figures within the Enlightenment, including Moses Mendelssohn, Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges, are relevant to current theoretical concerns. I identify with Habermas’s argument in favour of an ‘enlightened critique of the Enlightenment’ and his assertion that modernity represents an ‘unfinished project’ rather than a static model of social superiority. At a time when religious fundamentalism and ideological extremism are dominant forces in global relations, and nationalism and cultural essentialism inform much of the public discourse on citizenship and democracy, a considered affirmation of the precepts of the Enlightenment is necessary to the realisation of socially progressive theory.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
<u>Part One</u> .....	6
Chapter One: The ‘Enlightenment’ and Cultural Studies.....	7
Chapter Two: Situating <i>The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity</i> and its Contexts.....	22
Horkheimer and Adorno and <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> .....	25
Heidegger and Derrida.....	27
Habermas and Derrida.....	30
Foucault and Habermas on Kant’s <i>Was ist Aufklärung?</i> .....	34
<u>Part Two</u> .....	43
Chapter Three: Kant and Mendelssohn both reply to ‘The Question’: Moses Mendelssohn and Inclusive Citizenship.....	44
Understanding <i>Jerusalem</i> .....	49
Kant and Mendelssohn both ask ‘ <i>What is Enlightenment?</i> ’.....	62
Chapter Four: Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges and the Defence of Reason and Virtue.....	68
Wollstonecraft as Enlightened Philosopher.....	71
Wollstonecraft, Olympe de Gouges and the Pursuit of Virtue.....	77

<u>Part Three</u> .....	93
Chapter Five: The ‘Enlightenment’ and the Democratic Public Sphere.....	94
Habermas, Cultural Studies and the Theorising of the Public Sphere.....	95
Religion, Reason and the Constitutional State.....	111
Feminist Interventions in the Public Sphere.....	116
Conclusion.....	119
Bibliography.....	126

## **Acknowledgements**

I extend my sincere thanks to both my supervisors, Professor Alec McHoul and Dr Ian Cook. Both were highly supportive of this project and offered important advice and many useful insights. I acknowledge Murdoch University's Equity Department for the support they extend to many students. I also extend sincere thanks to my group of friends for supporting me during the otherwise isolating experience of post-graduate candidature. I thank Macska Chinna for his moral support. Last, but never least, I acknowledge from the heart the ongoing love and support of my parents.

## Introduction

This dissertation aims to re-position the historical Enlightenment, and its legacy, within cultural theory, with a particular focus on the broad field of cultural studies. Such a re-positioning is necessary because of the extent to which the historical Enlightenment and its legacy have been either misunderstood or misrepresented within cultural studies, as I will show. Within the field, the predominant view of the legacy of the Enlightenment is that, despite its emancipatory aims, it inaugurates an oppressive and exclusionary mode of modernity. I aim to show that not only is this view falsifiable, but also that many of the writings and protagonists of the historical Enlightenment can be of relevance to cultural studies in its theorisation of progressive social change and an inclusive public sphere.<sup>1</sup>

As I re-iterate here, it is not my intention to denigrate cultural studies as a multi-disciplinary field or to position it as a ‘straw man’ against which a potentially reactionary defence of ‘western modernity’ and ‘Enlightenment values’ can be mounted. I write from within the field of cultural studies and not from outside it. I show how lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of ‘the Enlightenment’ is depriving the field of potentially useful resources in critical theory and practice. I hope to demonstrate how a more nuanced understanding of the complexity and diversity of the historical Enlightenment and its legacy will aid the political practice(s) of cultural studies. My argument is thus related to the broader question of historical awareness within the field.

---

<sup>1</sup> In using the term ‘progressive’ I follow Foucault’s definition that ‘progressive politics is a politics which defines, within a practice, possibilities for transformation and the play of dependencies between these transformations’. This is of particular relevance to the oppressed or marginalised social groups discussed in this dissertation. Foucault, cited in David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, London: Hutchinson, 1993, p. 195.

In so far as it concerns the validation of the Enlightenment from a perspective that is socially and politically progressive, the subject of this dissertation may invite comparison with the work of Jürgen Habermas. The work of Habermas is pivotal to this dissertation and engagement with his theories feature strongly throughout, particularly in Chapters Two and Five. However, it is my intention to go further than simply agreeing with Habermas. His theories serve to position my argument concerning the continued relevance of the Enlightenment to a progressive mode of cultural studies and are not just ends in themselves. While Habermas positions Immanuel Kant as his exemplary Enlightenment figure, I demonstrate how this historical period remains relevant to the theorisation of social justice by focusing, in Part Two, on marginalised and subaltern subjects who actively engaged in the Enlightened ‘republic of letters’. The figures of Moses Mendelssohn, Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges serve to exemplify the progressive and self-critical impulse of the Enlightenment.

Before detailing the structure of this dissertation, I shall clarify the definition of the historical Enlightenment that I use. I cannot charge that ‘the Enlightenment’ is inadequately historicised within cultural studies and then not properly situate it. As I acknowledge repeatedly below, the Enlightenment was one of the first historical periods to name itself within its own happening, as Foucault has stated.<sup>2</sup> I use the terms ‘Enlightenment’ or ‘the Enlightenment’ (capital E) to refer specifically to a sustained period of varied social and intellectual development that occurred throughout eighteenth century Europe (and some of its colonies). However, there are thinkers from the seventeenth century, including John Locke, Christian Wolff and Samuel von Pufendorf, who figure here as ‘proto-Enlightenment’ figures. The historical Enlightenment is not a singular entity and some of the various ‘national’ enlightenments figure strongly in my writing. In terms of capitalisation and the use of the definite article, I have endeavoured

---

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007, p. 85.



to be consistent according to context. However, there is little consistency among the various writers referenced in this work. In some instances, this is due to the distinction between Enlightenment as historical period and enlightenment as intellectual concept. This is the distinction that I follow. The often problematic nature of definition and use results in the frequent use of quotation marks. I refer to ‘cultural studies’ without capitalisation because it is a field rather than a single discipline.

The structure of this dissertation consists of three parts sub-divided into five chapters. Part One, consisting of Chapters One and Two, is concerned with how the Enlightenment has been positioned, both within cultural studies specifically and more broadly within cultural theory. Part Two, consisting of Chapters Three and Four, serves to demonstrate the progressive actuality of the historical Enlightenment through the figures of Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges. Part Three, consisting of Chapter Five, is concerned with the continued relevance of Enlightenment thought to the theorisation of progressive social change and an inclusive public sphere.

In Chapter One, I begin by foregrounding the scholarly debate concerning the interlocking definitions of ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernity’ and the legacy of these concepts. I give a concise overview of the supposedly opposing arguments of Habermas, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida on these questions and indicate that there is more commonality between them than is often assumed. This leads into the main focus of the chapter: the dominant representation of the Enlightenment within cultural studies and how this is problematic. While acknowledging that practitioners such as Stuart Hall endorse ‘the Enlightenment project’, I detail numerous examples of how the Enlightenment is positioned within the field and identify re-occurring features. I demonstrate that the Enlightenment is predominantly presented, if at all, in a manner

that is poorly historicised and pejorative. I argue that it serves as a shorthand trope for oppressive modernity and that this is related to how power is theorised in cultural studies. Using the work of Mark Gibson, I probe how post-war European theory was adopted within the ‘Anglo-sphere’ of cultural studies. I contend that the dominant reading of Enlightenment in the field is in part due to simplification and misunderstanding regarding what theorists such as Foucault and Derrida have argued in relation to ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernity’.

In Chapter Two, I therefore return to Habermas and his debates with Foucault and Derrida concerning the character and legacy of ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernity’. I do this via an extended reading of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. I situate Habermas’s critiques of other theorists within the political and social context in which the book was written. I show that his arguments in relation to Foucault and Derrida have not remained static and that he came to an understanding with both thinkers respectively, such that they shared with him an ultimately affirmative view of ‘Enlightenment’. In the case of Foucault and Habermas, I show how engagement with the work of Kant provided a shared point of reference in affirming the necessity of a self-critical model of modernity.

Chapter Three focuses on how the writings of Kant and Mendelssohn intersect in the context of the German Enlightenment and its process of self-definition. I show how Mendelssohn, as a contemporary and acquaintance of Kant, warrants at least equal recognition to the latter as a thinker who advocated an intrinsically moral conception of what enlightenment should be. I focus on how Mendelssohn used the discourses of the Enlightenment to argue for the extension of civil rights and religious freedom to the

Jews of Prussia. I also argue that Mendelssohn's conceptions of religious toleration and social pluralism are more radically progressive than those advanced by Kant.

In Chapter Four, I focus on how both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges, in differing ways, attempted to harness Enlightenment ideas of 'Reason' and 'Virtue' to a project of equal female citizenship and participation in the public sphere. Both women are positioned not only as 'proto-feminist' figures but also as advocates of a radical conception of democratic and egalitarian citizenship.

In Chapter Five, I build on what has been demonstrated up to this point. I focus on the continued relevance of Enlightenment thought to the theorisation of progressive social change and an inclusive public sphere. I return to the theory of Habermas and engage in an intertextual reading of how he and David Morley, a theorist working in cultural studies, approach the question of how to foster a democratic and inclusive (and trans-national) public sphere. I then examine Habermas's developing ideas on the status of religious and cultural pluralism within the framework of a democratic and constitutional state. While Habermas looks to Kant as a theoretical precursor, I show that such ideas link back to the work of Mendelssohn. In the final section of the Chapter, I turn to Nancy Fraser's (broadly sympathetic) critique of Habermas's work and demonstrate how the work of Wollstonecraft and de Gouges remains relevant to the contemporary feminist theorisation of the public sphere. I thereby show that some of the ideas and protagonists of the historical Enlightenment are of continued relevance to the project of cultural studies. I re-iterate these arguments and suggest possible further developments in the Conclusion.

## **Part One**

## Chapter One

### The 'Enlightenment' and Cultural Studies

'What is Enlightenment?' is a question that has been asked from the eighteenth century onwards. In historical terms, the Enlightenment is associated with Europe during the eighteenth century and with processes of change in social and intellectual development during this period. However, Enlightenment as a historical period and enlightenment as an intellectual formation are intrinsically difficult to categorise and identify. The significance and meaning of the epoch has been questioned, affirmed and contested from its own natality through to the conscious interrogation of 'modernity' that has been a prominent feature of cultural theory in the post-war period. The Enlightenment and its legacy remain contentious because of the ongoing theoretical debate over the ideas of 'modernity' and 'progress' and the potentially destructive patterns of social and environmental change that these ideas supposedly engender. Within the realm of 'progressive' theory there understandably exists a longstanding ambivalence regarding the idea of 'progress'. There is doubt over whether the legacy of Enlightenment thought is an impetus towards greater social justice and human perfectibility or greater oppression and environmental and social destruction. How the Enlightenment has been understood and positioned within contemporary cultural theory and in particular within the field of cultural studies is the subject of this chapter.

'Enlightenment' and 'modernity' are linked, but it is potentially erroneous to conflate the two subjects. For example, in historicist discourse, the term 'Early Modern' may be used as a chronological marker to designate the European Renaissance, which occurred some four hundred to two hundred years before the period of the eighteenth

century Enlightenment. However, this Enlightenment embodies a self-conscious modernity. The relationship between the historical Enlightenment and the condition of modernity and progressive change was recognised, debated and problematised within its own time. While the self-awareness of the historical European Enlightenment is the primary focus of Part Two, the salient argument is that any meaningful effort to historicise tropes of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’ has to involve engaging with the particularity of the historical Enlightenment and its legacy. This kind of engagement, critical but affirmative, has long been advocated and practised by the German critical theorist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas. What can be described as Habermas’s ‘qualified defence’ of the ‘Enlightenment project’ is linked to a strongly argued belief in the crucial necessity of a paradigm of ‘modernity’ to any theoretical discourse or political programme that advocates progressive change.

This argument, put forward by Habermas primarily through a series of lectures in the early nineteen-eighties (and afterwards published as *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*) was formulated within the context of the popularisation of critiques of ‘modernity’ advanced by theorists including Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. At the time, Habermas affirmed that theories of so-called ‘postmodernity’ are potentially conservative in undermining concepts of rationality and progressive change. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas’s central contention against the (differing) theoretical positions of Foucault and Derrida is that they constitute a ‘radical critique of reason [which] exacts a high price for taking leave of modernity’ and which demonstrates a ‘reckless disregard for its own foundations’.<sup>3</sup> While many elements of modernity can and should be criticised, the possibility for just and progressive social change, for Habermas, is predicated on the values of the Enlightenment and any critique

---

<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, pp. 336-37.

must recognise this. As Thomas McCarthy, in his introduction to the English-language edition of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, states:

Habermas agrees with the radical critics of enlightenment that the paradigm of consciousness is exhausted. Like them, he views reason as inescapably situated, as concretized in history, society, body, and language. Unlike them, however, he holds that the defects of the Enlightenment can only be made good by further enlightenment. The totalized critique of reason undercuts the capacity of reason to be critical.<sup>4</sup>

However, such a positioning of the ‘radical critics’ has proved to be misleading. While Habermas’s critique of the theoretical positions of Foucault and Derrida occurs in the context of the early nineteen-eighties and is based on the reading of texts written during the nineteen-sixties and seventies, subsequent debate and engagement has led to clarification regarding these authors’ respective positions on the legacy and necessity of enlightened modernity, although such examples of clarification, dialogue and rapprochement appear to be largely unrecognised. Foucault states in an interview that he is ‘completely in agreement’ with Habermas regarding the necessity of a tradition of rational critique as represented by figures such as Kant.<sup>5</sup> He affirms the need to critically examine the legacy of such rationality and what it entails. He states:

I think that the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has always been ... the question: *what* is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers? How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practicing a rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by intrinsic dangers? One should remain as close to this question as possible, keeping in mind that it is both central and extremely difficult to resolve. In addition, if it is extremely dangerous to say that Reason is the enemy that must be eliminated, it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning of this rationality risks sending us into irrationality.<sup>6</sup>

Foucault is in fundamental agreement with Habermas concerning the need for a critique of the Enlightenment that itself stems from the enlightened tradition. The cultural and intellectual legacies of rationalist modernity should neither be rejected outright, nor

---

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. xvii.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Space, Power, Knowledge’, an interview with Paul Rabinow reprinted in Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

uncritically embraced. In this statement, Foucault expressly positions himself within the continuum of enlightened thought. As Habermas first stated in a public lecture given in Frankfurt during 1980, which would serve as the precursor to themes addressed in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, the condition of modernity should be understood to embody an ‘unfinished project’, rather than a static condition.<sup>7</sup>

Derrida, the other ‘radical critic’ most extensively engaged with by Habermas, also affirms the necessity of what he terms the ‘spirit of the Enlightenment’. In his 1993 address, *Specters of Marx*, he states that this spirit ‘must not be renounced’.<sup>8</sup> In referring to his conception of the ‘new International’, he speaks of the possibility of a ‘new Enlightenment for the century to come’.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Derrida concurs with Habermas in situating enlightened modernity as a necessarily ‘unfinished project’. In his 1980 lecture, Habermas asks the rhetorical question ‘should we continue to hold fast to the intentions of the Enlightenment, however fractured they may be, or should we rather relinquish the entire project of modernity?’<sup>10</sup> Both Foucault and Derrida answer in the affirmative to the former part of the question. A more detailed engagement with the works of Habermas, Foucault and Derrida, and the textual relationship between them, is featured in the following chapter.

It is in the context of a perceived conflict between Habermas and the so-called ‘post-modernists’ that Stuart Hall, a pre-eminent theorist in British cultural studies, outlined his position on questions concerning the theorising of cultural modernity in an interview conducted during the middle of the nineteen-eighties. Hall asserts that

---

<sup>7</sup> Habermas, ‘Modernity: An Unfinished Project’, reprinted in Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (eds), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, pp. 38-55.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 110.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> Habermas, ‘Modernity: An Unfinished Project’ in Passerin d’Entrèves and Benhabib, (eds), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, pp. 45-46.



‘Habermas’s defence of the Enlightenment/modernist project is worthy and courageous’ but that it is ‘not sufficiently exposed to some of the deeply contradictory tendencies in modern culture to which the postmodernist theories quite correctly draw our attention’.<sup>11</sup> He goes on to argue that postmodernist theory, as exemplified in this case by Lyotard and Baudrillard, is also unsatisfactory, being too ‘celebratory’ of the conditions of late modernity.<sup>12</sup> He asserts that there are therefore ‘two unacceptable choices: Habermas’s defensive position in relation to the old Enlightenment project and Lyotard’s Euro-centred celebration of the postmodern collapse’.<sup>13</sup> While Hall admits that such a statement represents an ‘oversimplified binary choice’, he nevertheless uses that binarised understanding in the interview.<sup>14</sup> Leaving aside his treatment of Lyotard and Baudrillard, Hall’s endorsement of Habermas’s ‘worthy and courageous’ defence of the Enlightenment is not expanded on.

As with Foucault and Derrida, Hall has affirmed the necessity of both acknowledging and valorising the ‘Enlightenment project’. However, the ‘Enlightenment’ to which he refers remains a singular and ahistorical entity, not positioned within a wider context. The question of *what* is ‘Enlightenment’ is not addressed. Within cultural studies as a field, ‘Enlightenment’ is rarely interrogated in its own right. ‘Modernity’ is a concept that is perhaps even more amorphous and unstable in both its meaning and usage. Nor does it help the process of understanding that, for the sake of argument, the two concepts tend to be conflated, even by a theorist as otherwise careful and precise as Habermas. However, both Foucault and Derrida, and a leading theorist within British cultural studies, Stuart Hall, are in fundamental

---

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall’, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, reprinted in David Morley and Kuan Hsing Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 131.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

agreement with Habermas regarding the validity and necessity of an often vaguely defined ‘Enlightenment Project’.

The fundamentally affirmative view of the ‘Enlightenment project’ held by Hall has not been the predominant position in contemporary cultural studies. Writing in *Modernity and its Futures*, published in 1992 and co-edited by Hall, Steven Yearley states that ‘an appreciation of Western societies’ environmental problems has encouraged social scientists to question in a new way the Enlightenment “achievements” of economic growth, technological progress and scientific advance’.<sup>15</sup> Writing on the subject of identity and biological reproduction in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, another book co-edited by Hall, Marilyn Strathern refers to ‘the notorious social contract as conceived by the Enlightenment’.<sup>16</sup> The common feature of these two examples is not only that ‘Enlightenment’ is referred to with pejorative connotations but also that it is positioned in almost anthropomorphic terms as a singular entity and referred to only in passing. There is no attempt by the respective authors to explain what they are arguing the Enlightenment is in relation to philosophical and historical context. Rather than the ‘social contract’ being situated as an idea that developed within the historical context of the Enlightenment, which is itself an arguable proposition, it is written as if the Enlightenment is the direct author of this idea. ‘Enlightenment’ is being used as a shorthand description for the concept of a rationalist modernity that embodies oppressive power. This concept is often used to frame what contemporary cultural theory is reacting against.

The story behind postmodernism, although it resists the narrative form, is about the end of another and greater story. The concluding tale is that which was written by the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment established a set of typical characters, with typical motives and a shared goal, that is to say that it provided

---

<sup>15</sup> Steven Yearley, ‘Environmental Challenges’ in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds), *Modernity and its Futures*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p. 118.

<sup>16</sup> Marilyn Strathern, ‘Enabling Identity? Biology, Choice and the New Reproductive Technologies’ in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: Sage, 1996, p. 43.

the ‘grand’ narrative form for the history of modernity. Reason was to triumph over faith, humankind was to become the measure of all things, nature was to be quelled and put to the service of humankind, and time was to be measured in terms of a transition from darkness into the light, a transition and an implicit theory of moral evolution that came to be known as *progress*.<sup>17</sup>

This quotation, taken from the second edition of *Culture*, a book written by Chris Jenks as part of the Routledge *Key Ideas* series, again demonstrates particular tendencies as to how the historical Enlightenment is positioned in cultural studies. This is the first reference to ‘the Enlightenment’ contained in the text. Jenks does present a summarised argument as to what Enlightenment is and yet there is no attempt to explain its historical or cultural context. Rather, the concept of ‘the Enlightenment’ serves to contrast ‘modernity’ with ‘postmodernism’. Jenks goes on to state that:

The centrality of humankind and, following Descartes, cognitive subjectivism, when linked to the institutionalised mode of reason that we call science, provided the methodology of this master plan. However, as history has shown us, the self-appointed claims of the methodology, those to objectivity, and the ideological insulation of its practitioners, in the form of value-neutrality, have created an accelerative moral vacuum. World wars, techniques and technologies of mass extermination and a market-led programme of subsequently polluting productivity have all weighed in the deficit column to offset the gains in health, income, enlightenment, democratisation and overall quality of life. Is this then the state of modernity that warrants the new designation – postmodernism?<sup>18</sup>

Again, ‘the Enlightenment’ is presented in almost anthropomorphic terms as a singular entity that has supposedly driven the development of all aspects of contemporary social, technological and economic organisation. Jenks goes some way toward rendering problematic the nature of ‘postmodernism’ but does not extend the same cautious ambivalence in regard to what constitutes ‘modernity’ and the complex connections between discourses of ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernity’.

Within Jenks’s summary, the conflation of ‘the Enlightenment’ with ‘modernity’ and scientific methodology is compounded by a largely pessimistic view of the results of such ‘modernity’. Jenks, in the space of a paragraph, constructs a precise and linear

---

<sup>17</sup> Chris Jenks, *Culture (Key Ideas)* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 192-93 (italics original).

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 193.

narrative directly linking the ‘*progress*’ of ‘the Enlightenment’ to a ‘deficit column’ containing ‘world wars’ and ‘technologies of mass extermination’ in a way that resembles a simplified and condensed version of the argument advanced by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a book which is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter of this dissertation. Neither Horkheimer, Adorno nor their text is referred to in this section of Jenks’s book, although there is mention of them in relation to the concept of the ‘culture industry’ in an earlier chapter.<sup>19</sup> It should also be noted that the paragraphs quoted above represent the sum total of any reference to ‘the Enlightenment’ in *Culture*, a text that is supposed to serve as an introduction to, and general overview of, the concept in relation to how it is approached in the social sciences and humanities. The way in which Jenks conceives of ‘the Enlightenment’ and the legacy of ‘modernity’, which comes ironically close to constituting a *metanarrative* about the rise of ‘postmodernism’, may partly stem from the difficulty involved in making theoretical distinctions concerning the differing and contradictory aspects of ‘modernity’.

Cultural theorists who follow the same basic line of argument as Horkheimer and Adorno in suggesting a correlation between the precepts of the Enlightenment and the social or technological rationality used in the operation of, for example, concentration camps, are limited by difficulties in adequately outlining the theoretical and historical distinction between philosophical and ideological modernity and scientific and technological modernity. As Habermas has recognised, societies can actively pursue technological and economic development while explicitly rejecting aspects of ‘modernity’.<sup>20</sup> A consequence of this conflation is that problematic or negative features of ‘modernity’, including contemporary life in industrialised western

---

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> Habermas, ‘Modernity: An Unfinished Project’ in Passerin d’Entrèves and Benhabib (eds), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, pp. 42-44.

societies, are situated as being the direct results of the 'Enlightenment'. To assert that elements of modernity such as corporate capitalism, the formation of the nation-state, and scientific rationalism are directly descended from 'Enlightenment' concepts is to confuse the many historical, social and structural catalysts of 'modernity' with a largely critical and pre-dominantly intellectual social and cultural movement that occurred in Europe and North America during the eighteenth century.

If the positioning of 'the Enlightenment' offered by Jenks is ahistorical, one author of a general or introductory text on cultural studies from within the field who attempts to both situate the period historically and explain its wider cultural and philosophical legacy is Fred Inglis. While the combined total of words on the subject contained in the book *Cultural Studies* comprises less than a page, it constitutes a sharply drawn picture.

The Enlightenment coincided pretty well with Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century. It taught the bad faith inherent in obedience to the old regimes, the power of reason to command human progress, the liberal duty to pull up the roots of blind tradition and superstitious custom. At its side, the great Romantics taught parallel lessons about the individual's natural rights, the irresistible beauty of personal feeling, the self-made conceptions of morality. Together the two great movements inspired men and women to march beneath the banner of revolution and its triple Parisian cry, 'liberty, equality, fraternity'.<sup>21</sup>

Inglis evidently has a positive perspective on the 'Enlightenment' and its legacy, affirming its fundamentally socially and politically progressive aspects. He also attempts to explain what it actually is and to situate it within a historical and social context. However, from the perspective of a cultural historian, his mapping of the historical and social context of the 'Enlightenment' is flawed and inconsistent. The ways in which Romanticism was a reaction *against*, and in some respects the antithesis of, mainstream eighteenth century progressive thought is not elucidated in Inglis's narrative. He does, however, attempt to bring together various different philosophical,

---

<sup>21</sup> Fred Inglis, *Cultural Studies*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 19.

cultural and geographic strands of the broad European Enlightenment in forming his overview.

A word on the Enlightenment, now so fiercely contested, misunderstood and calumniated an epoch. Let us place it between 1770 and 1800 (or so). It denotes that terrific surge of ideas which blew apart the *ancien régime* in France, initiated revolution there and in North America, and launched the classical doctrines of radical liberalism, as given their abrupt synopsis in the first chapter. These taught, by way of the great French subscription volume, the *Encyclopaedia*, by way of the German philosophers and the playwrights of *Sturm und Drang*, and by way of the English radicals, of Godwin, Bentham and Paine, that tradition was mere blind habit and that by the judicious application of reason, factual observation and scientific planning progress could be ensured and emancipation achieved by all humankind. The dynamism of this new surge in human possibility would be given by rational economic organization as codified by Smith and Ricardo, first masters of the new science of economics.<sup>22</sup>

Inglis situates the Enlightenment within its European historical context, although in a manner which is overly broad and imprecise. His writing also suggests that the various protagonists of the French, Prussian and British ‘enlightenments’ were all involved in a conscious and co-ordinated plan, inadvertently echoing contemporary conservative polemics. The ‘euro-centrism’ of discourse about the ‘Enlightenment’ has long been problematised within cultural studies. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to the ‘Christian Enlightenment’.<sup>23</sup> The use of such a phrase is itself problematic. While it is most probably used to mark the Enlightenment as a specifically European historical experience, and perhaps to differentiate such a European experience from periods of ‘enlightenment’ in other contexts, ‘Christian’ is a strange and arguably inaccurate prefix to attach to the ‘Enlightenment’ as an intellectual movement. Given that opposition to the Church as an institution, together with an antipathy toward superstition and irrational belief, is foremost among the defining features of the European Enlightenment, it would seem inappropriate to situate it as being ‘Christian’. Nonetheless, philosophers of the Enlightenment who were not Christian faced acute prejudice, as I show in Chapter Three.

---

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga’ in Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (eds), *The Spivak Reader*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 22.

It is pivotal to re-iterate that it is not my intention to denigrate cultural studies as a multi-disciplinary field or to position it as a 'straw man' against which a potentially reactionary defence of 'western modernity' and 'Enlightenment values' can be mounted. This dissertation is written from within the field of cultural studies and not from outside it. Rather, it is a case of returning to the question by Foucault quoted above, '*What is this Reason that we use?*', and recognising the need to more fully engage with the question of *what* the 'Enlightenment' (or 'enlightenments') is (or are) in terms of historical context and philosophical diversity before affirming, positively or negatively, its contemporary legacy and progressive potential. The question of 'legacy' is a complex one. Within cultural studies, the dominant view of 'Enlightenment' is of a re-inscription and embodiment of power, rather than of a challenge to power.

Theorists and practitioners within cultural studies position the question of identity and the human subject as being a key area of difference between 'Enlightenment' and 'post-modern' discourse. Despite his basically affirmative conception of what 'the Enlightenment' is, Hall asserts that the concept of identity that originated in this period is limiting and highly normative.

The Enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness, and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born.... I shall now look in somewhat more depth at how the concept of identity is said to have shifted, from that of the Enlightenment subject to that of the sociological and then the 'post-modern' subject.<sup>24</sup>

'Enlightenment' is again positioned as a binary opposite to the 'post-modern', so that the contemporary theoretical concept of personal identity as fractured and fluid can be contrasted against a nominal hyper-rationalist and essentialist idea of subjectivity. This

---

<sup>24</sup> Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity' in Hall, Held and McGrew (eds), *Modernity and its Futures*, pp. 275 & 280.

argument is again predicated on the notion that the ‘Enlightenment’ is singular and monolithic, and that therefore the ideas about identity developed during this period are uniform.<sup>25</sup> It can be expressly asserted that writers and philosophers as diverse as Locke, Hume, Rousseau and Wollstonecraft do not all advance the same conceptions of human identity. The Lockean concept of the young or unformed mind as a *tabula rasa* contradicts Hall’s above assertion that the ‘Enlightenment’ idea of personal identity is based on the belief in an ‘inner core which first emerged when the subject was born’. It is true that *some* of the ideas regarding human identity advanced during this period resemble Hall’s description. However, the re-occurring trope within cultural studies of a singular and philosophically unified ‘Enlightenment’ that embodies an oppressive modernity is indicative of a wider debate within the field about how theory is historicised and power is theorised.

In *Culture and Power*, published in 2007, Mark Gibson examines how and why the concept of ‘power’ has been used in the field over the course of its historical and international development. While not directly addressing the subject of the Enlightenment, Gibson’s book is useful in helping to form an understanding of why this subject has been positioned a certain way within cultural studies. He charts how the theorisation of power within cultural studies has developed from the avowedly non-Marxist British empiricism of Richard Hoggart and, to a lesser extent, Raymond Williams through to the conscious embrace of (neo) Marxist theory and continental European philosophy firstly by Perry Anderson and E.P. Thompson and then to a much greater extent by Stuart Hall when he was director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham during the 1970s, leading to an eventual situation where simplified understandings of the theoretical models developed by Hall and others

---

<sup>25</sup> For a more accurate assessment of the origins of the concept of ‘identity’, see Toby Miller, *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture and the Postmodern Subject*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.



have established the basis for cultural studies as it is practised in the ‘Anglo-sphere’ including the United States.

Gibson outlines how any discussion in cultural studies concerning the theorisation of power and the use of European theory has to recognise what Paul Gilroy termed the ‘ethno-historical specificity’ of the field.<sup>26</sup> Through its seminal connection to Britain, cultural studies has been adopted as an academic field of study in ‘the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand’ while ‘much of its theory has been borrowed from continental Europe’.<sup>27</sup> Gibson demonstrates that it was Anderson and Thompson who argued for a turn toward continental theory in British cultural studies during the 1960s and 1970s because they were critical of the lack of a radical and totalising critique of society within British philosophical traditions.<sup>28</sup> Part of Anderson’s Marxist analysis of British society was that, because the English Civil War was ‘pre-Enlightenment’, it was not a liberal revolution and therefore had not altered the semi-feudal structure of British society.<sup>29</sup> Thompson contrasted this with the French Revolution and the supposed French philosophical paradigm of ‘clarity of confrontation, systematic critique, organised and intellectually directed forms of political action’.<sup>30</sup> Gibson notes the irony of the situation in that Anderson and Thompson were advocating the use of totalizing continental theory over piecemeal British empiricism during the same period that French intellectuals, including Foucault, were questioning philosophical models that aspired to be systematic or totalising.<sup>31</sup> However, it was the conscious turn to (initially neo-Marxist) continental theory in British cultural studies that would lead to eventual engagement with Foucault.

---

<sup>26</sup> Mark Gibson, *Culture and Power: A History of Cultural Studies*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

Gibson re-affirms the central importance of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies in Birmingham and the theoretical and political direction it took in the 1970s in establishing the parameters of cultural studies as it has generally been practised since. It is viewed as the time and the place where the empiricist and liberal humanist tradition in cultural studies as embodied by Hoggart and Williams was fundamentally discontinued. As Gibson notes, ‘contemporary accounts of the development of the field abound in references to “interruptions”, “departures” and “ruptures”’.<sup>32</sup> He goes on to state that:

These are defined in two ways: at a theoretical level, in terms of the new possibilities opened up by the uptake of Marxism, Structuralism and European philosophy; and at the political level in terms of the upheavals of the late 1960s and the possibilities opened up by student activism, feminism and the ‘new social movements’.<sup>33</sup>

While Gibson questions the extent to which developments at Birmingham during the 1970s did constitute a ‘rupture’ within cultural studies, he concedes that efforts by Hoggart and Williams to ‘resist a generalised concept of power’ were largely unsuccessful as the themes of ‘power’ and power relations became central to the field.<sup>34</sup> This has, it is argued, led to certain dynamics in the use of tropes of oppression and resistance.

Referring to the internal struggles over the introduction of feminist praxis at Birmingham during the 1970s, Gibson shows how ‘power’ began to be theorised via a certain narrative framework that would become standard within cultural studies.

Feminism, black cultural studies, and later postcolonial criticism, are made to appear as having ‘revealed’ or ‘brought to light’ timeless phenomena which had previously been invisible or concealed. While this narrative was clearly important in providing fresh inspiration to cultural studies from the late 1970s through the 1980s, it has also contributed to a radical de-historicization of the concept of power. Particularly in the more theoretical discourses which developed or consolidated in the field during the 1980s, the concept is presumed

---

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

to refer transparently to a universal or quasi-universal phenomenon, specified at most with reference to ‘patriarchy’, ‘modernity’, or the historical mission of ‘the West’. This de-historicization makes it impossible to consider problems in relation to the specific circumstances in which they arose. While increasingly elaborate theories of power have emerged, little attention has been paid to the way the concept has been formed by the social, political and cultural contexts of the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>

This analysis concerning the ‘radical de-historicization of power’ provides a key to understanding the predominant theoretical positioning of the Enlightenment within cultural studies. An often insufficiently historicised Enlightenment serves as a proxy for, or is conflated with, a ‘modernity’ that embodies ‘Western’ oppression. This pattern is compounded by the use of certain kinds of continental European theory. Many of the mobilised criticisms of ‘Enlightenment’ are based on simplified or reductionist understandings of what theorists such as Foucault are presumed to have argued in relation to ‘reason’ and ‘the Classical age’. The irony is that some of the foundational practitioners of cultural studies were engaging with the legacy of the Enlightenment outside of the turn to continental theory, as evidenced by Raymond Williams writing on the works of David Hume.<sup>36</sup> The question of what Foucault and other European philosophers *actually* argue in relation to the Enlightenment is the subject of the next chapter.

---

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

## Chapter Two

### Situating *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and its Contexts

*The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (*Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*) remains the definitive statement by Jürgen Habermas regarding the necessity of the ‘Enlightenment project’ for progressive social change. It functions as a polemic, albeit as one that is generally nuanced and sensitive. As such, it should be understood in relation to the historical context in which it was written. Referring to Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and its wartime genesis, Habermas states that ‘explanations in terms of contemporary history and psychology can be of interest in theoretical contexts only to the extent that they provide hints of a systematic motive’.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, explanation of the motive underpinning Habermas and *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* cannot be separated from the political and social contexts of the nineteen-eighties. Nor can an explanation be developed without a linked understanding of Habermas’s theoretical and political orientation. His conception of a just and radically democratic society cannot be separated from the emphasis in his theory on communicative rationality.

The belief in the need for such a form of rationality drives Habermas’s argument concerning the importance and necessity of a type of self-aware intellectual modernity derived from the Enlightenment. Aspects of modernity, including the negative effects of technological and administrative rationality, should be criticised but such criticism must be rational if it is to remain progressive in its intent. In the introduction to *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, an edited collection that serves as a response to *Discourse of Modernity*, Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves affirms the link between the arguments Habermas advances in this work and the focus of his broader theory.

---

<sup>37</sup> Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, p. 117.

He is deeply aware of the distortions, aporias and pathologies of modernity, but believes that they can only be addressed and resolved in a fruitful way by protecting and expanding the sphere of communicative rationality against the systematic imperatives of the economy and the state (that is, reversing the colonization of the lifeworld), and by relinking the differentiated domains of science, morality and art, and their corresponding expert cultures, with the communicative praxis of the lifeworld.... By confronting modernity on its own terms, rather than escaping into a nostalgia for premodern traditions, or enthusiastically embracing a technocratic vision of postmodernity, or invoking an antimodern conception of the 'other' of reason, Habermas can thereby hope to redeem the *unfulfilled* promises of modernity.<sup>38</sup>

It is useful therefore to position *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* by establishing what it is not. It is not a liberal-rationalist defence of an unproblematic modernity. It is expressly not a conservative critique. Nor is it a Marxist critique against 'postmodernism' as exemplified by the writings of Alex Callenicos. It is instead a work based in the tradition of critical theory derived from the Frankfurt School. However, it is not my intention to re-inscribe the idea that *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* is best understood as part of the *querelle* between Frankfurt School 'neo-Marxists' on one side and French 'post-modernists' on the other.

The tendency within English-speaking analysis to view *Discourse of Modernity* predominantly in terms of a conflict that positions Habermas against both Foucault and Derrida is a damaging simplification. The oppositional character of the criticisms Habermas advanced against both theorists has been over-emphasised, often at the expense of properly acknowledging the ultimately constructive engagement that was engendered. In regard to Foucault, as I will demonstrate, such a process of engagement had already reached its conclusion by the time *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* had been published in 1985. Another consequence of situating the work primarily in terms of the Habermas-Foucault-Derrida nexus is that equally crucial protagonists and arguments are not always sufficiently engaged with. Of the ten essays

---

<sup>38</sup> Passerin d'Entrèves, 'Introduction' in Passerin d'Entrèves and Benhabib (eds), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 4.

that comprise *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, most of which directly correspond with the twelve lectures contained in *Discourse of Modernity*, there are two on Derrida by different authors, one on Foucault, and five that deal with broader questions of ‘post-modernist’ and ‘post-structuralist’ theory. Engagement with Habermas’s views concerning the intellectual legacies of Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger is condensed into a single essay and his analysis of Horkheimer and Adorno and their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is not given a specific chapter.

It is fair to state that Habermas’s analysis of both Nietzsche and Heidegger in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* is bound up with his critique of ‘postmodernity’ and his readings of Foucault and Derrida respectively. In this chapter, I also confine my engagement with Nietzsche and Heidegger to its bearing on Habermas’s argument and his linking of them to other theorists. I begin my analysis of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* by focusing on Habermas’s reading of Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. I then explore the philosophical and political motivations behind Habermas’s reading of Nietzsche and Heidegger. This leads to an analysis of Habermas’s reading of Derrida in relation to the latter’s later and more politically affirmative work. I conclude with an analysis of Habermas’s reading of Foucault and a demonstration of the pivotal philosophical rapprochement between them as embodied by their mutual engagement with Kant’s writings on Enlightenment. I hope to show that *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* should be understood within the political and cultural context in which it was written as a progressive affirmation of ‘Enlightenment’ and that Habermas’s engagement with some of its featured protagonists has not been static.

## **Horkheimer and Adorno and *Dialectic of Enlightenment***

Habermas refers to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as the ‘blackest book’ to be written by Horkheimer and Adorno.<sup>39</sup> By this he means that it is their most pessimistic work as it explicitly argues that the self-consciously progressive modernity embodied by the Enlightenment has failed. The opening statement of the book’s main chapter encapsulates their argument.

In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy.<sup>40</sup>

The argument that the legacy of the Enlightenment is a negative and destructive form of rationalism runs throughout the book. However, in the original 1944 introduction, both Adorno and Horkheimer affirm that ‘social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought’.<sup>41</sup> Yet it is then stated that this mode of thought nevertheless contains the ‘seed’ of the ‘reversal’ of civilization currently being experienced (within the context of the Second World War).<sup>42</sup> Habermas recognises that the book’s pessimistic outlook is informed both by historical context and the intellectual grounding of the Frankfurt School.

Critical Theory was initially developed in Horkheimer’s circle to think through political disappointments at the absence of revolution in the West, the development of Stalinism in Soviet Russia, and the victory of fascism in Germany. It was supposed to explain mistaken Marxist prognoses, but without breaking with Marxist intentions. Against this background it becomes intelligible how the impression could indeed get established in the darkest years of the Second World War that the last sparks of reason were being extinguished from this reality and had left the ruins of a civilization in collapse without any hope.<sup>43</sup>

Habermas writes as someone whose own intellectual development is strongly influenced by the Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory and who worked with

---

<sup>39</sup> Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 106.

<sup>40</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso, 1979, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* p. xiii.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 116-17.

Adorno and Horkheimer following the post-war re-establishment of the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung* or IfS) in the nineteen-fifties.<sup>44</sup> He would leave the IfS at the end of the decade, supposedly dissatisfied with Horkheimer's apparent attitude of increasingly conservative resignation.<sup>45</sup> Horkheimer's anti-Nazi and anti-Stalinist political stance, coupled with his gratitude at the US-led liberation of Germany, meant that the reconstituted IfS abandoned its earlier Marxist and radical theoretical orientation in favour of one that was limited to the advancement of liberal-democratic consolidation within the Federal Republic.<sup>46</sup> Horkheimer's experiences resulted in him developing a highly pessimistic theoretical attitude concerning both the feasibility and desirability of radical social change.

In arguing against what he sees as the pessimism and nihilism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Habermas focuses on Horkheimer and Adorno's use of Nietzsche. In a section of the book titled 'Excursus: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment', Horkheimer and Adorno situate Nietzsche, together with the German Romantics, as recognising the contradictions of an Enlightenment that resists 'domination' while also masking power and manipulation.<sup>47</sup> They state:

Nietzsche was one of the few after Hegel who recognised the dialectic of enlightenment.... [T]he revelation of these two aspects of the Enlightenment as an historic principle made it possible to trace the notion of enlightenment as progressive thought, back to the beginning of traditional history. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's relation to the Enlightenment ... was still discordant. Though he discerned both the universal movement of sovereign Spirit (whose executor he felt himself to be) and a 'nihilistic' anti-life force in the enlightenment, his pre-Fascist followers retained only the second aspect and perverted it into an ideology. This ideology becomes blind praise of a blind life subject to the same nexus of action by which everything living is suppressed.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Martin Beck Matustik, *Jürgen Habermas: A Philosophical-Political Profile*, Boston: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 44.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*



It would appear that Horkheimer and Adorno are ultimately critical of Nietzsche's philosophy, particularly in relation to how it was misappropriated by proto-Fascist or Nazi ideology. However, Habermas criticises their 'ambivalent attitude towards Nietzsche' and links what he perceives as their anti-rationalism to the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy.<sup>49</sup> He argues that it is this influence that leads Horkheimer and Adorno to give insufficient credit to the 'achievements of Occidental rationalism'.<sup>50</sup> He asks the question:

How can these two men of the Enlightenment (which they both remain) be so unappreciative of the rational content of cultural modernity that all they perceive everywhere is a binding of reason and domination, of power and validity? Have they also let themselves be inspired by Nietzsche in drawing their criteria for cultural criticism from a basic experience of aesthetic modernity that has now been *rendered independent*?<sup>51</sup>

He further asks 'did the state of the question by which Horkheimer and Adorno saw themselves confronted at the beginning of the 1940s leave no way out?'<sup>52</sup> Habermas again situates the pessimism and supposed nihilism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* within the context of the Second World War. In linking the negative dialectics of Horkheimer and Adorno to the philosophy of Nietzsche, he is drawing a negative association between tendencies he disapproves of in cultural theory and German Romanticism. This is one of the re-occurring tropes of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

### **Heidegger and Derrida**

Given that Habermas's writings are noted for caution and ambivalence, the polemical tone of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* can be considered uncharacteristic, as the author of a philosophical-political profile, Martin Beck Matustik, contends.<sup>53</sup>

Matustik argues that Habermas's readings of both Foucault and Derrida are prone to

---

<sup>49</sup> Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 121.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.* (Italics original).

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>53</sup> Matustik, *Jürgen Habermas: A Philosophical-Political Profile*, pp. 225-26.

inaccuracy and generalisations, driven by his fear of where critiques of rationalism can lead.<sup>54</sup> As I demonstrate, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* does not represent the last word in Habermas's engagement with Foucault and Derrida. Its polemical tone and content should be understood within the context of the time in which it was conceived and in relation to Habermas's own philosophical development.

During the nineteen-eighties Habermas was concerned about what he perceived as the increasing strength of politically and culturally conservative tendencies throughout the world. Such developments as the election of radically conservative governments in Britain, the United States and West Germany, the emergence of right-wing historical revisionism also in West Germany, the crisis of the welfare state, and the increasing influence of 'post-structuralist' and 'post-modernist' theory in the Western academic milieu were all viewed by Habermas as an inter-connected assault on the concept of a progressive modernity and the legacy of the Enlightenment.<sup>55</sup> He did not argue that Foucault and Derrida were themselves 'neoconservative' in their political orientation but rather that there was a danger that they were 'cloaking their complicity with the venerable tradition of counter-Enlightenment in the garb of post-Enlightenment'.<sup>56</sup> In this context, Habermas would view Foucault's use of Nietzsche and Derrida's use of Heidegger with suspicion.

The largely negative attitude held by Habermas towards Heidegger stems from the former's sense of disillusionment and anger as someone who was a young admirer of the latter's thought. Habermas asserts that while debate and condemnation concerning Heidegger's political orientation 'must not be allowed to cloud our view of

---

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> See Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

<sup>56</sup> Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 5.

the substantial content of his philosophical work' neither should the question of the relationship between his ideological worldview and his philosophy be ignored.<sup>57</sup> As a young university student in the early nineteen-fifties, Habermas identified as a follower of Heidegger's philosophy as exemplified by *Being and Time*. The break with Heidegger was triggered by the publication in 1953 of his lectures on the *Introduction to Metaphysics* from 1935. Habermas recounts his response.

I was, as a student, at that time so impressed with *Being and Time* that reading these lectures, fascist right down to their stylistic details, actually shocked me. I discussed this impression in a newspaper article – mentioning especially the sentence about the 'inner truth and greatness of the Nazi movement'. What shocked me most was that Heidegger had published in 1953, without explanation or comment, what I had to assume was an unchanged lecture from 1935. Even the foreword made no reference to what had happened in between.<sup>58</sup>

What is at issue for Habermas is not just what Heidegger did or did not do in the nineteen-thirties but his failure to account for it. It is a matter of bad faith and historical denial. For Habermas there is a connection between Heidegger's refusal to publicly reflect or admit error and his 'self-understanding as a thinker with a privileged access to truth'.<sup>59</sup> Heidegger's view of the role of the intellectual is, according to Habermas, inherently anti-democratic and anti-rationalist. Habermas ultimately sees an intricate connection between Heidegger's philosophy and his political ideology.

In both *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and *The New Conservatism* Habermas often does not separate his critique of Derrida from his critique of Heidegger. He stresses Derrida's identification as a 'disciple' of Heidegger.<sup>60</sup> He asserts that 'Derrida concludes from Heidegger's critique of modern subjectivity that we can escape from the treadmill of Western logocentrism only through aimless provocation'.<sup>61</sup> However, these sometimes florid assessments on the part of Habermas should be

---

<sup>57</sup> Habermas, *The New Conservatism*, p. 140.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>60</sup> Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 161.

<sup>61</sup> Habermas, *The New Conservatism*, pp. 51-52.

understood in the political context of the nineteen-eighties and his belief in the necessity of rationalist modernity.

### **Habermas and Derrida**

During the following decade Habermas and Derrida would come to a rapprochement. In 1993 *Specters of Marx* was published. It embodies Derrida's explicit affirmation of 'a spirit of the Enlightenment'.<sup>62</sup> This work, and the lectures upon which it is based, can be considered a reply to the characterisation of Derrida's 'deconstructionist' theories as being antithetical to the advancement of progressive social change, and in particular to the assessment provided by Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. While Foucault may indeed have been the initial 'preferred partner' for Habermas in this project, as I refer to further on in this chapter, it was Derrida with whom he would develop a friendship during the nineteen-nineties. They would eventually collaborate in producing a text that stands as both a practical political intervention and as an expression of the spirit of the enlightenment that both theorists, through differing routes, affirm. The 2003 declaration, entitled 'February 15, or, What binds Europeans Together: Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, beginning in Core Europe' was co-signed by Habermas and Derrida as a statement against the US invasion of Iraq and in support of a more unified Europe.<sup>63</sup> It represents the fundamental political agreement between Habermas and Derrida.

The understanding that both Habermas and Derrida affirm the necessity of a self-critical modernity, albeit from differing perspectives, is what underpins Giovanna Borradori's work containing interviews with both men regarding their views on the

---

<sup>62</sup> Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, p. 110.

<sup>63</sup> See Habermas and Derrida, 'February 15, or, What binds Europeans together: Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, beginning in Core Europe' in Daniel Levy, Max Pensky, and John Torpey (eds), *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations after the Iraq War*, London: Verso, 2005.

ramifications of the events that occurred in New York City on the eleventh of September 2001. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* is predicated on the thesis that the philosophical discussion of the events of '9/11' and their aftermath should include 'a critical reassessment of the political ideals of the Enlightenment'.<sup>64</sup> Both theorists are positioned together in the context of this work as sharing a basic 'allegiance to the Enlightenment' in their differing approaches.<sup>65</sup> The separate interviews that Borradori conducts with both men constitutes a dialogue with, rather than a dialogue between, them. However, in a broader sense *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* attempts to embody the rapprochement between Habermas and Derrida. There is a foregrounding of the underlying radical democratic politics that informs the differing theoretical projects of both men. This does not mean that Borradori argues that both Habermas and Derrida simply agree with each other. Rather, it means that she rejects the binarised and oppositional positioning of the two theorists that occurred within the intellectual context of the nineteen-eighties. She states:

Where a philosopher stands vis-à-vis the heritage of the Enlightenment is thus not only a theoretical matter but also implies delicate political ramifications. Like many philosophers who came of age in the 1980s, I grew up convinced that Habermas and Derrida expressed sharply opposed views with regard to the Enlightenment: Habermas defended it, and Derrida rejected it. Later on, I came to realise that this was a skewed picture for which the intellectual obsession of the decade – the *querelle* between modernism and postmodernism – is the main culprit.<sup>66</sup>

*Philosophy in a Time of Terror* has significance as being one of the first (and in retrospect, one of the last) works to facilitate an engagement between Habermas and Derrida based on the understanding that both offer readings of the Enlightenment that, while divergent, are ultimately complimentary. While Borradori does not render problematic the capitalized designation of 'Enlightenment' that she employs, she is

---

<sup>64</sup> Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

sensitive to the ambiguities of determining its legacy. She situates Habermas and Derrida as being oriented towards differing continuums in the European context: the former is positioned within a tradition of consciously progressive or emancipatory critical theory that has its lineage not only in the Frankfurt School but also in the work of Kant while the latter is linked to Nietzsche and Heidegger.<sup>67</sup> This respective positioning of both Habermas and Derrida is in itself conventional and follows the understanding that Habermas himself constructs in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. However, these separate trajectories are positioned not as being incompatible, but as both embodying the self-critical evaluation that is pivotal to the project of Enlightenment.

That this dialogue with Habermas and Derrida links the ongoing theoretical discussion of the ‘Enlightenment project’ with a discussion of the events relating to ‘9/11’ is partly a result of timing. Both men were due to arrive at conferences in New York when the events occurred.<sup>68</sup> It is, however, an event that brings some of the key theoretical tropes of both theorists into sharp focus. For Habermas, the events are relevant to his varied work on the nature of democracy, law, and terrorism. For both Habermas and Derrida, the questions of cosmopolitanism and how ‘Europe’ or ‘the West’ is constituted are also relevant. Within the framework of the book and its interviews, the events of September the eleventh constitute a threat to the social and political ideals of ‘Enlightenment’ both in relation to ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and ‘terrorism’ and in relation to the political and military responses that are engendered.

Given that Borradori explicitly positions Habermas and Derrida as sharing a qualified belief in ‘Enlightenment’ ideals, it is unfortunate that *Philosophy in a Time of*

---

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. x.

*Terror* does not contain a joint interview between them. The structure of the book, with Borradori's separate interviews with both men featured between her commentary and analysis, leads to a sense that a rapprochement is being claimed but not necessarily demonstrated. As an intervention in the aforementioned *querelle*, the work does not match up with its stated intentions. Linking the respective reflections of Habermas and Derrida on 'September the 11<sup>th</sup>' with the broader question concerning 'the legacy of the Enlightenment' is a logical and worthwhile project. However, this synthesis is not readily apparent in the interviews and thus there is a sense of disconnection between Borradori's stated project and the actual words of Habermas and Derrida. Just as *Specters of Marx* makes Derrida's politics explicit through his reflections on the possibilities of progressive theory in the aftermath of the 'Cold War', *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* attempts to give Derrida a platform for political expression in the context of a recent event. However, as a demonstration of a convergence between Habermas and Derrida regarding the Enlightenment project, the work is less than successful in its stated intentions.

*Philosophy in a Time of Terror* is indicative of the increasing recognition among certain theorists of the need for revision regarding the perceived politics of the 'postmodern'. Following Derrida's explicit identification with Enlightenment in *Specters of Marx*, there is a desire to progress from the understandings that have been dominant since the nineteen-eighties. Within this context, a rapprochement between Habermas and Derrida has significant symbolic value. Such a rapprochement had more time to develop than that between Habermas and Foucault. Nonetheless, while the developing philosophical recognition of shared understanding and agreement between Habermas and Derrida was genuine, Borradori's intervention represents a forced attempt to incorporate this trope into a work that is expressly a philosophical meditation

on the meaning of '9/11'. The 'February 15' declaration against the invasion of Iraq signed by both men two years later stands as a better example. However, the actual text was written solely by Habermas, albeit with Derrida's endorsement. It seems fitting that the political and philosophical convergence between Habermas and Derrida was marked by aporias and silences.

### **Foucault and Habermas on Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung?***

Michel Foucault is the subject of two lectures in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Thomas McCarthy, in his introduction to the English-language edition, concludes that it would appear Foucault is the 'preferred partner' for Habermas 'in his dialogue with French poststructuralism'.<sup>69</sup> McCarthy's use of the word 'dialogue' is instructive. Some commentators have interpreted *Discourse of Modernity* as constituting a series of polemic 'attacks' on theorists including Foucault and Derrida.<sup>70</sup> I have explored the context for this and shown how Habermas and Derrida would eventually affirm a shared philosophical-political position on the necessity of 'Enlightenment'. In the case of Foucault, such a convergence was already in progress while *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* was being written.

In the supposedly oppositional dialogue between Habermas and Foucault concerning questions of modernity and the character and legacy of the Enlightenment, engagement with the work of Kant provides a shared point of reference. In particular, Kant's 1784 essay 'What is Enlightenment?' is positioned by both theorists as embodying the self-aware and questioning progressive impulse that distinguishes the Enlightenment from earlier designations of the 'modern'. Foucault publicised his thoughts on Kant and the *Was ist Aufklärung?* essay in a series of lectures given

---

<sup>69</sup> Thomas McCarthy, 'Introduction' in Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. xiv.

<sup>70</sup> See Joel Whitebook, 'Intersubjectivity and the Monadic Core of the Psyche: Habermas and Castoriadis on the Unconscious' in Passerin d'Entrèves and Benhabib (eds), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, p. 172.



between 1978 and 1983. These lectures, each distinctive while also similar in theme and content, demonstrate the evolution of Foucault's engagement with this topic. In effect, they constitute an indirect dialogue with Habermas and his contemporary lecture-based critique of 'post-modern' and 'post-structuralist' thought that would eventually be published as *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. The dialogue between the two theorists would become increasingly direct until Foucault's death in 1984 prevented any further engagement. However, in his memorial address to Foucault delivered that year, Habermas directly engages with one of Foucault's lectures on Kant and the Enlightenment and indicates that the theoretical conceptions contained in this lecture alter the characterisation of Foucault's philosophical positioning which he had previously advanced in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

I do not seek to argue that Habermas and Foucault came to a rapprochement through simply agreeing with each other about the nature of the Enlightenment. Rather, by identifying the ways in which Foucault shares with Habermas a historicised, critical, but ultimately affirmative understanding of the legacy of the Enlightenment, I hope to show not only the useful insights that both theorists provide regarding such an understanding but also that the oppositional framing of the debate between them is largely a misreading which obscures the results of their constructive engagement. In short, Habermas and Foucault both recognise the continuing importance of a self-critical project of progressive modernity as delineated by Kant.

The series of lectures and manuscripts in which Foucault specifically addresses the subject of Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?' were finally published together in 2007 in a collection entitled *The Politics of Truth*. The title derives from Foucault's 1978 lecture on Kant, 'What is Critique?' which was delivered before the French Society of

Philosophy.<sup>71</sup> In this lecture, Foucault identifies the process of ‘critique’, as exemplified by the questioning of existing institutions and traditions, as being both the central theme in Kant’s definition of ‘Enlightenment’ and the legacy of that period to modern thought.

He states:

I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then! Critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination and reflected intractability. It would essentially ensure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.<sup>72</sup>

Foucault goes on to affirm that ‘in his attempt to desubjugate the subject in the context of power and truth, as a prolegomena [sic] to the whole present and future *Aufklärung*, Kant set forth critique’s primordial responsibility, to know knowledge’.<sup>73</sup> In identifying the character of the Enlightenment and Kant’s definition of it in this manner, Foucault draws explicit links between the Kantian *Aufklärung* and his own philosophical concerns. In so doing, he seeks to properly position the historical context of the Enlightenment to establish the intellectual continuity that exists between the Enlightenment and early modernity.

Throughout the lecture, repeated reference is made to the importance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the events of the Reformation in the development of critical discourses relating to truth and power. Foucault asserts that the history of critique within the western tradition revolves around the central question of ‘how [and how not] to be governed’.<sup>74</sup> He cites the conflict with established Church authority over the interpretation of scripture during the Reformation as a crucial point in the development of a critique of established authority as an intellectual tradition in

---

<sup>71</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007, p. 194.

<sup>72</sup> Foucault, ‘What is Critique?’ in *The Politics of Truth*, p. 47.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 44-46.

Europe.<sup>75</sup> He even goes so far as to suggest that the differing intellectual contexts of the classical Enlightenment within France and Germany are related to the fact that the German-speaking countries were part of the Reformation and France was not.<sup>76</sup> In noting the particularity of the German intellectual tradition and its engagement with questions concerning both the nature of critique and the nature of modernity, he refers in passing to both the Frankfurt School and Habermas.<sup>77</sup> If this lecture focuses on the link between critique and intellectual modernity, then Foucault's next lecture on the subject of Kant and the *Aufklärung* goes further in seeking to establish what distinguishes the Enlightenment from early modernity and thus renders it unique.

Foucault's first lecture at the College de France in 1983 would be the text that Habermas would eventually engage with. It is known under several titles. He refers to it simply as Foucault's lecture on Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?'. However, the editor of *The Politics of Truth* gives it the title of 'What is Revolution?' to distinguish it from another essay by Foucault with the other title (not to mention Kant's original essay). The editor's choice of title derives from the focus of the lecture being not only on Kant's '*Was ist Aufklärung?*' but also on his written reflections concerning the French Revolution. This is the lecture in which Foucault seeks to identify how the Enlightenment embodies a specifically self-conscious and progressive discourse of modernity, as opposed to the early modernity of the Renaissance and Reformation. His central observation about Kant's *Aufklärung* essay is that 'for the first time, one sees philosophy problematize its own discursive actuality'.<sup>78</sup> He goes on to position the originality of the historical situation in the following way.

No doubt one of the more interesting perspectives for the study of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in general, and of the *Aufklärung*, in particular would be to examine the

---

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 53 & 58.

<sup>78</sup> Foucault, 'What is Revolution?' in *The Politics of Truth*, p. 85.

fact that the *Aufklärung* named itself *Aufklärung*, that it is a very unique cultural process which became aware of itself by naming itself, by situating itself in terms of its past and its future, and by indicating how it had to operate within its own present.<sup>79</sup>

Foucault situates Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?' essay as being a seminal event in the development of a European tradition of a self-conscious 'modern philosophy' that would become dominant from the end of the eighteenth century onwards.<sup>80</sup> It was at this point, at the end of the century, that Kant would write what Foucault positions as a 'follow-up' to the 1784 essay. Fourteen years later, in 1798, *The Conflict of the Faculties* was published.<sup>81</sup> While this work ostensibly concerns the relations between the different faculties that comprise the structure of a university, Foucault argues that it is effectively a sequel to 'What is Enlightenment?' and, following the events in France, revolves around the question of 'What is Revolution?'.<sup>82</sup>

*The Conflict of the Faculties* is made up of three separate papers, and Foucault shows that the second paper, concerning the dispute between the School of Philosophy and the School of Law, is based around the question of whether human progress is possible.<sup>83</sup> It is in this context that Kant refers to the example of the French Revolution. Foucault suggests that Kant measures progress in relation to the Revolution not in terms of political and structural change and upheaval, but in terms of a shift in human morality that results in people knowing that they can change and shape their own actuality.<sup>84</sup> The self-aware attitude towards the idea of progress, as opposed to accepting its inevitability, is what matters according to Foucault. He states:

There again the question for philosophy is not to determine which is the part of the Revolution that it would be most fitting to preserve and uphold as a model. The question is to know what must be done with this will for revolution, with this *enthusiasm* for the Revolution which is something other than the

---

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 91.

revolutionary process itself. The two questions: ‘What is the *Aufklärung*?’ and ‘What to do with the will for revolution?’ together define the field of philosophical questioning that is concerned with what we are in our present.<sup>85</sup>

Foucault goes on to affirm that Kant is thus responsible for both of ‘the two great critical traditions which divide modern philosophy’.<sup>86</sup> He argues that, on the one hand, much of Kant’s critical work is concerned with the question of ‘the conditions under which true knowledge is possible’ and that this ‘analytic of truth’, this search for the absolute objective laws of reality, is what underpins a major strand of modern philosophy since the nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> However, on the other hand, the *Aufklärung* essay and *The Conflict of the Faculties* are, according to Foucault, demonstrative of this other strand of critical thought, self-aware and questioning, that explores how people can define themselves and the time in which they live.<sup>88</sup> Both intellectual traditions are legacies of the Enlightenment and Foucault positions himself as being part of the latter continuum. He concludes the lecture by affirming that the Kantian legacy presents practitioners of contemporary philosophical inquiry with a choice.

It seems to me that the philosophical choice with which we are confronted at present is this: we can opt for a critical philosophy which will present itself as an analytic philosophy of truth in general, or we can opt for a form of critical thought which will be an ontology of ourselves, an ontology of the actuality. It is this form of philosophy that, from Hegel to the Frankfurt School, through Nietzsche and Max Weber, has founded the form of reflection within which I have attempted to work.<sup>89</sup>

Foucault thus identifies himself as operating within the framework of an intellectual tradition which can be traced back to the Enlightenment and specifically to Kant, and which includes the Frankfurt School. He is positively affirming the continuing value of the Enlightenment to progressive philosophical thought and identifying himself with that project.

---

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p. 94 (italics and capitalisation original).

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.

It is therefore not surprising that in his memorial address for Foucault, Habermas engages with the text of this lecture in attempting to determine the complex relationship between this theorist and the Enlightenment. At the beginning of his address, Habermas recounts that the first and only time he met Foucault was in 1983 and that the two agreed to meet the following year ‘with some American colleagues’ in order to discuss Kant’s ‘What is Enlightenment?’<sup>90</sup> Habermas states that at the time he was unaware of the ‘lecture on that very subject that Foucault had just given’ and only became aware of it following Foucault’s death, a death which prevented any further meeting between the two.<sup>91</sup> Within this address, Habermas does not indicate that he is aware that Foucault has written other lectures and manuscripts on Kant and the *Aufklärung* and that the College de France ‘What is Revolution?’ lecture is thus one of a series of evolving but reasonably consistent reflections. However, given that Foucault and Habermas are perceived as embodying oppositional views concerning the legacy of the Enlightenment and the value of intellectual modernity, this memorial address represents something equivalent to a settling of accounts with Foucault on the part of Habermas. It entails an acknowledgement that Foucault, like Habermas, holds an ultimately positive conception of the Enlightenment as being an evolving and self-aware critical tradition, as opposed to being a static body of knowledge.

In both summarising and analysing Foucault’s account of the links between the two works by Kant, Habermas asserts that the picture of Kant that Foucault develops in this lecture is markedly different from the one he gives in *The Order of Things*.<sup>92</sup> Kant as the seeker of objective truth is superseded by Kant as ‘the precursor to the Young Hegelians’, investigating how people assess their own contemporary reality.<sup>93</sup> Of

---

<sup>90</sup> Habermas, ‘Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present: On Foucault’s Lecture on Kant’s *What is Enlightenment?*’ in *The New Conservatism*, p. 174.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

course, this multi-faceted view of Kant on the part of Foucault is entirely consistent with his assertion in the lecture that the Prussian philosopher is the initiator of two differing traditions within modern philosophy. Habermas identifies the crux of Foucault's observations, and poetically asserts that 'Foucault discovers in Kant the *first* philosopher to take aim like an archer at the heart of a present that is concentrated in the significance of the contemporary moment, and thereby to inaugurate the discourse of modernity'.<sup>94</sup> In making this statement, Habermas acknowledges that he and Foucault share a similar understanding of the Enlightenment as the crucible for a progressive, self-critical form of modernity. In summarising the final paragraph of the lecture, Habermas states:

If this is even a paraphrase of Foucault's own train of thought, the question arises how such an affirmative understanding of modern philosophising, a philosophising that is inscribed in our present and always directed to the relevance of our contemporary reality, fits with Foucault's unyielding critique of modernity. How can Foucault's self-understanding as a thinker in the tradition of the Enlightenment be compatible with his unmistakable critique of precisely this form of knowledge, which is that of modernity?<sup>95</sup>

Habermas is perhaps trying to come to terms with the realisation that the criticisms of Foucault that he expounded in the lectures that would be published as part of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* were overwrought, if not a misreading. Nonetheless, his defence that Foucault's body of work is often contradictory in its arguments is reasonable. Habermas does in fact commend the way Foucault 'perseveres in productive contradictions'.<sup>96</sup> Given that this public valorisation of Foucault's work dates from the year of his death, it demonstrates that the supposed *querelle* between the supposed 'post-modernists' and the successors of the Frankfurt School was already becoming redundant by the time it became received knowledge in the wider academic context.

---

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 175-76.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p. 178.

If both Derrida and Foucault are in fundamental agreement with Habermas in affirming, in differing ways, the progressive necessity of 'Enlightenment', then the theoretical basis of the dominant critique offered by some forms of cultural studies is weak and ahistorical. If Foucault did *not* argue that the legacy of the Enlightenment is simply oppressive, practitioners of cultural studies who advance this argument cannot correctly claim that it is based on either 'post-modernist' or 'post-structuralist' theory. The progressive actuality of the historical Enlightenment is the subject of Part Two of this dissertation.



## **Part Two**

### Chapter Three

#### Kant and Mendelssohn both reply to the ‘Question’: Moses Mendelssohn and Inclusive Citizenship

As established in the previous chapter, Habermas and Foucault reached agreement in arguing that a critical and self-aware conception of modernity was the relevant legacy of the historical Enlightenment to contemporary theory. Furthermore, both theorists position Kant as being the central protagonist in this critical affirmation of the Enlightenment within its own time. However, Kant was certainly not the only contemporary intellectual to valorise the project of the Enlightenment while also recognising its problematic elements. Writing during the same period, the Berlin-based philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was both a critic of and an advocate for the professed values of the Enlightenment. As a Prussian Jew, Mendelssohn used Enlightenment discourse as the intellectual framework for campaigning toward greater civil rights, religious freedoms, and social opportunities for Jewish people in the German states and elsewhere in Europe. Mendelssohn’s participation in the debates over the character of the Enlightenment is thus linked to a concrete political and social reformist project.

In this chapter, I will show how the works of Kant and Mendelssohn intersect and how both display a nuanced attitude towards the relationship between Enlightenment values and social progress. To this end, I focus on specific texts and position these within historical and biographical context. In particular, I explore the importance of *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn’s treatise on religious toleration, and Kant’s and Mendelssohn’s separate essays both entitled *What is Enlightenment?*

The work of Moses Mendelssohn has to be understood within the context of the time and place in which he lived. His status as a member of the Jewish community, whose civil and religious rights and freedoms were markedly inferior to the other subjects of the absolute monarchy of Prussia, was fundamental to his philosophical project. This project was both nuanced and ambitious, as it advocated civic equality, religious freedom and social pluralism within the framework of enlightened absolutism. Crucially, Mendelssohn was advocating religious freedom not just in relation to the rights of Jewish subjects of the Prussian state but also in relation to theological debate and religious practice within the Jewish community itself. Mendelssohn is thus a seminal figure in the *Haskala*, the so-called ‘Jewish Enlightenment’ centred around European Jewish communities that would eventually lead to ‘Reform Judaism’. Mendelssohn’s intellectual project therefore has two tiers: it is both a programme of social and political reform based on concepts of inclusive citizenship and human rights as well as a philosophical and theological project of religious reform and spiritual inquiry.

Mendelssohn’s philosophy is therefore a synthesis of the ‘enlightenment’ model of critical thought and the much older tradition of critical scholarship within Judaism. Biographical studies of Mendelssohn point towards how such a synthesis developed, with Alexander Altmann’s 1973 biography remaining definitive. Mendelssohn was born in 1729 in the city of Dessau, the capital of the principality of Anhalt-Dessau to a father who was a Judaic scribe entrusted with copying Torah scrolls and writing other documents of Jewish law.<sup>97</sup> Altmann describes how Mendelssohn’s birthplace was home to a significant Jewish community and was a centre of Judaic religious scholarship, assisted by the patronage of ‘court-Jews’, Jewish scholars who served as

---

<sup>97</sup> Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 3.

advisors to princely and royal households and as such enjoyed their favour. In eighteenth century Europe, the ‘court-Jew’ therefore served as a significant link between the legal and social segregation of the ghetto and the upper echelons of society.<sup>98</sup> Mendelssohn was thus literate in the tradition of Jewish scholarship from childhood.

Mendelssohn left Dessau for Berlin, the main city of Prussia, at the age of fourteen.<sup>99</sup> It was here that he was gradually exposed to intellectual currents beyond Orthodox Judaism, despite the fact that he had come to Berlin for the specific purpose of furthering his Talmudic studies under the tutelage of the Chief Rabbi, David Frankel.<sup>100</sup> The tradition of critical analysis within the Hamidrash led Mendelssohn to the study of later Jewish scholars, including the medieval Hispano-Jewish philosopher Maimonides. Altmann asserts that it was ‘his study of Maimonides that provided Moses’ first link with the modern Enlightenment’.<sup>101</sup> Mendelssohn’s interest in developing his scholarly knowledge beyond Judaism led to him studying Latin in order to understand the writings of more contemporary European philosophers.

It was via the study of Latin that Mendelssohn encountered the writings of John Locke. Among the first non-classical Latin texts he studied was *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.<sup>102</sup> The first (near) contemporary philosopher whose writings Mendelssohn studied was thus one of the seminal and most important figures in Enlightenment thought. Locke would remain a significant influence on Mendelssohn’s philosophy, not just in terms of epistemology but also in relation to theories of religious toleration and civil society. Other modern philosophers whose work Mendelssohn

---

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

would become familiar with during this period include Leibniz, Wolff and Spinoza.<sup>103</sup> Mendelssohn's attitude towards Spinoza was nuanced, as he admired much of the latter's work and in some respects wished to emulate him while also remaining a devout follower of Judaism.<sup>104</sup> The supposed contradiction between his status as an enlightened philosopher and his identity as an observant Jew is a re-occurring theme in Mendelssohn's later career as a public intellectual.

This brief biographical summary demonstrates the multi-layered complexity of Mendelssohn's intellectual formation. His first decade in Berlin incorporated completing his Talmudic studies while also reading other, more recent, Jewish thinkers including Maimonides and Spinoza as well as learning Latin and reading 'modern' philosophers including Locke and Leibniz. Mendelssohn's intellectual basis as a philosopher thus combines an understanding of both Jewish theology, and the tradition of critical thinking that is constant within it, and the contemporary critical thought of the European Enlightenment. This synthesis that Mendelssohn works with therefore embodies a continuum of critical thinking in which Judaism and the Enlightenment are compatible elements in the expansion of human knowledge. Altmann describes the intellectual formation of the young Mendelssohn in the following, somewhat poetic, terms:

What Mendelssohn achieved was the creation, within himself, of a rich interior world in which the Jewish heritage blended with the philosophy of the age, and which removed the barriers of the ghetto long before emancipation was considered in legal terms. What he dreamt of was not commercial success as the road to wider contacts but a wider intellectual horizon and the prospect of citizenship in the world of the Enlightenment. The vision of this goal did not come to him suddenly. Nor did he achieve it by his own unaided efforts: he was fortunate enough to find mentors to guide him. And yet the decisive impulse did come from within.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 27 & 33.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

It was through the patronage of a series of gentile friends and mentors that Mendelssohn was able to establish a public role as a writer and philosopher and, while he may not have been motivated by ‘commercial success’, entering into the management and later the ownership of a silk factory gave him the financial means and economic security to pursue that role.<sup>106</sup> While much of Mendelssohn’s early work is beyond the thematic scope of this chapter, it established his legitimacy and reputation within the enlightened public sphere, thereby enabling the publication of his more politically focused later work.

Mendelssohn established his career as a published writer (beyond the Jewish religious community) by becoming a regular contributor to, and later editor of, his friend Friedrich Nicolai’s literary review *Literaturbriefe* in 1759.<sup>107</sup> However, his reputation as a public philosopher and critic was aided by submitting the winning entry for the Royal Academy’s prize-essay competition in 1761.<sup>108</sup> The essay question, pertaining to the difference between metaphysical and mathematical truth, elicited many submissions, including one from Kant.<sup>109</sup> This was over twenty years before they would both submit essays on the question ‘What is Enlightenment?’ towards the end of their careers. Kant received the commendation for second place but was impressed with Mendelssohn’s successful entry.<sup>110</sup> The two would correspond regularly over the next twenty years. Within four years of winning the prize, Mendelssohn would publish *The Phaedon*, a Socratic dialogue.<sup>111</sup> This work, embodying the enlightened respect for classical sources, would secure Mendelssohn’s reputation as a philosopher.

---

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 112-13.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140.

## **Understanding *Jerusalem***

Mendelssohn's career as a public intellectual, or an inhabitant of the 'republic of letters' is based on his dual role as both a philosopher concerned largely with theological questions and as an advocate for the civil rights of a religious and ethnic minority. His mature work skilfully combines both of these roles. Indeed, as a philosopher focusing mainly on questions of theology, Mendelssohn positions his political advocacy in a manner that is just abstract and hypothetical enough to avoid being a direct attack on the Prussian state and the rule of the 'enlightened' monarch Frederick the Second (or 'The Great'). Rather than make demands as an activist, as a philosopher he poses questions and crafts arguments that lead to self-evident conclusions. The political project of civil equality is supported by the philosophical project of arguing for religious pluralism and the validity of Judaism.

Official discrimination against Jews in eighteenth century Prussia was an intricate system of different levels of disadvantage. According to Altmann, in 1750 the existing system of discrimination was further codified through a royal edict issued by Frederick the Great.<sup>112</sup> Prussian residents of Jewish origin were divided into six different categories or classes. The first four classes comprised the *Schutzjuden* or 'protected Jews'. The most senior class were those granted 'general privilege' which enabled freedom of movement within the city, equal commercial standing with Christian merchants, and the hereditary conferral of these privileges to all offspring. The second class of *Schutzjuden* had highly restricted freedom of movement and, in each family, only one child could inherit their protected status. The third class was comprised of skilled professionals whose protected status was not hereditary while the fourth class were the religious officials of the Jewish community whose protected status was also non-hereditary. The last two classes were 'tolerated' rather than 'protected'.

---

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

Those in the fifth class had to depend on the patronage of protected Jews, had no privileges, and were unable to enter into either trade or the professions while the sixth class were private employees who were not permitted to stay in Berlin beyond the duration of their employment and were not allowed to marry.<sup>113</sup> Such a level of stratification indicates the highly structured nature of the discrimination experienced by Jews in Berlin and Prussia.

The young Moses Mendelssohn was thus himself an ‘unprotected foreign Jew’ when he first came to Berlin to study under the patronage of the Chief Rabbi.<sup>114</sup> Frederick would eventually grant him protected status in 1763, following his success as a public philosopher and as a silk merchant. Over the following decade Mendelssohn would thus establish himself as the respectable and respected voice on behalf of the Jewish community in Berlin, using his standing and reputation to intervene and assist.<sup>115</sup> In the context of eighteenth-century Berlin, he embodies not only the traditional role of intercessor between the Jewish community and the gentile establishment, but also a connection between the ghetto and the ‘republic of letters’.

Mendelssohn’s presence in the public sphere of writers and thinkers would test the contradictions and tensions within enlightened liberalism. A belief in ‘tolerance’ could be accompanied by a belief that Judaism was retrograde superstition. Kant’s friendship with Mendelssohn did not preclude him from expressing traditional views on the question of Jews and Judaism. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, first published in 1798 but older as a course of lectures, Kant recognises that the ‘civil status’ of Jews is ‘weak’.<sup>116</sup> However, further on in a note to the text, he asserts that the

---

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, p. 421.

<sup>116</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (trans. and ed. by Robert B. Loudon), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 63.



‘Palestinians living among us since their exile, or at least the great majority of them, have earned the not unfounded reputation of being cheaters, on account of their spirit of usury’.<sup>117</sup> In re-instating this traditional slur, Kant fails to acknowledge that the dominance of Jews in the money-lending trade was due to legal restrictions since the Middle Ages. He goes on to characterise Judaism as an ‘ancient superstition’.<sup>118</sup> Such hostility towards Jews and Judaism was expressed not only by philosophers who held atheist or deist positions but also by those who held that any truly enlightened person would recognise the truth of Christianity and therefore accept conversion. Mendelssohn encountered this attitude in the writer Johann Casper Lavater in what became known as the ‘Lavater Affair’.<sup>119</sup>

The ‘Lavater Affair’ entailed Mendelssohn having to both assert and defend his position as a religiously devout Jew while avoiding the appearance of attacking Christianity and the figure of Christ. It was a controversy that he was reluctantly drawn into due to Lavater’s actions. Lavater was an ‘enlightened’ theologian who had personally known Mendelssohn since 1763.<sup>120</sup> Over the course of the next few years, Lavater and Mendelssohn had several private conversations on matters of philosophy and theology. At some point, Mendelssohn made a statement to the effect that as a philosopher he had respect for the moral character of Jesus as a man.<sup>121</sup> Lavater interpreted this to mean that Mendelssohn was open to conversion to Christianity. Mendelssohn would later claim that his willingness to discuss matters of Christian theology was prompted by Lavater’s insistence and that there was assumed to be an understanding that such conversations would remain private.<sup>122</sup> As a theologian, Lavater had previously argued in his writings that the ‘second coming’ of Christ was predicated

---

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, p. 201.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

on the conversion of all Jews to Christianity.<sup>123</sup> He was therefore motivated by a strong personal belief in hoping to facilitate Mendelssohn's conversion.

The shift from private debate to public controversy occurred in 1769.<sup>124</sup> That year Lavater published his German translation of Genevan philosopher Charles Bonnet's treatise on the truth of Christianity, *La Palingenesie*. This translation was prefaced by a dedication from Lavater to Mendelssohn. In this dedication, Lavater directs fulsome praise towards Mendelssohn's 'excellence' as both a philosopher and as a man, lauding him as 'an *Israelite in whom there is no guile*'.<sup>125</sup> He goes on to state 'I shall never forget the sweet modesty with which you look upon Christianity, despite your remoteness from it; nor shall I forget the *philosophical* respect which ... you expressed for the *moral* character of its founder'.<sup>126</sup> Having disclosed the nature of a private conversation, Lavater goes on to request of Mendelssohn that he not only read this translation of Bonnet's work but that he publicly state as a philosopher whether or not he agrees with Bonnet's arguments concerning the truth of Christianity.<sup>127</sup> The dedication was thus essentially a form of public intellectual and moral blackmail.

In his public reply to Lavater's challenge, Mendelssohn employed lines of argument that would be further developed in *Jerusalem*. After some initial drafting, he decided that his reply would explicitly avoid debating questions of theological truth and instead focus on principles of religious and philosophical toleration and pluralism.<sup>128</sup> He adopted a philosophical position, as opposed to a theological one. His reply did however contain a defence of Judaism as a valid belief system based on tolerance and

---

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.* (italics original).

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.* (italics original).

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, p. 214.

morality.<sup>129</sup> His argument that Judaism is tolerant was based on the principle that it does not seek to convert non-believers.<sup>130</sup> In an argument that would be further developed and re-affirmed in both *Jerusalem* and *On the Question: What is Enlightenment?*, Mendelssohn valorises personal and public morality over the ‘truth’ of any particular religious creed.<sup>131</sup> However, as I will show, religion and morality are still very much interlinked in Mendelssohn’s philosophy. The *Letter to Lavater* was published in 1770.<sup>132</sup> It signifies Mendelssohn’s increased willingness to engage publicly with questions relating to the place of Jews in society, culminating in the publication of *Jerusalem* over a decade later.

Traditional anti-Semitism could be re-inscribed during the Enlightenment. Voltaire is the most noted example of this tendency. Mendelssohn disliked Voltaire on account of his anti-Semitism, his antipathy to organised religion and because of a general quality of superficiality that Mendelssohn ascribed to the French *philosophes*.<sup>133</sup> The French Enlightenment is, with some exceptions, not the Enlightenment that Mendelssohn subscribes to. Aside from contemporaries including Kant, his philosophical basis is informed by the early Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. John Locke, as noted above, together with Christian Wolff and Samuel von Pufendorf, were formative influences on Mendelssohn. This type of philosophy, combining the study of natural law with projects of civil reform, is a major influence on the conception of civil and religious rights and freedoms that Mendelssohn presents in *Jerusalem*.

The civil philosophy that Pufendorf and his followers developed in the German states during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is significantly different

---

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.* See pp. 30 & 335-336.

from the metaphysical philosophy espoused by Kant during the late eighteenth century. However, the former is of equal significance in the historical development of enlightenment thought. This is the argument put forward by Ian Hunter in his book *Rival Enlightenments*. Hunter asserts that the importance of ‘Pufendorbian’ civil philosophy to the historical formation of enlightened intellectual discourse has been largely obscured by the contemporary scholarly focus on Kantian metaphysics as the main legacy of the German Enlightenment.<sup>134</sup> These two differing approaches to questions concerning the nature of the human subject and society embody ‘rival’ tendencies within the Enlightenment. As I will show, Mendelssohn’s philosophy employs a unique synthesis of these opposing traditions.

Pursuing a consciously revisionist line of argument, Hunter reconstructs the origins of this civil philosophy, demonstrating that the instituting of concepts such as religious freedom and toleration owe more to pragmatic and anti-metaphysical strategies of statecraft than the self-conscious promotion of ‘reason’ associated with the ‘high’ Enlightenment. He states:

Our initial sketch of a ‘civil enlightenment’ – pre-dating the philosophical *Aufklärung* by a century or more, and arising from sources quite other than the ‘work of thought’ – would therefore seem to find its moorings in a substantial body of historical work. Here, there is significant consensus that a civil enlightenment – that is, the first moves to establish religious toleration, detheologise politics, separate civil society from religious community – emerged as a response to the devastation of religious civil war.<sup>135</sup>

Hunter therefore situates the political and religious reforms advocated by Pufendorf and his followers including Christian Thomasius within the historical context of the Thirty Years War having only recently ended. Policies of religious toleration were promoted because such policies aided the security of the state. This process of the ‘desacralisation of politics’, as Hunter terms it, therefore had its theoretical basis not in ‘university

---

<sup>134</sup> Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. ix-x.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

metaphysics or moral philosophy’ but in a mode of civil philosophy that comprised ‘natural law, political law, neo-Aristotelian and neo-Stoic political sciences, [and] civic republicanism’.<sup>136</sup> Such a process resulted in the ‘first liberal freedoms’ being instituted with the absence of any liberal-rationalist idealism.<sup>137</sup> Pufendorf’s attitude to notions of human perfectibility can appear contradictory. He views the human subject as being intrinsically moral and ‘equipped by nature to know the natural law’ but also as being unable to ‘govern himself in accordance with it’.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, he views a strong state as being necessary for social peace. Hunter summarises the political and social vision of the natural law theorists in the following terms.

The state envisaged by Pufendorf and Thomasius was one that pursued external security through diplomacy and war, and internal security through the development of a novel and powerful double strategy. This strategy required the state’s indifference to the transcendent values of its constituent moral communities – an indifference they would experience as civil freedom – and its readiness to suppress all conduct threatening social peace, no matter what the source.<sup>139</sup>

By way of analogy, one could argue that this vision is close to the theories of John Locke in relation to freedom of conscience but close to the theories of Thomas Hobbes in relation to state security. Hunter himself argues against viewing Pufendorf’s conception of society as being merely authoritarian. He stresses that the liberalism of Pufendorf’s position in arguing for the withdrawal of the state from interference in the religious beliefs of its citizens must be recognised.<sup>140</sup> The fact that it is not sufficiently recognised is because, according to Hunter, a proto-liberalism that rejects ideas of innate human rationality and perfectibility cannot be easily assimilated into histories of Enlightenment thought, hence the greater focus on Kantian moral philosophy.<sup>141</sup> Pufendorf’s theories represent a ‘practical’ enlightenment. As I will show, Moses Mendelssohn subscribed to the classically ‘high enlightenment’ belief in human reason

---

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, p. 196.

and perfectibility. However, in devising his picture of a pluralistic and tolerant society, as envisaged in *Jerusalem*, he draws on the ideas of Pufendorf and the ‘natural law’ civil philosophy of the early enlightenment.

*Jerusalem or On Religious Power and Judaism*, first published in 1783, demonstrates the mature synthesis of Mendelssohn’s intellectual endeavours. His lifelong engagement with both the study of Judaism and the modern philosophy of the Enlightenment(s) converges with his civic role as an advocate for the Jews of Berlin and Prussia. In his work, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, Altmann states that ‘although the plea for Jewish emancipation is not the overt theme of the book, no one reading it could fail to see the implications of Mendelssohn’s political theory’.<sup>142</sup> Mendelssohn builds on Locke’s concepts of religious toleration and the separation of church and state to advance the idea of cultural pluralism within the framework of a secular, but not irreligious, polity. In relation to this, Mendelssohn outlines what the rights and duties of citizens of such a state would be. In addition to being a treatise on religious toleration and civil equality, *Jerusalem* is also a valorisation of Judaism as a religion and moral code to a mostly gentile readership inculcated with anti-Semitic prejudices. As a combined work of philosophy, theology and political reform, it exemplifies the advocacy within enlightened discourse of progressive change.

Theories relating to the idea of ‘the social contract’, as formulated in different ways by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, influence Mendelssohn’s conception of civil rights and responsibilities that he puts forward in *Jerusalem*. However, as a philosopher influenced by the ‘natural law’ concepts of Wolff and Pufendorf, he believes that such rights and responsibilities are not created through the social contract but exist prior to

---

<sup>142</sup> Altmann, ‘The Philosophical Roots of Moses Mendelssohn’s Plea for Emancipation’ in his *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, Hanover: University Press of New England. 1981, p. 155.

it.<sup>143</sup> Unlike Pufendorf however, Mendelssohn views the human subject as being innately reasonable and moral.<sup>144</sup> The state cannot be an instrument to create the rights and responsibilities of its citizens but it can be used to secure them. Civil justice is the logical fulfilment of natural justice.

Writing in *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn acknowledges the work of Hobbes and Locke in developing theories of government and civil society.<sup>145</sup> However, while he strongly agrees with Locke that the state must not enforce religious dogma, he also rejects a strict separation between spiritual and temporal power. Mendelssohn fears that, in a strictly secular society, people will lose the spiritual awareness that he considers necessary for their moral conduct as citizens. He paraphrases Judaic teaching in order to emphasise this point, writing that the ‘rabbins liken this life to a lobby, in which we are to fit ourselves in the manner we wish to appear in the inner room’.<sup>146</sup> Mendelssohn views recognition of the sacred as fundamental to civil society while also arguing that the state should have no coercive powers in relation to enforcing religious belief. He therefore also rejects the concept of a state church or of the coercive power of such an institution. He writes:

Neither State nor Church has ... a right to submit the principles and persuasions of men to any compulsion whatsoever. Neither Church nor State is entitled to connect rights over persons, or claims to things with principles and persuasions; and to weaken, by extraneous admixture, the influence of the force of truth on the discerning faculty. Not even the social compact could concede such a right to either State or Church.<sup>147</sup>

Mendelssohn’s argument that the Church (in using that term, he also includes other religious institutions) should not have coercive powers once more reveals the influence of early enlightenment ‘natural law’ philosophy on his thought. According to Altmann,

---

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>145</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Authority and Judaism Vol. 2* (trans. by M. Samuels), London: Longman, Orme, Brown and Longmans, 1838, pp. 6-11.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62.

he follows Pufendorf in viewing churches and other religious institutions as collegial bodies. Within this interpretation, the Church is a ‘free association of like-minded individuals, established by contract’ as opposed to being ‘a divinely founded mystical body’.<sup>148</sup> According to Mendelssohn, both civil states and religious communities are designed by social contracts based on the moral obligations of natural law. Therefore, the civil exclusion of the Jews from Prussian society has no logically justifiable basis.

As Altmann writes:

By emphasising the moral function of religion, Mendelssohn found a way of integrating the church into the state’s sphere of interest without permitting any state influence in the theologies and internal affairs of the various churches. By the same token he placed all religions on one and the same level vis-à-vis the state. Again, the principle of equality was asserted, and seeing that the Jew was being discriminated against on purely religious grounds, it followed with inexorable logic that the denial of civil equality to the Jew was unjustifiable.<sup>149</sup>

What Mendelssohn advocates in *Jerusalem* is not just religious toleration, in the manner of Locke, but religious and civil equality. A secular state is positioned as being a necessary pre-condition for genuine religious freedom and spiritual morality. The logic of his argument means that he not only supports the equality of the Jewish community with the rest of society but toleration within it. He argues against the use of *herem*, the Judaic equivalent of excommunication, because it is incompatible with his critique of coercive religious power.<sup>150</sup>

Mendelssohn can balance his belief in divine truth with his argument against coercion by either church or state in matters of religion and conscience because of his attachment to principles of natural law and human rationality, in accordance with the ideals of the Enlightenment. As stated above, his conception of human nature is based on the understanding that people have an innate capacity to be moral and reasonable. He

---

<sup>148</sup> Altmann, ‘Philosophical Roots of Mendelssohn’s Plea for Emancipation’, p. 162.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163.



therefore argues that divine truth can become evident through reason, without the need for coercion. He writes:

I ... do not believe that the resources of human reason are inadequate to the persuading of mankind of the eternal truths requisite for their happiness; and that God had need to reveal them to them in a preternatural manner.<sup>151</sup>

Mendelssohn therefore combines his devout faith in Judaism with a typically enlightened belief in ‘rational religion’. His belief in the human capacity for reason is consistent with the enlightened belief in human perfectibility. The concept of ‘rational religion’ is a central trope within the Enlightenment, particularly for those philosophers who sought to criticise ‘superstition’ while also attacking atheism. Kant’s *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, which was first published in instalments in 1792 before being published as a whole the following year, contains some significant similarities to *Jerusalem* in that it presents an argument for religious freedom while also positioning religious belief as being central to the moral conduct of the individual in society. Kant’s *Religion* builds on the arguments put forward in both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. As with Mendelssohn, morality is central to Kant’s conception of the enlightened and tolerant state. He re-iterates his concept of the ‘moral law’ and links it to the traditional Christian themes of original sin and ‘radical evil’.<sup>152</sup> He also puts forward the concept of the ‘ethical community’ and links it to religious faith.<sup>153</sup> As with Mendelssohn, Kant makes an explicit connection between religious toleration and spiritual morality. He states that ‘moral faith must be a free faith, founded on pure dispositions of the heart’.<sup>154</sup> This statement is also consistent with the central tenet of rationalist theology, echoed in the passage from Mendelssohn featured above, that genuine religious belief is acquired through reason as opposed to being enforced by state coercion. Kant terms the former type of religious belief as

---

<sup>151</sup> Mendelssohn. *Jerusalem Vol. 2*, p. 96.

<sup>152</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (ed. by Allen Wood and George di Giovanni with an Introduction by Robert Merrihew Adams), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 89.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

‘pure’ while the latter is described as ‘ecclesiastical’.<sup>155</sup> However, Kant’s conception of religious toleration and rationality is in some respects more traditional and coercive than Mendelssohn’s.

While Mendelssohn does not seek to convert people to Judaism, Kant’s arguments in the *Religion* are to some extent a re-inscription of traditional German Protestant belief as the ‘pure’ faith. In relation to this, it must be noted that Kant argues in the *Religion* that Judaism should not be considered a genuine religious faith and that it is not as morally advanced as Christianity.<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, the dominant scholarly view of Kant’s *Religion* is that it embodies the enlightenment discourse of religious liberty and freedom of conscience and it is for this reason that the Prussian authorities attempted to suppress the publication of its second volume. In his introduction to the 1998 ‘Cambridge Texts’ edition of the *Religion*, Robert Merrihew Adams states that ‘one of the themes that runs through all Kant’s writings collected in this volume is his fervent advocacy of freedom of belief and expression’. Adams situates the attempted censorship of the *Religion* as being the result of Frederick II, who died in 1786, being succeeded by Frederick William II who, he states, ‘was much more conservative in these matters’. He goes on to position the *Religion* as reflecting ‘Kant’s grave concern about the direction of events in Prussia’.<sup>157</sup> Hunter in *Rival Enlightenments* challenges this mode of reading Kant and the *Religion*, in which enlightened values of tolerance are positioned as being under threat from conservative reaction.

Hunter questions whether Kant’s model of ‘rational religion’, based on linking his moral metaphysics with a particular interpretation of Protestant belief, can genuinely be considered progressive, and whether attempts by the government of Frederick

---

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 130-132.

<sup>157</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, ‘Introduction’ in Kant, *Religion*, p. xxxii.

William to censor the *Religion* should be considered as simply reactionary. He argues that Kant sought to position his rationalist theology within Lutheran institutions, thus leading towards the establishment of a confessional state religion.<sup>158</sup> Within this context, the edict issued by Frederick William's Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, Johann Christoph Wollner – which continued the practice of religious toleration while ordering theologians and religious leaders to desist from public proselytising and public experimentation – can be seen as an attempt to preserve toleration rather than as an attack upon it. According to this interpretation, the edict can be positioned within the tradition of Pufendorf's civil enlightenment. As Hunter states:

The edict repeats the post-Westphalian toleration of the three main confessions and in fact extends this to all sects not engaged in public proselytising.... This at least allows us to offer an alternative historical interpretation of the attempt to censor Kant's *Religion*. Rather than representing a reactionary political-religious attempt to repress the so-called *Aufklärung*, this act can be seen as an instance of the state's long standing policy of forestalling public religious controversy and managing religious enthusiasm – here the enthusiasm of rationalist religious intellectuals.<sup>159</sup>

According to this line of argument, the Prussian state was seeking to prevent Kant from prescribing his model of the true religion and thereby disrupting the delicate balance of religious pluralism. By comparison, Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* is a far less prescriptive work and may therefore be considered a better example of enlightened theology.

*Jerusalem* thus precedes Kant's *Religion* and foreshadows many of its arguments as both a work of rationalist theology and social planning. However, while arguing for respect and freedom to be extended towards the followers of Judaism, Mendelssohn is not seeking to prescribe it for everyone as the true or 'pure' religion. In many respects, *Jerusalem* embodies the classically liberal tendency in Enlightenment political discourse. The closing paragraph of the book demonstrates its essentially liberal character.

---

<sup>158</sup> Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*, p. 341.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, p. 342.

Let everyone who does not disturb public happiness, who is obedient to the civil government, who acts righteously towards you, and towards his fellow countrymen, be allowed to speak as he thinks, to pray to God after his own fashion ... and to seek eternal salvation where he thinks he may find it. Suffer no one to be a searcher of hearts, and a judge of opinions in your states; suffer no one to assume a right which the Omniscient has reserved to himself.<sup>160</sup>

In outlining a system of both individual and collective rights and freedoms within the framework of a secular state, *Jerusalem* is representative of enlightened modernity. In the year of its publication, Mendelssohn would also attempt to answer the question of what exactly Enlightenment is.

### **Kant and Mendelssohn both ask ‘*What is Enlightenment?*’**

James Schmidt, in the preface to *What is Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, a collection of both primary and secondary texts, identifies German-speaking Europe as being at the forefront of the self-investigation of what constituted enlightenment. He states:

While the Enlightenment was a European event, the debate on the question ‘what is enlightenment?’ was uniquely German. For reasons that defy easy explanation, neither French *philosophes* nor Scottish moralists (to name only the two most likely parties) were as concerned as their German-speaking colleagues with the question of what enlightenment was.<sup>161</sup>

It was the prominence of public discourse about ‘enlightened’ ideas that resulted in the question ‘what is enlightenment?’ being asked as part of a footnote to an article by the theologian Johann Friedrich Zollner, published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in 1783.<sup>162</sup> It was as a response to this question that Kant wrote his noted essay *What is Enlightenment?* published the following year. While it is not as well known, another essay in response to the question was written by Mendelssohn and also published in 1784.<sup>163</sup> Kant and Mendelssohn both attempt to define the nature of the ‘*die Aufklärung*’. Kant’s essay is, of course, widely known in the context of historical

---

<sup>160</sup> Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, p. 172.

<sup>161</sup> James Schmidt, ‘Preface’ in Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, p. ix.

<sup>162</sup> Schmidt, ‘Introduction’ in *What is Enlightenment?*, p. 2.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*

studies and cultural commentary on the Enlightenment as the foremost example of a contemporary explanation of the period by someone who has since been positioned within the ‘canon’ of Enlightenment thinkers. Therefore, given that much has been written on *What is Enlightenment?* I will focus on identifying the most salient features.

The opening statement of Kant’s essay defines ‘*Enlightenment*’ as ‘*mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity*’.<sup>164</sup> This last phrase, or *selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*, is a recurring concept in this essay and in much of Kant’s other work.<sup>165</sup> He explains that this ‘immaturity’ is ‘self-incurred’ because ‘its cause lies not in the lack of understanding but rather in the lack of the resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another’.<sup>166</sup> He goes on to declare ‘*Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment’.<sup>167</sup> ‘*Sapere aude*’ is the Latin for ‘Dare to know’ and the phrase is closely associated with popular understandings of the Enlightenment, both then and now. Towards the end of the essay, Kant reiterates the importance of the concept of using one’s own understanding and relates it to the meaning of the Enlightenment as an epoch. He states:

If it is asked ‘Do we now live in an *enlightened* age?’ the answer is ‘No, but we do live in an age of *enlightenment*.’ As matters now stand, much is still lacking for men to be completely able – or even to be placed in a situation where they would be able – to use their own reason confidently and properly in religious matters without the guidance of another. Yet we have clear indications that the field is now being opened for them to work freely toward this, and the obstacles to general enlightenment or to the exit out of their self-incurred immaturity become ever fewer. In this respect, this age is the age of enlightenment or the century of *Frederick*.<sup>168</sup>

The deference that Kant exhibits towards Frederick and the Prussian state is evident in how he frames the relationship between enlightenment and intellectual freedom. Kant

---

<sup>164</sup> Immanuel Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ reprinted in Schmidt, (ed.), *What is Enlightenment?* p. 58. Trans. by Schmidt. (italics original).

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62. (italics original).

draws a distinction between the *'public'* and *'private'* use of reason.<sup>169</sup> However, this distinction does not follow what might be considered the most obvious logic. Rather than situating the private as the sphere in which people may exercise intellectual freedom separate from their public duties, he inverts the binary. The *'public use of reason'* refers to the public sphere where people (meaning educated men of letters) can exercise their intellectual freedom and engage in debate provided that they obediently discharge their duties in regard to whatever profession they may be in.<sup>170</sup> A clergyman, teacher or army officer (to use some of Kant's examples) can engage in free debate in the *public* sphere but they must obey in the *private* context when carrying out their duties.

By formulating the distinction in this way, Kant expressly aims to provide a framework in which intellectual and cultural enlightenment can proceed without jeopardising the *'civil order'* and harmonious functioning of the state.<sup>171</sup> He suggests with approval that the maxim of the Prussian Enlightenment under Frederick should be *'argue, as much as you want and about whatever you want, only obey!'*<sup>172</sup> He also asserts that such a division of intellectual freedom is only workable in the context of an enlightened absolute monarchy and would not work in a republican context.<sup>173</sup>

Mendelssohn approaches the same question from a different perspective. Mendelssohn is sensitive to questions of religious and cultural tradition. In his essay, he draws a distinction between *'enlightenment'* and *'culture'* and he views both as being components of *'education'*.<sup>174</sup> He defines *'culture'* as *'goodness, refinement, and beauty in the arts and social mores'* while he suggests that *'enlightenment'* is related to

---

<sup>169</sup> Kant, 'What is Enlightenment' in Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment*, p. 59.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63. (italics original).

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Mendelssohn, 'On the Question: What is Enlightenment?' in Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment?* p. 53.

‘theoretical matters: to (objective) rational knowledge and to (subjective) facility in rational reflection about matters of human life, according to their importance and influence on the destiny of man’.<sup>175</sup>

Therefore, within Mendelssohn’s framework, ‘culture’ constitutes the practical requirements of living a good and civilised life whereas ‘enlightenment’ constitutes the theoretical and intellectual basis for it. By way of comparative example he writes that ‘the French [have] more culture, the English more enlightenment’.<sup>176</sup> This statement reflects Mendelssohn’s ambivalence towards the French mode of ‘enlightenment’. As is typical of the advocates of enlightenment, he stresses the idea of human progress, stating ‘I posit, at all times, *the destiny of man as the measure and goal of all our striving and efforts*, as a point on which we must set our eyes, if we do not wish to lose our way’.<sup>177</sup> He goes on to divide the ‘destiny of man’ into the respective pathways of ‘man *as man*’ and ‘man *as citizen*’.<sup>178</sup> Such a division correlates with his belief in ‘natural law’ philosophy.

Just as Mendelssohn positions ‘enlightenment’ as being on a higher plane than ‘culture’, he equates destiny ‘as man’ with ‘enlightenment’ and destiny ‘as citizen’ with ‘culture’. He asserts that ‘Man *as man* needs no culture: but he needs enlightenment’.<sup>179</sup> He writes ‘Unfortunate is the state that must confess that for it the essential destiny of man is not in harmony with the essential destiny of its citizens’.<sup>180</sup> This statement is of particular significance given Mendelssohn’s political project to extend the rights and status of full citizenship to Prussian Jews, and is in accordance with the arguments expressed in *Jerusalem*. However, as with Kant, his belief in enlightenment and

---

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.* (italics original).

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*, p. 55.

progress is balanced by a belief in the necessity of restraint and the importance of culture and tradition. He states:

The misuse of enlightenment weakens the moral sentiment and leads to hard-heartedness, egoism, irreligion, and anarchy. Misuse of culture produces luxury, hypocrisy, weakness, superstition, and slavery. Where enlightenment and culture go forward in step, they are together the best shield against corruption.<sup>181</sup>

As he explains at the beginning of the essay, such a fusion of culture and enlightenment constitutes education and he concludes his piece on 'What is Enlightenment' by stressing the importance of an educated nation. However, his conclusion has a pessimistic quality even as he extols the idea of progress. He concludes by writing that a 'nation that through education has come to the highest peak of national happiness is just for that reason in danger of collapse, because it can climb no higher' ending with 'but this leads us too far from the question at hand'.<sup>182</sup> This pessimistic belief in a correlation between the peak of enlightened development and the advent of social collapse foreshadows the thesis of Adorno and Horkheimer as expounded in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. There is evidence that Adorno was aware of the writings of Mendelssohn. In the eighth lecture in his series on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Adorno refers to earlier descriptions of Kant as being the 'all-destroyer' in relation to such a critique of reason.<sup>183</sup> According to the Editor's Notes, this description of Kant originated with Mendelssohn who, in his final work *The Mourning Hours or Lectures on the Existence of God*, refers to the 'all-destroying Kant'. Arthur Schopenhauer later paraphrases this to refer to Kant as the 'all-destroyer'.<sup>184</sup> Perhaps Adorno's use of this expression demonstrates familiarity with Schopenhauer rather than Mendelssohn. However, the philosophies of Adorno and Mendelssohn are connected by the way in which both men, in different times, were to measure the success or failure of enlightenment values against the reality of their lived experience as German Jews.

---

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Theodor W. Adorno. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 85.

<sup>184</sup> Rolf Tiedemann, 'Editor's Notes' in Adorno, *Kant's Critique*, p. 252.



Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment derives from having witnessed the corruption of modernity that Mendelssohn forewarns against over a hundred years earlier. However, Mendelssohn's experience leads him to place an ambivalent hope in enlightenment values.

Despite their differences, Kant and Mendelssohn both embody a tendency within enlightened discourse that stresses moral seriousness. Both philosophers believe strongly in progressive social change but both argue that such change must not come at the expense of certain cultural concepts that are of foundational importance to a civilised and moral society. Mendelssohn has the ambivalence of someone who has the experience of being on the margins of society. He is therefore not a naive utopian. His enlightened belief in reason and human perfectibility is balanced by a strong recognition that people have a capacity for evil that must be controlled through some kind of moral order that can serve to protect the rights of all. While such a view demonstrates the influence of his religious beliefs, it is also indicative of the profoundly moral conception of the Enlightenment that Mendelssohn advocates. He is aware that appealing to human rationality alone is not sufficient to protect human rights and dignity. Conversely, he is equally aware that belief in human reason is fundamental to any project that seeks to protect and expand human dignity. The philosophers of the European Enlightenment all too often failed to extend their professed values to the Jewish Diaspora. However, Mendelssohn, in recognising the emancipatory potential of enlightened discourse, uses these values to move towards the conception of a secular and inclusive cosmopolitan society.

## Chapter Four

### Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges and the Defence of Reason and Virtue

The historical European Enlightenment is also referred to as the ‘age of reason’. As demonstrated in the previous chapter on Kant and Mendelssohn, Foucault’s question about how such ‘reason’ is identified was being asked at the time. The same is true of the ongoing theoretical discussion about the *gendered* value of the concepts of reason and rationality. By the time of the late or ‘high’ historical ‘Enlightenment’, the link between ‘reason’ and the ‘rights of Man’ was explicitly made. The character of enlightened reason was two-fold. Men had innate or natural rights because of their capacity for reason or rational thought but reason was itself positioned as an overarching progressive impulse that challenged arbitrary power and tradition while advancing human perfectibility. The enlightened discourse on reason was and is gendered and yet feminism in its broadest sense can be considered, for all that, part of the Enlightenment project. The relationship between feminism and the enlightenment is thus paradoxical. This statement is made with the awareness that there is no singular ‘feminism’ and no singular ‘Enlightenment’. The salient point is that the paradox was recognised and interrogated at the time. This chapter turns to two specific instances of this.

While there were significant numbers of women writers and intellectuals in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe who can be identified as being (proto) feminist, this chapter will focus on Mary Wollstonecraft in Britain and Olympe de Gouges in France and their efforts to insert the question of gender into the debates over reason and rights occurring at the time of the French Revolution during the final decade of the eighteenth century. For both writers, advocacy of women’s rights was

intrinsically linked to the affirmation of the 'rights of man' in a universal sense. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* followed on from her reply to Edmund Burke, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, while de Gouges's *The Rights of Woman* was directly modelled on the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen' drawn up by the National Assembly in revolutionary France in 1789. This does not mean, however, that Wollstonecraft and de Gouges simply position women's rights as being merely an extension of men's rights. They both interrogate the concept of gender and gendered reason while affirming the necessity of reason to human progress and emancipation in general.

Wollstonecraft and de Gouges were thus involved in the ongoing debate over the relationship between feminism and enlightened reason from its inception. The tensions and contradictions contained in their writings pre-figure the ambivalence with which the legacy of the historical Enlightenment is viewed within feminist scholarship. As Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, in their introduction to the edited book *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, state:

Enlightenment is contentious. Once an age of reason, tolerance and emancipation, today it is routinely characterised as repressive and incipiently totalitarian.... Its record on women is indicted, with leading *philosophes* damned as misogynists in new dress while women who affirm enlightened values – like Wollstonecraft – are condemned for colluding with the oppressor. Meanwhile champions of Enlightenment vigorously defend its progressive credentials, including its record on gender issues.<sup>185</sup>

The legacy of the Enlightenment for feminist thought cannot be reduced to a question of either/or. Both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges demonstrate this by engaging in a process of valorising and repudiating different aspects of enlightenment thought.

---

<sup>185</sup> Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, 'General Introduction' in Knott and Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. xvi.

In her path-breaking critique of the gendered values within western philosophy, *The Man of Reason*, Genevieve Lloyd is careful to affirm that such criticism should not entail a complete rejection of the tradition of rationalist thought. She states with firm clarity that the ‘claim that reason is male need not at all involve sexual relativism about truth, or any suggestion that principles of logical thought valid for men do not hold also for female reasoners’.<sup>186</sup> Such a statement echoes the famous comment made by Wollstonecraft about the meaning of truth – see the section on Wollstonecraft’s re-framing of virtue later in this chapter. Lloyd goes on to assert the necessity of rational critique to any project of feminist philosophical inquiry.

Philosophers can take seriously feminist dissatisfaction with the maleness of Reason without repudiating either Reason or philosophy. Such criticisms of ideals of Reason can in fact be seen as continuous with a very old strand in the western philosophical tradition; it has been centrally concerned with bringing to reflective awareness the deeper structures of inherited ideals of Reason. Philosophy has defined ideals of Reason through exclusions of the feminine. But it also contains within it the resources for critical reflection on those ideals and on its own aspirations.<sup>187</sup>

This statement can serve as a useful lodestone for feminist scholarship, or indeed for any progressive critique of the historical Enlightenment and its legacy. Reason can only be reformed through reason. This is why Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges remain relevant to feminist thought in demonstrating a reflective engagement with the Enlightenment while being contemporary protagonists within it.

Mary Wollstonecraft is, of course, a widely known historical figure, situated both as a ‘pioneering feminist’ and increasingly as an emblematic thinker and writer of the Enlightenment and Romantic eras. Much writing on Wollstonecraft over the past two hundred years has been focused on her personal life, particularly her position as the eventual wife of William Godwin and the mother of Mary Shelley. Olympe de Gouges

---

<sup>186</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in Western Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 109.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*

is a less well-known figure, particularly outside France. However, scholarship on the questions of women's rights and activism within the public sphere during the first French Revolution has led to an increasing awareness of her life and writings. The two women were contemporaries and wrote on similar (at times identical) subjects and questions. Although their approaches and conclusions can differ, they are united by a shared advocacy for the rights of women and men within the philosophical framework of the Enlightenment and a belief in enlightened progress. This has led to both women becoming increasingly popular subjects for scholarly research because they can be easily positioned as recognisably proto-feminist figures.<sup>188</sup> However, for purposes of the present analysis, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges are positioned not only as (proto) feminist thinkers but also more specifically as Enlightenment philosophers who asked how the predominant enlightened themes of reason, natural rights and civic virtue could be connected to a project of egalitarian citizenship which encompassed women.

### **Wollstonecraft as Enlightened Philosopher**

In *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, Barbara Taylor expressly situates the English writer within the historical and social context of the late Enlightenment and the radicalism of the period around the French Revolution. Taylor argues that how Wollstonecraft and her writings are perceived has constantly shifted according to the ideological and social context of the different historical periods in which her life and work has been evaluated, particularly within the sphere of feminist activism and scholarship.

Every feminist generation reinvents her: to late nineteenth-century women's rights activists, struggling in the suffocating embrace of the 'angel in the house', she appeared a classic Victorian individualist, laying claim to those qualities – independence, self-regulation, self-reliance – valued in Victorian men but denied to their womenfolk. To *fin-de-siecle* New Women she personified romantic bohemianism, while to leftwing women like Eleanor Marx and Emma Goldman

---

<sup>188</sup> John Robertson, 'Women and Enlightenment: A Historiographical Conclusion', in Knott and Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, p. 692.

she was the embodiment of the democratic spirit, an 'indomitable' champion of 'the disinherited of the earth'. Women's Liberationists of the 1960s and 70s, caught up in a complex feud with western liberal-democratic traditions, praised her personal unorthodoxy while criticising her, mistakenly, as a bourgeois liberal. The personae were as diverse as the political agendas prompting them, yet with one feature in common: an imaginary modernity.<sup>189</sup>

In referring to 'imaginary modernity', Taylor means that all these historically contextual views of Wollstonecraft position her as embodying contemporary ideological concerns. Wollstonecraft is always situated within both scholarship and popular understanding as being 'relevant', and is therefore measured against the standards of present times rather than those of the eighteenth century. While recognising that no analysis, including her own (or, indeed, my own), can escape from this tendency, Taylor affirms that Wollstonecraft and her arguments should be understood and evaluated in relation to the full context of the time in which she lived.<sup>190</sup> While this may seem a straightforwardly logical proposition, Taylor follows E.P. Thompson in asserting that once Wollstonecraft is judged against this historical context, the radicalism of her political profile as a 'Jacobin *philosophe*' becomes apparent.<sup>191</sup> In order to appreciate the innovative and progressive quality of Wollstonecraft's thought, her writings must be properly situated within their historical context.

As an example of how Wollstonecraft has at times been inadequately historicised, Rosemarie Tong's 1989 *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* is instructive. Here, each chapter is devoted to a different 'school' of feminism: liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist, psychoanalytic, existentialist and postmodern. Wollstonecraft is briefly referenced in the first chapter as a protagonist within the historical development of liberal feminist thought. In a section three and a half pages long entitled 'Liberal Feminism in the Eighteenth Century: The Same Education for Women as for

---

<sup>189</sup> Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 9-10.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

Men’, Tong positions Wollstonecraft as a classical liberal concerned solely with legal equality in education, rather than with political rights.<sup>192</sup> She states that Wollstonecraft ‘celebrated reason, usually at the expense of emotion’ and that it ‘did not occur to Wollstonecraft to question the value of traditional male traits’.<sup>193</sup> Even in praising her, Tong situates Wollstonecraft’s feminism as being narrow and inadequate.

Despite the limitations of her analysis, Wollstonecraft did present a vision of a woman, strong in mind and body, who is not a slave to her passions, her husband, or her children. For Wollstonecraft, the ideal woman is less interested in fulfilling herself – if by self-fulfillment is meant any sort of pandering to duty-distracting desires – than in exercising self-control. In order to liberate herself from the oppressive roles of emotional cripple, petty shrew, and narcissistic sex object, a woman must, Wollstonecraft believed, obey the commands of reason and discharge her wifely and motherly duties faithfully.<sup>194</sup>

There is a degree of truth contained in Tong’s representation of Wollstonecraft’s thought, particularly in relation to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as I will show. However, in framing Wollstonecraft simply as a middle-class liberal concerned only with educational equality in order to better equip women for their traditional duties in the private sphere, Tong fails to recognise the radicalism of her politics within its historical context. To separate ‘liberal feminism’ from ‘radical feminism’ in the context of the late eighteenth century is obviously ahistorical. It is misleading to assert that Wollstonecraft simply takes male norms as human norms. This is because her radical enlightenment philosophy entails a re-specification of human nature in general.

Wollstonecraft, as Taylor argues, must be understood as a protagonist of the radical Enlightenment of the 1790s. She was part of the circle of reformist writers and commentators gathered around the publisher Joseph Johnson including, among others, Joseph Priestly, the Reverend Richard Price, Thomas Paine and William Godwin all of whom (initially) supported the French Revolution of 1789 and saw it as the prelude to

---

<sup>192</sup> Rosemarie Tong. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 16.

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

further progress in the advancement of human liberty and perfectibility. Wollstonecraft was not the only woman in this London-based literary circle with other notable names being Mary Hays, Maria Edgeworth and Anna Barbauld.<sup>195</sup> This group of writers and thinkers was part of the radical wing within the ‘broad church’ of the English enlightened tradition that would fracture after 1789, with the result that, in later years, it would be more difficult to speak of a British, particularly an English, Enlightenment.<sup>196</sup>

Writing in his deliberately revisionist work of popular history *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, Roy Porter shows how, during the increasingly reactionary climate of the 1790s, the dominant image of the British philosopher shifted from being that of a patriot who was continuing in the proud native tradition of John Locke and the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688 to being that of a dangerous subversive who had been infected by innately foreign French ideas. Within this context, there was a political imperative to positioning the ‘Enlightenment’ as being antithetical to British tradition. Porter demonstrates how rapidly and profoundly this shift in the political and social atmosphere occurred by describing a gathering held at a Norwich tavern on the First of November 1788 to celebrate the centenary of the so-called Glorious Revolution. He writes:

Over a hundred gentlemen had supped at the city centre tavern with a Dissenter in the chair. ‘The immortal memory of King William’ produced three cheers ... There were more radical toasts too: ‘the majesty of the People’ and ‘freedom to slaves’. Nearer home, the diners had a whipround for the miserable debtors languishing in the city’s gaols. The event captures the true flavour of the English Enlightenment, progressive but not incendiary, broad church and confident enough to include toasts to prelates and people alike, to embrace Anglicans and Dissenters, and to extend sympathy to unfortunates. Such relaxed, tolerant optimism did not long survive the outbreak of the French Revolution.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, p. 146.

<sup>196</sup> The ‘Scottish Enlightenment’ is generally situated as being distinct. See Arthur Herman. *The Scottish Enlightenment*, London: Fourth Estate, 2003.

<sup>197</sup> Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 446-47.



The increasing radicalism and violence of events in France, and debate over their meaning, would cause a divide with many erstwhile liberal Whigs siding with the conservative establishment against the more radical advocates of political and social change within Britain. The interpretation of the events of 1688 would become a subject of contention. Porter positions Richard Price and Edmund Burke as representing, in their respective public speeches and writings, diametrically opposed readings of the Glorious Revolution, its legacy and its relationship to contemporary events in France. While Price saw the events of 1688 as representing a period of revolutionary progressive change in relation to which both the American and French Revolutions were logical and necessary progressions that signalled the need for further reform in Britain, Burke framed the events and legacy of the Glorious Revolution in conservative and constitutionalist terms.<sup>198</sup> Burke mounted these arguments in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.<sup>199</sup>

Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, written and published in 1790, was framed as a public reply to Burke. Hers was not the only written rebuttal of Burke to come from the reformist side, with Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* long being the most well known. However, Wollstonecraft's intervention meant that she had shifted from socially acceptable genres of female authorship such as novels and advice books to the far more contentious area of political debate in the public sphere. Taylor states that from 'the moment Wollstonecraft published *The Rights of Men* her status shifted from literary lady to radical *philosophe*'.<sup>200</sup> The only other noted female author in Britain during the late eighteenth century to write on the 'masculine' subjects of politics and history before the ascent of Wollstonecraft was the Whig historian Catherine Macaulay. Her death in 1791 prevented any meeting between the two women,

---

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 447-49.

<sup>199</sup> See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (originally published 1790), Penguin: London, 1986.

<sup>200</sup> Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, p. 149.

who were publicly admiring of each other's work.<sup>201</sup> *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* should be understood not only as a precursor to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (there appears to be no explanation for Wollstonecraft's inconsistency regarding the use of the plural and singular noun) but also as a strong affirmation of radical enlightenment beliefs.

Arguing directly against Burke's appeals to tradition, custom and 'chivalry', Wollstonecraft affirms the value of reason and natural rights. In contrast to Burke's pessimism about human nature, Wollstonecraft sets forth a belief in human perfectibility and rationality, which she positions as being innate and derived from a divine creator. She states:

It is necessary emphatically to repeat, that there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights.<sup>202</sup>

The references to 'forefathers' and 'prescription' are a criticism of Burke and his continual appeals in the *Reflections* to social custom. Like many enlightened thinkers, Wollstonecraft positions natural rights as being derived from God. This is not simply a rhetorical device to maintain social respectability but, in all likelihood, a sincere belief on her part. Wollstonecraft's religious beliefs, as with many British radicals of the time, were based on a variant of Non-Conformist Protestantism known as 'Rational Dissent'. Taylor argues that there is an intrinsic link between Wollstonecraft's radically enlightened belief in human reason and perfectibility and the religious creed to which she subscribed. Taylor describes the combination of influences that underpinned this religious system as being 'a bracing brew of Lockean psychology, Newtonian

---

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>202</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Men' in D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (eds), *The Vindications*, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001, p. 43.

cosmology, rationalist morality and reform politics'.<sup>203</sup> Rational Dissenters also rejected belief in the Trinity (hence their other designation as Unitarians) and the concepts of hell and original sin.<sup>204</sup> It was a belief system that embodied the enlightened concept of 'rational religion'. It was also a belief system predicated on strong notions of social justice and responsibility. For Wollstonecraft, her faith in God, her belief in human reason, and her avowal of justice and republican virtue for both men and women are all interconnected.

### **Wollstonecraft, Olympe de Gouges and the Pursuit of Virtue**

While *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* was addressed to Edmund Burke, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, written and published two years later, was prefaced with a dedication addressed to Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, a leading figure in the French national assembly. Talleyrand had made speeches to the Assembly explicitly rejecting proposals that French women be granted the same political rights as male citizens.<sup>205</sup> Wollstonecraft's stated intention in dedicating the *Vindication* to Talleyrand was, as she addressed him, to 'induce you to reconsider the subject, and maturely weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of women and national education'. She goes on to state: 'I plead for my sex – not for myself'.<sup>206</sup> Women radicals who supported the revolutionary process in France had to negotiate the gendered ideals advanced by the leaders and ideologists of that process. When Wollstonecraft addressed Burke in her earlier *Vindication*, she was not seeking his endorsement or approval. Conversely, in dedicating the *Rights of Woman* to Talleyrand, she is publicly honouring a Revolutionary leader and endorsing the Revolution while directly challenging his stated views on the position of women within that Revolution.

---

<sup>203</sup> Taylor, *Wollstonecraft*, p. 103.

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>206</sup> Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' in Macdonald & Scherf (eds), *The Vindications*, p. 101.

The respectful dedication is a strategy used by Wollstonecraft to legitimate challenge and negotiation in relation to a political project of which she approves but seeks to reform.

The discourse on women and their rightful status as debated by radicals in France and Britain during the period of the French Revolution was conflicted. The view of women commonly held by such radicals was often not any more 'progressive' than that advanced by established opinion. Because political radicalism in the late eighteenth century was to a large extent based around ideologies of classical republicanism and civic virtue, the ideal public sphere as envisaged by such radicals was one from which women were excluded. This tendency was exemplified by the theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau whose writings on education and child rearing strongly influenced the policies of the revolutionary government in France.

In this context, both Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges are in their writings testing the possibilities, as well as the limits, of enlightened radicalism in relation to gender and inclusive citizenship. In arguing that the rights of 'man' in their universal sense must include the rights of women in their specific sense, both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges negotiate with the meaning of concepts of reason and virtue, rather than simply embracing or rejecting them. They both employ strategies of legitimation in publicly endorsing (or seeking the endorsement of) male authors and public figures whom they in some cases then challenge. Both women use the teachings of Rousseau while also criticising or revising his conception of gender.

Pre-dating modern feminist criticism of Rousseau, female readers and authors engaged with the complexity and contradictions of his ideas concerning women during

his own time. In *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau*, Mary Seidman Trouille examines how seven eighteenth-century women responded to his ideas, both in the public sphere of authorship and in the private sphere of personal letters and diaries. Using the examples of Madame Roland, Madame d'Épinay, Germaine de Staël, Stephanie de Genlis, Wollstonecraft, de Gouges and the enigmatic 'Henriette', Trouille shows how women from a diverse range of social backgrounds and with differing philosophical beliefs were engaged readers of Rousseau who both approved of and criticised his theories, sometimes simultaneously. Admiration for Rousseau's theories of education or his egalitarian politics could be combined with arguments against his conception of women and their appropriate social roles. As Trouille argues, it was often the increasing realisation that Rousseau's democratic and egalitarian philosophy was incompatible with his ideal of the feminine that caused female intellectual admirers to become either critics or revisionists.

With the passing of time, these seven women came to view Rousseau's ideal of sensibility and his limited view of female destiny with increasing ambivalence. With the insights brought to them by their careers as writers and their experiences as women, they gradually moved from a position of admirer or even passionate disciple of Rousseau to one of resisting reader and protesting writer. This was especially true of Wollstonecraft, d'Épinay, Staël, and Genlis, who were openly critical of Rousseau's views on women and women writers by the end of their careers.<sup>207</sup>

Within Trouille's narrative, the female writers who engage in the most recognisably feminist criticisms of Rousseau are foregrounded over those who employ more subtle strategies of resistant or revisionist reading. As will be discussed below, Trouille compares de Gouges's public admiration of Rousseau unfavourably with Wollstonecraft's more direct critique expressed in the *Vindication*. This critique is based on a re-visioning of the concept of female virtue. Nevertheless, both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges seek to extend the ideal of republican virtue, and thus the rights of citizenship, to women.

---

<sup>207</sup> Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers read Rousseau*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 316.

*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* encapsulates an understanding of the ‘long’ Enlightenment from Locke through to Rousseau. Wollstonecraft is, in many respects, a Lockean rationalist but she also expresses qualified agreement with some of the ideas of Rousseau, the proto-romanticist. As with Rousseau himself, Wollstonecraft’s intellectual profile and body of work embodies the transition from the historical ‘Enlightenment’ toward the Romantic era. This is not to state that Wollstonecraft was actually a ‘romantic’ writer. As Taylor argues, the writings of Wollstonecraft defy any simple binary separation between enlightened intellect and romantic imagination.<sup>208</sup> *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* stands not only as an assertion of rights but also as one of the most trenchant critiques of Rousseau written from a pro-enlightenment perspective during the eighteenth century.

In valorising the writings of Rousseau while also arguing against him, Wollstonecraft brings to light what she describes in the *Vindication* as his ‘unintelligible paradoxes’.<sup>209</sup> She argues with Rousseau against Rousseau, particularly in relation to the differences in his attitudes toward how boys and girls should be educated. While agreeing with some of the concepts for childhood education that Rousseau puts forward in *Emile*, Wollstonecraft firmly objects to his differing views on the appropriate education and position of girls and women, as expressed through the character of Sophie. In arguing against Sophie as Rousseau’s ideal construct of womanhood, Wollstonecraft positions herself as an advocate of true reason and virtue against the excessive ‘sensibility’ of Rousseau.

But, according to the tenour of reasoning, by which women are kept from the tree of knowledge, the important years of youth, the usefulness of age, and the rational hopes of futurity, are all to be sacrificed to render women an object of desire for a *short* time. Besides, how could Rousseau expect them to be virtuous

---

<sup>208</sup> Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, p. 58.

<sup>209</sup> Wollstonecraft, ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’, p. 212.

and constant when reason is neither allowed to be the foundation of their virtue, nor truth the object of their inquiries? But all of Rousseau's errors in reasoning arose from sensibility, and sensibility to their charms women are very ready to forgive!<sup>210</sup>

She goes on to state that 'when he [Rousseau] should have reasoned he became impassioned, and reflection inflamed his imagination instead of enlightening his understanding'.<sup>211</sup> Wollstonecraft positions herself as a defender of the 'enlightening' power of 'reason', and the ability to reason, against the misuse of 'sensibility' and 'imagination' that underpins Rousseau's restrictive ideal of the feminine as embodied by Sophie. In so doing, Wollstonecraft is inverting the gendered binary common to late eighteenth century enlightened thinking. She is linking herself, the woman, with the defence of reason while linking Rousseau, the man, with an excess of sensibility. As with the critique of Burke in the first *Vindication*, she assumes the role of the rationalist against the romantic. Most importantly, in making such an inversion of the binary, Wollstonecraft positions the use of reason as a means by which women can defend their intellectual and moral autonomy from the encroachment of potentially enslaving romantic fantasies or conceptions of what they should be.

In arguing against Rousseau's ideas on how girls should be educated, Wollstonecraft makes use of the ideas of John Locke in relation to both the raising of children and human epistemology. She refutes Rousseau's assertion that girls have an innate disposition toward ornate clothing by evoking Locke's statements in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* against restrictive clothing and a 'sedentary life' for children.<sup>212</sup> In attacking the 'false system of female manners' on which the education of girls is predicated, Wollstonecraft uses Locke in stating that the 'power of generalizing ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, is the only

---

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 153-54.

acquisition for an immortal being, that really deserves the name of knowledge'.<sup>213</sup> Wollstonecraft's use of Locke demonstrates not only his pivotal influence over the course of the British Enlightenment but also her belief in a genderless mind. It can be asserted that Locke was a considerably more 'gender-neutral' writer than Rousseau and that Locke's epistemology was conducive to Wollstonecraft's view of human nature. As she asserts in the *Vindication*, 'for men and women, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same'.<sup>214</sup> She argues that the meaning of 'virtue' must therefore be applied equally to men and women, as opposed to only denoting restrictive codes of sexual behaviour in the case of the latter.<sup>215</sup> Wollstonecraft's efforts at re-framing the concept of 'virtue' are intricately linked to her envisioning of female citizenship.

*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is most commonly positioned as being more concerned with questions of female education and intellectual potential than with matters of civil equality. However, by re-framing the concept of 'virtue', Wollstonecraft is pointing toward a model of equal female citizenship. Within this framework, women should no longer defer to the strictures of moral 'virtue' defined in exclusively sexual terms but instead aspire to civic virtue as rational members of society. Referring to women, Wollstonecraft states:

To become respectable, the exercise of their understanding is necessary, there is no other foundation for independence of character; I mean explicitly to say that they must only bow to the authority of reason, instead of being the *modest* slaves of opinion.<sup>216</sup>

According to Wollstonecraft, female virtue should be understood in terms of the woman citizen and her capacity for reason and not as a means of controlling and proscribing female sexuality. Wollstonecraft's effort to 'de-gender' the concept of virtue has radical

---

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*



implications, particularly within the context of eighteenth century European society. Her conception of virtue points to civil equality for women while also explicitly rejecting gendered double standards regarding sexual behaviour. Wollstonecraft positions a woman's virtue as being based on reason and not on social constructions of sexual modesty. Such a definition of female 'virtue' was largely unacceptable to both conservatives and progressives alike during the time of the French Revolution. In France, the playwright and author Olympe de Gouges would confront the limits of socially acceptable female citizenship.

There are a number of similarities between de Gouges and Wollstonecraft beyond the fact that they both wrote treatises on women's rights. Both were from modest middle-class backgrounds (although de Gouges may have been the illegitimate daughter of an aristocrat) and both were autodidacts.<sup>217</sup> While both were supporters of the Revolution, they had a shared sympathy for the more moderate (Girondist) elements within the national assembly.

There are also significant differences between the two women. There was an obvious difference between being a sympathetic observer of the Revolution while living in England and being a protagonist within factional politics in France. Wollstonecraft did of course go to France in 1792 but there is little evidence that she and de Gouges met, or that they had the opportunity to read each other's work. They also differ in their autodidactic careers, leading to significant differences in their written work. As stated above, Wollstonecraft was part of an informed literary circle, and demonstrated familiarity with the works and authors she cited. De Gouges, according to Janie Vanpée,

---

<sup>217</sup> Janie Vanpée, 'La Déclaration des Droits de la Femmes et de la citoyenne: Olympe de Gouges' *Re-Writing of La Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme*' in Catherine R. Montfort (ed.), *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*, Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1994, p. 62.

had ‘absolutely no literary formation’.<sup>218</sup> Vanpée casts doubt on the extent to which de Gouges had actually engaged with the written works of Rousseau when she referenced his ideas in her 1788 essay *Le Bonheur primitif de l’homme, ou les rêveries patriotiques*.<sup>219</sup> Vanpée situates de Gouges’s autodidactic accumulation of knowledge within the tumultuous public sphere of Paris during the late eighteenth century.

Her knowledge was steeped in oral tradition, gleaned informally from hearing whatever ideas, words, commonplaces were being bandied about on stage, at the national assemblies, in street and salon discussions. In this sense, de Gouges was very much a product of her times, reflecting in both the content of her knowledge and the manner by which she gained that knowledge, the explosion of speech, discourse, and oral communication of all types that occurred at the advent of and during the Revolution.<sup>220</sup>

Much of de Gouges’s writing is modelled on public speeches and declarations, rather than on books and essays. Both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges wrote fiction as a means of communicating their social concerns. However, Wollstonecraft wrote novels whereas de Gouges wrote plays, as will be discussed below. The public sphere that de Gouges inhabited is thus a more performative space than the literary circles inhabited by Wollstonecraft. The political space that de Gouges uses during the Revolutionary period is one that is based on patterns of public speech, public performance and public declaration. This is demonstrated in the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* published in 1791.

Unlike Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication*, de Gouges’s *Declaration* is not a discursive essay but is instead directly based on the National Assembly’s 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, with a Preamble followed by numbered articles. It concludes with a ‘Postamble’ that concisely refers to a number of subjects ranging from the status of women under the old regime, a proposal for civil unions referencing Rousseau’s ‘Social Contract’, a plea for the emancipation of ‘men of

---

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*

colour' in France's Caribbean colonies and an anecdote concerning de Gouges's experiences with a rude Paris coachman.<sup>221</sup> Despite the seeming lack of discipline within this 'Postamble', it contains some of de Gouges's most pointed observations. Comparing the status of women under the *Ancien Régime* to their position within the new revolutionary order, she asserts that women were 'in former times despicable and respected, and since the Revolution respectable and despised'.<sup>222</sup> De Gouges means that, under the old regime, certain women wielded social and political power indirectly as the wives and favourites of kings and ministers whereas, under the new order, women were venerated as mothers producing children for the 'fatherland' (*La Patrie*) but excluded from political power. In stating this, she recognises the implications of the revolutionary government's gendered discourse on 'virtue' and citizenship.

Dorinda Outram, in her essay '*Le Langage Mâle de la Vertu: Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution*', explores how the concept of 'virtue', in its classically republican sense, was central to the ideology of the Revolution and what this meant for conceptions of female citizenship. Outram describes how the Revolutionary government linked female political power with the corruption of the body politic.

To a very large extent, the influence of women was seen as the defining characteristic of the corruption of power under the Old Regime. Boudoir politics, the exchange of political gifts for sexual favours, are seen both as causes of the weakness of the Old Regime, and as the justification of the Revolution. Perhaps the most telling example of this occurred during the trial of Marie Antoinette, the deposed Queen of France, in 1793.... To the degree that power in the Old Regime was ascribed to women, that meant that the discourse of the Revolution was committed to an anti-feminine rhetoric.<sup>223</sup>

Virtuous politics in Revolutionary France was thus masculine politics. Outram goes on to note the highly gendered use of the term 'virtue' in Revolutionary discourse and

---

<sup>221</sup> Olympe de Gouges, 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen' in Macdonald and Scherf, (eds), *The Vindications*, pp. 384-92.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, p. 384.

<sup>223</sup> Dorinda Outram, '*Le Langage Mâle de la Vertu: Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution*' in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds), *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 124-25.

asserts that the ‘necessary conclusion was that political revolution could only take place if women were excluded from exercising power, and the niche formally occupied by women’s powerful vice was taken over by male virtue’.<sup>224</sup> De Gouges’s *Declaration* is therefore a direct challenge to the gendered view of virtuous citizenship promulgated by the Revolutionary authorities. As with Wollstonecraft, de Gouges is arguing that women should be able to claim ‘virtue’ in its republican sense.

Such a challenge to this gendered concept of civic virtue is also implicitly a challenge to the teachings of Rousseau. However, de Gouges is consistent in her public admiration for Rousseau and his ideas. In contrast to Vanpée’s assertions, Trouille positions de Gouges as being an actual reader of Rousseau who demonstrates not just a general familiarity with his ideas but also specific knowledge of his writings.<sup>225</sup> What can be asserted is that de Gouges demonstrated an understanding of his thought. Her admiration of Rousseau was not just a public exercise but a sincere belief evidenced in private letters. Trouille states that, while imprisoned, de Gouges ‘invoked Rousseau and identified with his persona of persecuted virtue’ in a letter to her son.<sup>226</sup> De Gouges also strongly identified with Rousseau’s proto-romanticist conceptions of nature and natural talent in framing her own abilities as an author.<sup>227</sup> This admiration of, and personal identification with, Rousseau did not prevent de Gouges from criticising his view of women and their proper social role. In a preface to one of her plays published in 1791, she makes reference to the ‘sternest of our learned men’ who, she writes, ‘grant us only the right to please’ and who ‘argue that we are fit only to run a household and that women with scholarly or literary pretensions are insufferable creatures’.<sup>228</sup> However,

---

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>225</sup> Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment*, p. 243.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*, p. 242.

she does not refer to Rousseau by name. As Trouille recognises, this is a deliberate strategic exercise.

By avoiding criticising Rousseau directly, Gouges ... was able to challenge his views on women without having to disavow her enthusiasm for his egalitarian ideas or his important influence on her development as a thinker and writer.<sup>229</sup>

Trouille later states that de Gouges 'lacked the courage or the insight (or both) to criticise Rousseau directly'.<sup>230</sup> This is perhaps an unfair assessment. As with Wollstonecraft's appeal to Talleyrand, de Gouges is pursuing a strategy of legitimisation. By publicly endorsing Rousseau, she is valorising a figure whose ideas are associated with the official ideology of the Revolutionary government and in particular the Jacobin faction. She is seeking to change the civic status of women while demonstrating her adherence to republican values.

Olympe de Gouges shares the vision of Wollstonecraft in advocating for a genderless conception of civic virtue. As she famously states in article ten of her *Declaration*: 'Woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she should equally have the right to mount the Tribune'.<sup>231</sup> The irony of the fact that the authorities would eventually grant her the former has been frequently noted. Vanpée argues that de Gouges was tried and executed not so much for her specific political opinions as for the fact that she publicly professed them.<sup>232</sup> Her arrest in 1793 was due to her writing and distributing a pamphlet that called for a plebiscite on the form of government to be adopted by Revolutionary France. De Gouges argued at her trial that these actions should be interpreted not as evidence of monarchist sympathies on her part, as the prosecution alleged, but as proof of her deeply held republican and democratic

---

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>231</sup> Olympe de Gouges, 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen', p. 383.

<sup>232</sup> Vanpée, 'La Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne: Olympe de Gouges' Re-Writing of *La Déclaration des Droits de L'homme*', p. 57.

convictions.<sup>233</sup> Following her execution, a government newspaper admonished her for ‘forgetting the virtues that suit her sex’.<sup>234</sup> The gendered conception of the civic virtue to which she aspired would ultimately cost de Gouges her life.

The particular conception of civic virtue and classically republican values held by Olympe de Gouges is presented in many of her plays. In positioning de Gouges as a polemical author in the public sphere, many historians have focused on her short political tracts and pamphlets, such as the *Declaration*, while either ignoring or underestimating her work as a published playwright.<sup>235</sup> However, it is in her capacity as a playwright that de Gouges’s positions on contentious subjects including slavery, divorce, the social status of women and the direction of the Revolution were all communicated to audiences and met with an often hostile critical reception. When considering her impact as an author in the public sphere, de Gouges’s status as a playwright must be recognised. In relation to arguments amongst scholars concerning the extent of her literary formation, the fact that de Gouges wrote plays which were published and performed is an integral part of her contentious profile as a woman in the ‘republic of letters’. Gabrielle Verdier argues that the continued marginalisation of the plays of de Gouges by contemporary historians is partly due to the low aesthetic regard in which ‘revolutionary theater and eighteenth-century bourgeois drama’ are held.<sup>236</sup> Verdier focuses on the ways in which de Gouges both adheres to and challenges the narrative conventions of such theatre while writing plays with a political and social purpose.

---

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>235</sup> Gabrielle Verdier, ‘From Reform to Revolution: The Social Theater of Olympe de Gouges’ in Montfort (ed.) *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*, p. 189.

<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*

Olympe de Gouges's vocation as an author and playwright pre-dates the Revolution of 1789. However, it was during the Revolutionary period of the 1790s that some of her plays could actually be performed. Of her twelve plays written between 1783 and 1793 that survive, ten were published and four were performed.<sup>237</sup> Her authorship is easy to attribute because, rather than write and publish using a male pseudonym, she signed all her work with her own name in defiance of contemporary convention.<sup>238</sup> While her most expressly political plays were written during the Revolutionary period, the plays she wrote before 1789 also address social concerns. Written as early as 1783, the drama *Zamor et Mirza, ou l'heureux naufrage* is a critique of slavery in the French West-Indies. Its controversial subject caused its staging to be delayed by the Comédie Française until 1789, following the initial stages of the Revolution and the threat of legal action by de Gouges.<sup>239</sup> During the 1790s it was retitled as *L'Esclavage des negres*, by which it is more widely known.<sup>240</sup> Some of the plays written by de Gouges to address the status of women also pre-date the Revolution. Written in 1787, the comedy *Le Philosophe corrigé ou le Cocu supposé* criticises gendered double standards regarding sexual virtue.<sup>241</sup> The question of what constituted female virtue after the Revolution is central to de Gouges's later plays.

One of the last plays to be written by de Gouges before her arrest and eventual execution was *L'entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles ou les Vivandiers*. It serves as a demonstration of how de Gouges used her plays to affirm her support for the Revolution while also seeking to radically alter the position of women within it. As with many plays written in France during the 1790s, it serves as a propaganda piece intended to glorify a contemporary figure. This had unfortunate consequences for de Gouges

---

<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>240</sup> *ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>241</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

because the figure used in the play, the war hero General Dumouriez, suffered defeat and then defected to the Austrians within a few weeks of the play first being performed early in 1793.<sup>242</sup> However, the narrative focus of the play is not on Dumouriez (or ‘Dumourier’ as the title of the play refers to him) but on the common people who serve in his army, including the play’s female protagonists. De Gouges’s final play has many of the tropes which characterise her body of work as a playwright and serve to distinguish it from her contemporaries. Verdier offers the following description of the features which mark de Gouges’s comedies and dramas.

The young woman plays a more active role and attempts to fashion her own destiny. Female rivalry is virtually nonexistent. Mature women, quite numerous, serve as protectresses and role models for the younger ones, and encourage their emancipation. Moreover, the young woman’s fate and the obstacle she faces – abusive domestic authority or institutions – are linked to another social injustice denounced by the play. Rather than the sacrifice of a solitary victim, the play stages the solidarity of oppressed groups against the masters and the oppressive institutions. Indeed, de Gouges’s casts include crowds of common people, slaves, peasants, nuns, simple soldiers, and guards won over by their destitute prisoners.<sup>243</sup>

All of these features are present in *Dumourier*. However, unlike in de Gouges’s earlier plays, the central male authority figure is valorised rather than resisted. De Gouges is once again pursuing a strategy of legitimation for her radical arguments by endorsing a male figure of authority known in the public sphere. As a piece of Revolutionary propaganda, the play endorses the figure of General Dumouriez and the institution of the Revolutionary army. It endorses, to an extent, the official ideology of the French Revolutionary government (as nebulous and unstable as that was). The heterodox element is the representation of the female characters and how they are used to promulgate de Gouges’s differing conception of republican civic virtue and equality.

The female characters in *Dumourier* transgress accepted roles for women, in the sense of both representation on stage and in serving as models for behaviour in the

---

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*, p. 199.



public sphere. While other plays of the period feature women as combatants in the Revolutionary army, reflecting a reality during 1792-93 before the National Assembly passed a law which strictly limited the role of women to that of nurses and camp-followers, in de Gouges's play the female soldiers are not 'curiosities' but instead serve as 'models for women'.<sup>244</sup> While it may seem incongruous that de Gouges would valorise the concept of women as soldiers given the essentially pacifist nature of her philosophy, it is in fact consistent as her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* is based on the assertion that women have equal rights to men in the public sphere and can practise civic virtue. Valorising the idea of a citizens' army is also consistent with classical republicanism.

*Dumourier* can be understood as an attempt by de Gouges to combine an endorsement of the classically republican ideology sanctioned by the Revolutionary authorities with an affirmation that such a conception of civic virtue be inclusive of women. As Verdier states:

De Gouges did warn that the success of the Revolution depended on the regeneration of civic virtue, but did not equate this with narrow moralism. She proclaimed, moreover, that this regeneration could only be achieved by the active *participation* of women in the political sphere, not their exclusion.<sup>245</sup>

It was this radical conception of female citizenship, combined with the growing disrepute attached to the figure of General Dumouriez, which led to the play being received with an almost uniformly hostile critical reception when published and performed.<sup>246</sup> While de Gouges was not tried and executed for the plays that she wrote, her work as a playwright contributed to her increasingly negative reputation in the public sphere of the Revolution. Her body of work, both as a playwright and as a

---

<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.*, p. 197. (*Italics original*).

<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*, p. 212.

political author, is consistent in demanding that the same standard of civic virtue be applied equally to male and female citizens of the new republic.

Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft were both advocates of reason and enlightenment. They both argued for enlightened concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘rights’ to be applied to all people regardless of gender. As with many radicals of the Revolutionary era, they both had strong sympathies with the classically republican idea of ‘virtue’ and sought to remove its gendered connotations while affirming their belief in equal citizenship. To this end, each affirmed their own position as female authors in the public sphere. They both recognised the contradictions of enlightened discourse while remaining committed to the principles of the Enlightenment. They both negotiated these contradictions through the pursuit of strategies of legitimation that enabled them to challenge the conception of gender held by many radicals of the time while positioning themselves as supporters of radical change. The extent to which their arguments are applicable to contemporary feminist thought will be addressed in the final section of the next chapter.

## **Part Three**

## Chapter Five

### The 'Enlightenment' and the Democratic Public Sphere

In Chapters Three and Four, I have sought to demonstrate what the historical European 'Enlightenment' was and how questions of progressive social change and social justice for the marginalised and oppressed were addressed at that time, by authors who themselves hailed from such conditions. In so doing, I have offered an alternative picture of the Enlightenment to the dominant view within cultural studies as outlined in Chapter One. I have also shown, in Chapter Two, how theorists as diverse as Habermas, Foucault and Derrida share an ultimately affirmative view of what 'Enlightenment' is and support the need for a self-aware and progressive conception of cultural modernity. This final chapter is therefore centred on the following central question: how can cultural studies use the legacy of the Enlightenment in its development of progressive social theory? There is a historically specific corollary to this question. How might the ideas put forward by Moses Mendelssohn, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Olympe de Gouges contribute towards contemporary debates on multicultural and feminist theory respectively? There is also a broader corollary to this question. How can cultural studies re-position a certain kind of modernity as necessary without re-inscribing an oppressive affirmation of a socially destructive mode of modernity?

To ask the central question is to return to the theory of Jürgen Habermas. His writings and lectures concerning how an inclusive polity is constructed in relation to communicative action, deliberative democracy and the role of religion within the framework of a secular constitutional state are of central importance to the question of how contemporary cultural theory, including cultural studies, can continue the 'unfinished project' of the Enlightenment in advancing a socially just conception of modernity. It is not my intention to merely agree with every argument and theoretical

model advanced by Habermas. Instead I hope to demonstrate how his continually evolving body of work can make a valuable contribution to how concepts of pluralism, multiculturalism, democracy and the public sphere are theorised within cultural studies. Habermas's theories have at times been criticised within the field. This has sometimes been due to misinterpretation and a failure to acknowledge that his theoretical positions are not static.

In the first section of this chapter I position Habermas's arguments concerning constitutional democracy and an inclusive public sphere in relation to how such themes are expounded within cultural studies. I do this via an extended comparative reading of cultural theorist David Morley and his year 2000 text *Home Territories* and the work of Habermas. In the next section of this chapter, I probe Habermas's developing arguments concerning the role of religion and cultural difference in the formation of an inclusive constitutional state. While these arguments are rooted in Kantian idealism, I will show how such ideas do, in fact, link back to the work of Mendelssohn. In the final section of this chapter I explore Nancy Fraser's theoretical engagement with Habermas's work and posit the continuing relevance of Wollstonecraft and de Gouges to a feminist theorisation of an inclusive public sphere. Models of engaged citizenship and an inclusive public sphere within the framework of a constitutional polity are the link between the work of Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges and their continued relevance to contemporary cultural theory.

### **Habermas, Cultural Studies and the Theorising of the Public Sphere**

How a genuinely inclusive and democratic public sphere can be developed is a shared theoretical concern for both Habermas and some cultural studies practitioners. This section activates a critical engagement with David Morley's *Home Territories: Media,*

*Mobility and Identity*. Owing to its time of publication, the discussion of media systems in Morley's book is now dated by its focus on print and television. However, it serves as an instructive example of how the concept of the public sphere, including Habermas's theorisation of it, is typically framed within cultural studies. In analysing Morley's arguments about the public sphere and the possibilities for multicultural and post-national social formations, I engage in a comparative intertextual reading with the work of Habermas.

The continuing importance of Habermas as a seminal theorist of the public sphere, who has long explored the nature of democratic citizenship and the tensions between the often opposing discourses of civil society and nationalism, is acknowledged within cultural studies but he is at times subject to misinterpretation. Morley makes some assertions about Habermas's arguments that are misleading. His assessment of Habermas's work should not go unanswered. Any analysis of the links between territoriality, citizenship, and the construction of a public sphere cannot lightly dismiss the contributions made by Habermas towards the theoretical understanding of these concepts. Through engaging in an intertextual reading of Morley and Habermas, I probe the extent to which a discourse of active and participatory citizenship can transcend mechanisms of social and territorial exclusion.

In *Home Territories*, Morley investigates the nature of territoriality by considering how ideologies of 'home' are mobilised by various groups in reference to constructions of identity. He states in the introduction that despite the discourse of post-modernity making much of a 'de-territorialised' existence based on increased mobilities, the 'concept of home often remains as the uninterrogated anchor or alter-ego

of all this hyper-mobility'.<sup>247</sup> Therefore, Morley seeks to investigate the links between how people identify with home as an actual site and the wider questions of place and identity. By using a methodology of 'postmodern geography', he analyses how territorial discourses operate at both the micro level of the individual home and local community and the macro level of the nation-state, and the connections between the two.<sup>248</sup> He thus intends to show the symbiotic relationship between how a normalised xenophobia informs constructions of homeliness and how the trope of the home features in the exclusional discourse of the nation-state. He writes:

In particular, my focus is on the process through which, in different contexts, conflict is generated in the process of identity formation by the attempt to expel alterity beyond the boundaries of some ethnically, culturally or civilisationally purified homogenous enclave, at whatever level of social or geographical scale. In these processes, the crucial issue in defining who (or what) 'belongs' is ... also that of defining who (or what) is to be excluded as 'matter out of place', whether that matter is represented by impure or foreign material objects, persons or cultural products.<sup>249</sup>

The processes of exclusion that operate both in the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of the nation state are sourced from the same discourse. Morley argues that a hegemonic understanding of these spheres is configured through the media.<sup>250</sup> He positions communications technology as the nexus between the two spheres and asserts the paradoxical nature of its role as a transgressor of the public/private boundary which invades the home while at the same time affirming the value of the normative household and shared experience within the context of the nation state.<sup>251</sup> Media and communication technologies, in occupying both spheres, assist in the articulation of who is addressed and included and who is excluded from the imagined community of the nation.

---

<sup>247</sup> David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000, p.3.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*

Morley frames the mediated construction of this imagined community as a question of who is granted ‘symbolic membership of the nation’ and what modes are available for participation in the community as it is imagined through the media.<sup>252</sup> Who is addressed and included through broadcasting denotes the limits of the public sphere. However, Morley is very much aware that there has been much work in the disciplines of media and cultural studies over the years which positions national media broadcasting as a site of normalising ideology. He re-iterates the argument that analysis of the role of the media must transcend a model of purely vertical power relations and instead incorporate understandings of both vertical and horizontal relations in how media broadcasting communicates with the public(s).<sup>253</sup> In relation to the complexity of who is being hailed and how, he mobilises arguments against the concept of there being a singular public sphere that must be valorised above other forms of social organisation.

It is within this context that Morley enters into a critique of what he interprets as Habermas’s conception of the public sphere and its development. Mobilising the arguments of other theorists, he frames Habermas’s analysis of the public sphere as an outdated discourse that privileges normative and elitist conceptions of active citizenship and democracy at the expense of other groups and modes. It should be noted that Morley does not actually reference any primary sources by Habermas himself but only other theorists’ critiques. He also does not identify the text or body of work to which he is referring but instead summarises Habermas’s theoretical position on the public sphere as follows:

The basic narrative of Habermas’ work on the public sphere can be argued to represent a ‘tragic rise and fall myth’ in which that sphere is seen to have arisen in reaction to the limits of an old aristocratic culture but then to have been corrupted by the artificialities of our contemporary mediatised world.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.



The unnamed work which is being referred to is *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* which, although not published in English until 1989, was first published in German in 1962.<sup>255</sup> The significance of this time delay in translation becomes apparent when considering the nature of some of the mobilised criticisms of this work. Without having situated this uncited work in any historical context or even identified its title, Morley then proceeds to singularly validate another theorist's critique. He writes:

Nancy Fraser rightly argues that not only does Habermas' account idealise the liberal public sphere, but because he fails to examine other non-liberal, non-bourgeois, competing public sphere – what she calls subaltern counter-publics – that he ends up idealising the uninterrogated class- and gender-based assumptions of the claim that the bourgeois public ever fully represented the public in the first place.<sup>256</sup>

As we will see, Habermas never made such a claim, and the concept of 'counter-publics' was something he initiated. While it is ahistorical to criticise a text published in 1962 for 'uninterrogated' gender-based assumptions without identifying its context, the problem is compounded by a failure to assess the actual text in question. I re-iterate that my intention is not to engage in an uncritical defence of Habermas, but rather to demonstrate the continuing relevance of his theories to conceptions of the public sphere, democracy, and territoriality. It is therefore imperative that any assessment of Habermas's still developing body of work be properly situated within the relevant contexts. In his original introduction, Habermas does foreground that he is specifically investigating the development of the *bourgeois* public sphere, as opposed to '*plebeian*' ones.<sup>257</sup> As William Outhwaite notes, while Habermas did not entirely ignore questions of class and gender in the original edition, he does address these criticisms in his introduction to the second German edition.<sup>258</sup> Habermas, whatever the confusion over his self-identification as a Marxist theoretician, has been consistent in addressing

---

<sup>255</sup> William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p. 7.

<sup>256</sup> Morley, *Home Territories*, p. 114.

<sup>257</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, p. xviii.

<sup>258</sup> Outhwaite, *Habermas*, pp. 8 & 13.

questions of power and oppression throughout his writings.<sup>259</sup> Nancy Fraser acknowledges this, as will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

The largest gap in theoretical understanding between the Habermas and the Morley texts separated by almost forty years is in how the relationship between the media and its audiences is conceived. As stated above, Morley rejects the model of a solely vertical power relationship between dominating media systems and passive audience, affirming the contemporary dominant discourse within the disciplines of media studies and cultural studies that stresses the agency of the consumer. In comparison, *The Structural Transformation*, as a relatively seminal inquiry into the role of media systems in the public sphere, has a more alarmist and conspiratorial tone. Here, Habermas constructs a clear differentiation between the function of the media in the bourgeois public sphere of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe and the ‘mass media’ of the postwar period. He argues that the former served as a discursive space for relatively open mutual discussion of ideas and issues within the bourgeois sphere, often in opposition to the ruling establishment as embodied by royalty and aristocracy, whereas the latter is a corporatised organ of state and commercial power that constructs, rather than transmits public opinion. He writes:

According to the liberal model of the public sphere, the institutions of the public engaged in rational-critical debate were protected from interference by public authority by virtue of their being in the hands of private people. To the extent that they were commercialised and underwent economic, technological, and organisational concentration, however, they have turned during the last hundred years into complexes of societal power, so that precisely their remaining in private hands in many ways threatened the critical functions of publicist institutions.<sup>260</sup>

While this line of argument may feature an overly idealised construction of the Enlightenment public sphere, the characterisation of the development of media systems into corporate entities and the subsequent effect of that on open and informed

---

<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>260</sup> Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 188.

discussion within the contemporary public sphere can be considered prescient over fifty years later. As Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts (writing in the introduction to their 2004 edited work, *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*) assert, the arguments contained in *Structural Transformation* 'are as relevant as they ever were' in the context of the contemporary growing awareness of the problematic nature of corporate power and the development of social justice movements around the 'anti-corporate' discourse.<sup>261</sup> The relevance of such arguments can therefore be extended to contemporary social movements including the more recent 'Occupy' protests.

While *Structural Transformation* does frame the mass media as a somewhat monolithic entity that has a dominating effect on public opinion, disregarding people's agency, this is once again a matter of the context in which it was written. While an emphasis on the structural power of media systems may have been the dominant discourse in sociological theory in the 1960s, Habermas has since expressed awareness that the model of vertical power relations between media and audience is no longer viable.<sup>262</sup> Therefore, the apparent disregard for the agency of the viewer shown in *Structural Transformation* is a matter of time and context rather than of ideology.

The discourse of readership agency, as validated by Morley, also has problematic implications for the construction of a model of active citizenship and a critical public sphere. In criticising the limits of the 'masculinist' public sphere and valorising a more positive conception of media readership, Morley mobilises arguments that frame the mass media and popular culture as sites of empowerment for subaltern groups that have been traditionally excluded from the main sites of public discourse.<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts (eds), 'Introduction' in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing/The Sociological Review, 2004, p. 10.

<sup>262</sup> Outhwaite, *Habermas*, p. 12.

<sup>263</sup> Morley, *Home Territories*, pp. 114-15.

A telling example is his paraphrasing of Lila Abu-Lughod's argument that, in Egypt, television has allowed much wider access to knowledge and literacies about the outside world than the traditional public sphere as embodied by the Cairo coffee house, because such a space was limited to urban men.<sup>264</sup> While this is most probably true, Morley's assertion that television therefore 'has had a profoundly democratising effect', is troubling.<sup>265</sup> Although the concept that disempowered groups can use popular or trivialised culture as a site of re-negotiation is an influential idea within cultural studies, there is nothing inherently democratic about sitting in front of a television or computer screen. However engaged a viewer one may be, in most circumstances the level of agency and control most people have over what they watch is limited to the ability to change channels or switch off. While cable and satellite television (or public broadcasting) may hail groups who feel excluded from the discourse of national belonging that the mainstream broadcasters project, television in itself cannot constitute a counter-public. The same criticism can be made in relation to inter-net based 'social media'. Applications such as 'Facebook' increasingly function as sites of corporate and government surveillance over each individual consumer while 'Twitter' is, by its very nature, an inadequate and debased form of public discourse. Such criticism is not to deny the usefulness of these applications in helping to organise activism in public space.

The danger in validating the consumption of popular culture in the private sphere over the exclusionary limits of the public sphere is that the exclusion is perpetuated. Patterns of consumption do not in themselves constitute an emancipatory political project. Seeing members of marginalised social and ethnic groups on television can be considered a validating shift 'towards a multi-ethnic public sphere'.<sup>266</sup> But

---

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, p. 124.

conflating the inclusiveness of a society with its mediated forms does not advance the cause of social justice. Nonetheless, Morley asserts a valid political position:

An egalitarian multicultural society depends on the creation and maintenance of a plurality of public arenas in which a wide range of groups, with a diverse range of values and rhetorics, can effectively participate.<sup>267</sup>

However, the development of such democratic plurality entails an actively political engagement. The democratisation of the public sphere will require structural changes, but on an ideological and political level, it requires the conscious articulation of a discourse of active citizenship.

In this regard, the theories of Habermas once again prove relevant. Far from ignoring the existence of ‘subaltern counter-publics’, Habermas has long practised a theoretical engagement with the question of social movements and their potential. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, published in Germany in 1981, is in many ways a continuation and development of the arguments contained in *Structural Transformation*. In theorising about the extent to which the increasingly technocratic, corporatized, and mediated forms of social organisation denote the ‘colonisation of the lifeworld’, he affirms the potential for change and democratic empowerment as embodied by popular protest movements that exist outside institutionalised forms.<sup>268</sup> He writes:

In the past decade or two, conflicts have developed in advanced Western countries that deviate in various ways from the welfare-state pattern of institutionalised conflict over distribution. They no longer flare up in domains of material reproduction; they are no longer channelled through parties and associations; and they can no longer be allayed by compensations. Rather, these new conflicts arise in domains of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialisation; they are carried out in sub-institutional – or at least extraparliamentary – forms of protest; and the underlying deficits reflect a reification of communicatively structured domains of action that will not respond to the media of money and power.<sup>269</sup>

---

<sup>267</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>268</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Boston: Beacon Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> corrected edition 1985, p. 391.

<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*, p. 392.

Habermas is explicitly referring here to the development of the women's movement, the peace and anti-nuclear movement, the environmental movement, and the protests of social minorities.<sup>270</sup> However, his analysis remains relevant given the contemporary mobilisation of a large, trans-global, and decentred anti-corporate movement. In her article 'Habermas and Social Movements: What's "New"?', Gemma Edwards asserts that the Habermasian trope of 'colonisation of the lifeworld' is applicable to the intensifying process of capitalist corporatisation, the results of which can be witnessed in everything from the increasing omnipotence of advertising and branding in public spaces to the commercialisation of university campuses.<sup>271</sup> However, she also argues that Habermas's theories on protest movements and resistance to 'colonisation' have to be re-configured to address the fact that the differentiation between 'old' social movements based around 'material reproduction' and 'new' ones based on 'cultural reproduction' no longer apply.<sup>272</sup> While the distinction perhaps made sense in the context of the Federal Republic of Germany during the early 1980s, where trade unions by and large formed part of the institutionalised apparatus of the welfare state, issues of unionism, wages, and conditions can no longer be separated from an analysis of social movements and counter-publics that are configured around the defence of the lifeworld.

Edwards is not therefore arguing that Habermas's theory of social movements is now irrelevant but that it has to be revised to address the increasing convergence between the supposedly 'old' movement of trade unionism and the 'new' movements of anti-corporate protest. She cites the development of 'community unions', 'living wage' campaigns, and the event of the 2002/2003 British Fire-fighters' strike.<sup>273</sup> According to Edwards, that dispute should be understood not just as a campaign for wage increases

---

<sup>270</sup> *ibid.*, p. 391.

<sup>271</sup> Gemma Edwards, 'Habermas and Social Movements: What's "New"?', in Crossley and Roberts (eds), *After Habermas*, p. 118.

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

but also as a campaign against a proposed program of ‘modernisation’ involving cost-cutting, more managerial control, and less flexibility in regard to working conditions.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, she argues, within the terms of Habermas’s theory, the industrial action embodied a resistance to increasing economic and administrative rationalism resulting in a ‘colonisation of the workplace’.<sup>275</sup> In writing about the nature of ‘new’ protest movements and ‘alternative’ lifestyles, Habermas asserts that such practices are a direct challenge to ever more dominant and invasive forms of social and economic organisation. He states:

Alternative practice is directed against the profit-dependent instrumentalization of work in one’s vocation, the market-dependent mobilisation of labor power, against the extension of pressures of competition and performance all the way down into elementary school. It also takes aim at the monetarization of services, relationships, and time, at the consumerist redefinition of private spheres of life and personal life-styles.<sup>276</sup>

Over thirty years after this was first written, Habermas’s theoretical insights once more prove decidedly prescient when considering contemporary debates about the nature of work and leisure in a deregulated market economy. For Habermas, counter-publics are not formed through sitting at home in front of the television set. They are formed through actions of direct participatory engagement in the public sphere. The ‘Occupy’ movement and many of the events associated with the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ are examples of this. By these actions, colonisation is resisted and the public sphere is democratically reclaimed.

The example of the anti-corporate (or ‘Occupy’) movement and its global presence is conducive to the idea of what Morley terms ‘transnational public spheres’.<sup>277</sup> This raises the question of whether conceptions of democracy and citizenship can effectively transcend the structural and ideological formations of the

---

<sup>274</sup> *ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>275</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>276</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. Two*, p. 395.

<sup>277</sup> Morley, *Home Territories*, p. 125.

nation-state. Morley asserts the need to ‘abandon the Habermasian assumption that the public sphere is necessarily (or intrinsically) national in scope and address the existence of cross-cutting transnational and diasporic public spheres’.<sup>278</sup> However, Habermas does not make that assumption, and has long engaged with the intricacies of the relationship between democracy, citizenship, and nationalism. Like Morley, Habermas frames Europe as the site for discussing the limits and possibilities of a formalised trans- or post-national public sphere. In this, he follows the example of Kant.<sup>279</sup>

The question of whether an increasingly politically integrated Europe demonstrates the potential for a post-national formation of citizenship thus concerns both theorists. Writing about the process of European integration, Morley states:

If we are unable to transcend a notion of Europe as anything other than a nation-state writ large, the project of creating a European AudioVisual Sphere of Culture risks simply replicating, on a larger scale, all the corresponding problems of nationalism. As Robbins notes, the discourse of EuroCulture emphasises cohesion, integration, union and security – values equally central to the kind of belonging associated with the problematic history of the nation-state.<sup>280</sup>

Therefore, a discourse of cultural *metanationalism* means that even transnational political formations do not preclude the exclusion of certain people from belonging. Habermas, viewing such concerns from the perspective of German history, has long argued that, within the context of a democratic state, belonging should be politically articulated not through a discourse of cultural nationalism, but instead by means of a ‘constitutional patriotism’.<sup>281</sup> He argues that such a discourse locates citizenship within a negotiated framework of mutual rights and responsibilities and thus separates it from the tropes of shared ethnicity or culture.<sup>282</sup> He positions such a concept as the basis for

---

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>279</sup> See Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008, p. 312.

<sup>280</sup> Morley, *Home Territories*, p. 260.

<sup>281</sup> Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001, p. 74.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*



any just and effective post-national political and social formations.<sup>283</sup> Thus, citizenship is framed as a political and ethical value of participation and solidarity rather than as a legal category of limited belonging.

Both Morley and Habermas are engaged with the question of how to separate the concepts of nation and culture from the discourse and practice of democratic citizenship. While Morley grounds the discussion of the realisation of an egalitarian multicultural society within the discourse of post-structuralist theory, Habermas approaches the project from a historical and materialist perspective that stresses the importance of legal and social frameworks. Both theorists measure the possibilities and shortcomings of an inclusive conception of citizenship against the situations experienced by those most on the margins of national belonging: immigrants, refugees, and those whose ‘ethnic’ or ‘cultural’ difference is marked in relation to the dominant social group. These groups challenge the essentialist conflation of political organisation and territoriality with the supposed imperatives of shared culture and shared ethnicity. Such a conception of citizenship, which Morley terms ‘cultural fundamentalism’, remains the dominant discourse through which the nation state and its attendant political relations are theorised.<sup>284</sup> In addressing the issue of how a more integrated Europe avoids the pitfalls of a metanational(ist) structure, Morley states that the ‘question of who is to be allowed in or out through the doors of Europe is a crucial one, most particularly at a moment when its walls themselves are being rebuilt’.<sup>285</sup> Habermas addresses that question with regard to expanding the political and legal conception of citizenship.

---

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>284</sup> Morley, *Home Territories*, pp. 247-49.

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.*, p. 261.

In 1990, during the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin wall and the process of Eastern Bloc dissolution and German reunification, Habermas wrote an essay entitled 'Citizenship and National Identity' in which he focused consideration of the historical formation of the nation-state and the prospects for greater European integration around the question of greater democratic inclusiveness, with reference to contemporary debates over multiculturalism and immigration. Pivotal to this historical understanding of how conceptions of the nation state have evolved is an analysis of the links between the development of the nation as a political entity and liberal democracy as the normative or idealised model of political organisation.

Habermas draws a distinction between 'prepolitical' and 'political' conceptions of nationhood. He writes that the use of the term 'nation' to denote commonality in a society based on the attributes of supposedly shared descent, culture and language dates from the classical period and was familiar to European thought by the Middle Ages, although he asserts that the political conception of a nation as a sovereign state had already developed by the 'early-modern period'.<sup>286</sup> He argues that while these two differing conceptions of nationhood have been interlinked since the eighteenth century, the emerging discourse of democracy and liberal republicanism enabled citizenship as a value system and a signifier of political belonging to be separated from the trope of ethno-cultural homogeneity. Writing on the legacy of the French Revolution, Habermas states:

The nation of citizens finds its identity not in ethnic and cultural commonalities but in the practice of citizens who actively exercise their rights to participation and communication. At this juncture, the republican strand of citizenship completely parts company with the idea of belonging to a prepolitical community integrated on the basis of descent, shared tradition, and common language. Viewed from this end, the initial fusion of national consciousness with republican conviction only functioned as a catalyst.<sup>287</sup>

---

<sup>286</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, p. 494.

<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 494-95.

He goes on to state categorically that ‘citizenship was never conceptually tied to national identity’.<sup>288</sup> Thus, peoples’ rights as citizens are not tethered to, and transcend, the need to belong to a nation as a cultural entity. Extrapolating from this, Habermas addresses the question of how the recognition of citizenship as both an ethical value and a legal entitlement can transcend its mobilisation as a category predicated on territorial exclusivity.

Habermas frames the question of whether a transnational mode of citizenship can operate in an integrated Europe as being a matter of the extent to which the mechanisms of democracy can keep pace and exist with the process of greater economic and bureaucratic integration.<sup>289</sup> Like Morley, Habermas argues that the conventional idea of the nation-state cannot simply be transposed onto an integrated Europe without replicating the problems of nationalism. He employs his conception of ‘constitutional patriotism’ to assert how a united Europe will require a discourse of expressly political citizenship, involving the development of transnational public spheres, operating separately from formations of culture.<sup>290</sup> Dismissing essentialist conceptions of cultural exceptionalism as the model for a common pan-European identity, he states that the idea of ‘common origins in the European Middle Ages’ is irrelevant to the development of pan-European citizenship.<sup>291</sup> The question of to what extent tropes of nationality, culture, and identity can be separated from the mechanisms of a nascent transnational citizenship is brought into focus by questions of immigration and marked cultural difference.

---

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.*, p. 495.

<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 500-502.

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*, p. 507.

<sup>291</sup> *ibid.*

Habermas asserts that any conception of transnational citizenship leaves no justification for ‘restrictive or obstructionist asylum and immigration policies’.<sup>292</sup> He argues that the legal value of citizenship must be affirmed in relation to universalist conceptions of human rights and democratic participation as opposed to national belonging. Following on from this, he cites approvingly historical and legal precedents for conferring citizenship rights upon immigrants as a matter of course, the principle being that anyone under the jurisdiction of a legal-political system must have the ability to participate in it.<sup>293</sup> Such a universalist discourse on the nature of political rights and responsibilities forms the crux of his arguments concerning citizenship, and thus serves to qualify his affirmation of a multicultural and pluralist society. Referring to the moral responsibility of European states to maintain open borders, he writes:

They [European states] must not circle their wagons and use a chauvinism of affluence as cover against the onrush of immigrants and asylum seekers. Certainly the democratic right to self-determination includes the right to preserve one’s own *political* culture, which forms a concrete context for rights of citizenship, but it does not include the right to self-assertion of a privileged *cultural* form of life. Within the constitutional framework of the democratic rule of law, diverse forms of life can coexist equally. These must, however, overlap in a common political culture that in turn is open to impulses from new forms of life.<sup>294</sup>

Therefore, the other side of Habermas’s insistence that the discourse of democratic citizenship be separated from the discourse of cultural essentialism is that he positions culture as being subordinate to political and legal frameworks. While, like Morley, he argues for the development of structures in which cultural difference and diversity can be supported within the context of an egalitarian society, he positions an acceptance of the dominant systems (such as the rule of law and the procedures of liberal democracy) through which the structural power of the state is organised as the framework upon which to do this. He positions the constitutional nation-state as a necessary component in moving towards a transnational democratic global order.

---

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*, p. 509.

<sup>293</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, p. 514.

It is this affirmation of an arguably normative discourse of liberalism that has led some theorists writing from the perspective of cultural studies, such as Morley, to characterise Habermas as being an elitist exponent of the Eurocentric and legalistic values of the 'Enlightenment project'. However, if a project of developing a socially just and inclusive model of citizenship that can accommodate multicultural and trans- or post-national social formations is to be realised, then there has to be some basis for common democratic participation and civic equality and solidarity. Implementing a model of constitutional patriotism does not entail that citizens swear unbending allegiance to a statically maintained political order but rather that, within the context of a multicultural and pluralist society, there is a discourse of mutual respect and validation underpinned by a system of equal rights and responsibilities to which everyone has recourse. While such a model does not of itself address the problem of structural inequalities, it does serve as the basis for a mode of democratic citizenship that can transcend the regressive nature of cultural essentialisms and fundamentalisms.

### **Religion, Reason and the Constitutional State**

Habermas is committed to the promise of the Enlightenment. He opposes religious and cultural fundamentalism. He affirms the need for an inclusive and active public sphere. Taken together, what do these principles mean for how religion, particularly as a marker of cultural difference, should manifest itself in the constitutional state? Habermas has long written on questions relating to the practice of religious belief, in relation to both philosophy and social theory. Two different strands influence his stance towards questions of religion: the work of Kant and, more indirectly, a European-Jewish intellectual tradition that is the inheritance of the Frankfurt School. Habermas has long been a defender of the importance of this tradition to the development of European and

German philosophy.<sup>295</sup> Recognition of this led him to be invited to a conference on Derrida's theory in relation to the latter's Jewish background. Derrida was present at Habermas's resulting lecture, 'How to Answer the Ethical Question: Derrida and Religion'.<sup>296</sup> Habermas is acutely aware of how religious traditions can be used to frame questions of belonging and social justice.

The increasing recognition of Habermas's respectful engagement with questions of religion and its role within the public sphere and the constitutional state resulted in a dialogue being organised between him and (then) Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 2004. The agreed subject of the dialogue was 'The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State'.<sup>297</sup> Both men delivered prepared responses that were later published together as *The Dialectics of Secularization*. While Ratzinger's response was understandably to assert that such 'pre-political moral foundations' were derived from the truth of the Divine, Habermas used the opportunity to re-affirm his argument for mutual respect and tolerance within the framework of a secular polity. He argues that for a respectful dialogue to occur, secularists must acknowledge that 'religious convictions have an epistemological status that is not purely and simply irrational'.<sup>298</sup> He goes on to make the following assertion.

The neutrality of the state authority on questions of world views guarantees the same ethical freedom to every citizen. This is incompatible with the political universalization of a secularist world view. When secularized citizens act in their role as citizens of the state, they must not deny in principle that religious images of the world have the potential to express truth. Nor must they refuse their believing follow citizens the right to make contributions in a religious language to public debates. Indeed, a liberal political culture can expect that the secularized citizens play their part in the endeavors to translate relevant

---

<sup>295</sup> See Habermas, 'The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers' in his *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 2002, pp. 37-59.

<sup>296</sup> See Habermas, 'How to Answer the Ethical Question: Derrida and Religion' in his *Europe: The Faltering Project*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, pp. 17-36.

<sup>297</sup> Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006, p. 15.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, p. 51.

contributions from the religious language into a language that is accessible to the public as a whole.<sup>299</sup>

Habermas condemns both religious and atheist fundamentalisms. As noted above, Habermas positions multicultural and cosmopolitan pluralism as being enabled by legal equality within the framework of a liberal and constitutional state. He affirms multiculturalism but rejects overly relativist and romanticised conceptions of what it should be. Religious and cultural pluralism must not displace civil equality and the rule of law but function within it. Tracing the connection between the historical development of religious tolerance and the practice of multicultural policy, he states:

The advance in reflexivity exacted from religious consciousness in pluralistic societies in turn provides a model for the mindset of secular groups in multicultural societies. For multiculturalism that understands itself in the right way is not a *one-way street* to the cultural self-assertion of groups with their own collective identities. The equal coexistence of different forms of life must not lead to segmentation. It calls for the integration of all citizens and the mutual recognition of their subcultural memberships within the framework of a shared political culture.... The same constitutional basic norms in terms of which cultural exemptions and authorizations are justified also define their limits.<sup>300</sup>

The collective rights claimed by a religious or cultural group must be balanced against the rights of the individual and the legal and ethical norms of a constitutional and democratic polity. In this regard, Habermas positions traditional liberalism as being a better foundation for multicultural policy than what he terms ‘postmodern liberalism’.<sup>301</sup> He is aware that an emphasis on the collective rights of a cultural or religious group, irrespective of what individuals deemed to belong to that group may want or think, has ‘the potential to promote internal repression’.<sup>302</sup> A collectivist conception of multiculturalism, coupled with cultural essentialism and moral relativism, can be harmful to the rights of individuals and the expression of difference not just between but also *within* cultural groupings.

---

<sup>299</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>300</sup> Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, p. 270.

<sup>301</sup> *ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>302</sup> *ibid.*, p. 301.

Habermas positions his views on religion, and the role of religious belief within the state, as being influenced by the work of Kant.<sup>303</sup> He sees in Kant's philosophy of religion a way to criticise dogma and fundamentalism while making positive use of the moral and intellectual resources of a faith that has been filtered through reason.<sup>304</sup> However, the view of religion and the state that Habermas expounds may actually be closer to Mendelssohn than to Kant. In Chapter Three, I explained Mendelssohn's arguments concerning religion and the state as expounded in *Jerusalem*. I demonstrated both the similarities and the differences with Kant's view as put forward in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Both men argued for religious toleration by the state and the importance of a rational conception of religion for a moral society. However, I noted the argument of Hunter that Kant may have been advocating the re-establishment of a certain interpretation of German Protestantism as a confessional state religion. Habermas's conception of religious freedom and equality as being enabled by a state that is genuinely secular and neutral mirrors that of Mendelssohn. The influence of Kantian thought on Habermas is well recognised but what of Mendelssohn? Given Habermas's recognition of the importance of the Jewish intellectual tradition to German philosophy, his silence on Mendelssohn is intriguing.

The ideas put forward by Mendelssohn remain relevant to the theorisation of multiculturalism, secularism and an inclusive public sphere. As shown in Chapter Three, *Jerusalem* argues not just for 'toleration' of religious and cultural difference but primarily for a system of both individual and collective rights and freedoms within the framework of a secular state. While defending its virtues, Mendelssohn does not seek to establish Judaism as a state religion nor does he grant it a monopoly on metaphysical truth. He argues for freedom of belief not just in relation to the state but also in relation

---

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.*



to cultural groups. In opposing the practice of *herem*, the Judaic equivalent of excommunication, he is refuting ‘internal oppression’. Within the context of its time, *Jerusalem* stands as a genuinely ‘enlightened’ document in every sense of the word.

In discussing the current relevance of Mendelssohn’s ideas, the criticism can be made that the arguments advanced in *Jerusalem* do not go beyond conventionally liberal conceptions of multiculturalism, secularism and pluralism. The criticism can also be made that while Mendelssohn advocates freedom of religion, he does not allow for freedom *from* religion, making no concessions to those who identify as agnostic or atheist. Such criticisms point to a line of argument that Mendelssohn’s ideas, while progressive for their time, have nothing new to offer in terms of contemporary social or cultural theory. However, if Habermas can argue for the continuing relevance of Kant then a similar appeal can be made in relation to Mendelssohn. As we have seen, Mendelssohn positions religion as being central to the moral basis of society and yet he argues against coercion of the individual on matters of religious belief, whether it is from the state, religious institutions or cultural groups. An individual should not have religious truth imposed on them, nor be subject to interrogation concerning what they actually believe, because such matters are the sole prerogative of the Divine. Mendelssohn’s arguments are antithetical to any current manifestation of religious fundamentalism. His belief in concepts of natural law and human rationality, as explained in Chapter Three, means that his ideal of human morality can be transposed on to a system of secular ethics. Mendelssohn’s system of ethics may be more genuinely secular than that of Kant. When discussing questions of religious and cultural pluralism within the context of a secular and constitutional state, the work of Mendelssohn is still deserving of attention.

## **Feminist Interventions in the Public Sphere**

There is an increasing recognition within the broad field of cultural theory of the liberating potential of the ideas put forward by protagonists of the Enlightenment. Such recognition extends to feminist theory. For example, in referring to Wollstonecraft and her contemporaries, Kate Soper concisely notes that ‘when considering which, if any, aspects of the “feminism” of the eighteenth century Enlightenment one might wish to see resuscitated, one might be inclined to argue that it would be its republican vein’.<sup>305</sup> Rather than rejecting outright the classically republican conception of the public sphere, feminist advocates of an inclusive polity can recognise its usefulness, while seeking to modify it. In considering the relevance of the ideas of Wollstonecraft and de Gouges to contemporary feminist theorisation of the public sphere, attention shall initially be turned to the work of Nancy Fraser.

Although Fraser has been critical of Habermas’s theorisation of the public sphere, she does not reject it entirely but instead seeks to develop it. While Habermas’s concept of ‘deliberative democracy’ is a synthesis of the classically liberal and the classically republican conception of democracy, Fraser attempts to synthesise (neo) Marxist and post-structuralist theoretical models in writing on matters of social justice. The long-standing goal of her theoretical project has been to combine ‘the politics of redistribution’, by which she means economic justice and socialism, with the ‘politics of recognition’, by which she means the identity politics of the contemporary cultural left.<sup>306</sup> Fraser explicitly rejects an ‘either/or’ choice between the two, or arguments that one strand is more important than the other to the advancement of social justice.<sup>307</sup> Both

---

<sup>305</sup> Kate Soper, ‘Feminism and Enlightenment Legacies’ in Knott and Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, p. 713.

<sup>306</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “postsocialist” condition*, New York & London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 2-3.

<sup>307</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

strands are of equal importance in her theorisation of a genuinely inclusive public sphere.

Fraser has long argued that the critical and emancipatory potential of Habermas's work is compromised by his inadequate recognition of gender. Such criticism extends to his attempts from the 1970s onwards to address the issue. She objects to his cursory recognition of feminism as a 'new social movement' in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. This objection is linked to her broader concerns about the adequacy and effectiveness of the 'system/lifeworld' theoretical distinction to account for gendered differences in social practice.<sup>308</sup> Nonetheless, Fraser does not seek to jettison Habermas's basic theoretical model but to 'reconstruct' it so that it better addresses the integral question of gender.<sup>309</sup> She refers to Habermas's work as constituting an 'indispensable resource' in its theorisation of the public sphere.<sup>310</sup> For Fraser, the concept of an inclusive public sphere that does not exclude or devalue women is of fundamental importance to feminist theory.

What then, is the continued relevance of the work of Wollstonecraft and de Gouges to contemporary feminist theory and practice? If, as Soper contends, the 'republican' ideal might be the legacy of the Enlightenment that feminists can use, then the ways in which both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges attempt to re-frame the idea of feminine 'virtue' remains important. As we have seen, both women grappled with trying to 'de-gender' the concept of active citizenship in the public sphere. This struggle was manifested both in their writings and how they lived their lives. Contrary to some interpretations, their work does not merely take 'male' norms as human norms. Nor, in

---

<sup>308</sup> Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, pp. 114 & 134-35.

<sup>309</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>310</sup> Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, p. 69.

seeking to valorise active female citizenship in the public sphere, do they devalue women who perform 'traditional' roles in the private sphere (with the exception of Wollstonecraft's ideological critique of aristocratic 'women of leisure'). In attempting to replace the ideal of female sexual virtue with republican civic virtue, the effect is two-fold. A model of equal citizenship for both men and women is promulgated while the concept of female 'virtue' acquires a different meaning and no longer pertains to sexual control. The work of Wollstonecraft and de Gouges goes beyond proto-liberalism and remains relevant to contemporary feminism in its envisioning of active and egalitarian citizenship.

The development of a genuinely democratic and inclusive public sphere is positioned within cultural studies as central for the realisation of social justice and progressive change. An 'enlightened' mode of modernity will not hinder such a project but assist it. Concepts such as political liberalism, the rule of law and the constitutional state should be subject to continual scrutiny and reform but should not be rejected. Habermas's conception of the public sphere and deliberative democracy is not the final word on the subject but a framework on which others can build. Likewise, in arguing for the continued relevance of Mendelssohn to the theorisation of multiculturalism and Wollstonecraft and de Gouges to feminist theory, I am not attempting to impose any prescriptive models. Rather, I have endeavoured to demonstrate how certain ideas stemming from the historical Enlightenment may be of continuing relevance to the theorisation of social justice within the broad field of cultural studies.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation has focused on a re-positioning of the historical Enlightenment and its legacy within cultural theory, and in particular within the field of cultural studies. It has consisted of three parts sub-divided into five chapters. Part One (Chapter One and Chapter Two) is concerned with the theoretical positioning of the historical Enlightenment. Chapter One is focused on the dominant representation of ‘Enlightenment’ within cultural studies and how this is problematic. Chapter Two is centred on Habermas’s affirmation of ‘Enlightenment’ and his rapprochement with Derrida and Foucault on this point. Part Two (Chapters Three and Four) demonstrates how contemporary figures within the historical Enlightenment sought to use its principles and practices to advance social change and challenge the marginal status of the social groups to which they belonged. Chapter Three is centred on the figure of Moses Mendelssohn and Chapter Four is centred on Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges. Part Three (Chapter Five) is concerned with the continued relevance of Enlightenment thought to the theorisation of progressive social change and an inclusive public sphere.

Insofar as it remains the ‘unfinished project’, the Enlightenment, in all its manifestations, embodies a dynamic and self-critical model of progressive modernity. In this sense, cultural studies can be viewed as its ‘child’. Such a model of progressive modernity is necessary to the theorisation of just social change. Practitioners within the broad field of cultural theory, including cultural studies, can benefit from recognising and understanding this as the relevant legacy of a historical Enlightenment that is manifold and complex. Within this dissertation, I have attempted to chart both this complexity and the question of legacy. There is the question, related to historiography,

of how the Enlightenment is positioned and then there is the question, related to history, of what the Enlightenment actually was. The first question was addressed in Part One of this dissertation and the second question was addressed in Part Two. Linking the two questions, in Chapter Two I demonstrated how the predominant view of ‘the Enlightenment’ held within the ‘Anglo sphere’ of cultural studies is, to some extent, based on a misreading or misunderstanding of cultural theorists including Foucault and Derrida, who both held an ultimately affirmative view of ‘Enlightenment’. In Chapter Five, I sought to demonstrate the continuing relevance of an Enlightenment model of modernity to the theorisation of a genuinely inclusive and democratic public sphere. In so doing, I returned to the example of Habermas as well as the protagonists of the historical Enlightenment who featured in Part Two.

In this dissertation, Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges serve to exemplify the progressive and self-critical impulse within the historical Enlightenment. While they were chosen as the most salient examples, there are other figures that could have been foregrounded. In Chapter Four, references were made to other women writers including Catherine Macaulay and Germaine de Staël. In relation to Mendelssohn and issues of racial ‘otherness’, there is the figure of Olaudah Equiano, an African former slave who settled in England and was involved in the abolitionist movement in the 1790s.<sup>311</sup> However, his close association with the expressly anti-Enlightenment figures of William Wilberforce and Hannah Moore made his inclusion problematic. Nonetheless, there are many protagonists within the historical Enlightenment who deserve further scholarly attention.

---

<sup>311</sup> For an introduction to the life of Olaudah Equiano, see Dorinda Outram, *Panorama of the Enlightenment*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2006, pp. 153 & 162.

To the extent to which I have demonstrated that there is a gulf between the predominant view within cultural studies of the Enlightenment as an embodiment of oppressive modernity and its progressive actuality, the question now is how such a repositioned Enlightenment can be used as a resource within cultural studies. Chapter Five went some way towards answering that question. However, a more affirmative view of the legacy of the Enlightenment within cultural studies can go beyond, for example, simply agreeing with Habermas or granting cursory acknowledgement to Wollstonecraft as a 'proto-feminist' figure. It can entail the recognition that enlightened praxis remains relevant to the realisation of progressive change.

Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges are theorists writing from the 'subaltern' position about the need for justice and progressive change. The 'subaltern', *pace* Spivak, does speak within the enlightened public sphere.<sup>312</sup> These three figures all positioned themselves at the centre of the 'republic of letters', although not without consequence. They were marginalised people who refused to marginalise themselves. They can serve as an example to those who speak as the marginalised. They could see the disconnection between Enlightenment discourses of 'reason' and 'the rights of man' and their own respective situations. However, they did not reject the Enlightenment as being irredeemably oppressive but instead sought to improve its emancipatory potential through processes of constructive critique. The question that each of them essentially asked can be framed as 'how can the principles and practices of the Enlightenment be used to open up the public sphere to people like me?' which they then endeavoured to answer. While the emancipatory projects that they each initiated were not realised within their own respective lifetimes, and are not fully realised now, such a reality underscores the argument that the Enlightenment embodies an 'unfinished project'.

---

<sup>312</sup> See Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

The rhetorical question that I devised above, ‘how can the principles and practices of the Enlightenment be used to open up the public sphere to people like me?’ is one that can be asked by those working in cultural studies who, like Mendelssohn or Wollstonecraft or de Gouges, have identities which can be considered to be currently disempowered and marginalised. Such a question is linked to the one asked by Foucault and cited in the first chapter, ‘what is this Reason that we use?’ and goes to the issue, identified by Habermas, of how ‘enlightenment’ can be criticised or rendered problematic while still being ultimately affirmed. The ‘disempowered groups’ hailed by cultural studies, including the female, the ethnically ‘other’, the queer, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged, can ask this opening question, just as Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges did in their own time.

There exist strong parallels between the profile of the activist cultural studies intellectual during its development and the profile of the activist intellectual of the historical Enlightenment. As detailed in Chapter One, cultural studies in Britain did not emerge from Oxford or Cambridge but from more marginal academic centres such as Birmingham. Its protagonists, including Hoggart, Williams and Hall, were not Oxford dons who taught Classical Greek. Its students and graduate practitioners included people from the working class, women and black immigrants such as Hall and Gilroy. They were people attempting to theorise their own experiences with a goal of realising progressive social change. This summation is of course cultural studies’ narrative of itself.<sup>313</sup> However, it also mirrors the narrative of the role of public or organic intellectuals within the historical Enlightenment. In Britain, ‘enlightened’ thought and thinkers did not come through the conservative milieu of Oxford, with the notable exception of Isaac Newton. Locke was excluded from Oxford, and his work was not

---

<sup>313</sup> Gibson, *Culture and Power: A History of Cultural Studies*, p. 83.



taught there throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>314</sup> To the extent that ‘Enlightened’ thought was included in University syllabuses in Britain, it was in Scotland. It was Edinburgh and Glasgow, not Oxford and Cambridge, which were the academic centres of Enlightenment in Britain.<sup>315</sup> However, both in Britain and throughout Europe, the development of both ideas and intellectuals occurred largely outside of the established universities, which were often inherently conservative.

This is partly why theorisations of the ‘public sphere’ are central in histories of the Enlightenment. The ‘republic of letters’ encompassed alternative intellectual hubs including salons, new academies and circles of publishers and writers. Such a statement fits within conventional historical narratives of the Enlightenment. However, it also points to how, within the Enlightened public sphere, openings were created for new kinds of people to emerge as intellectuals. Mendelssohn did not go to university. Wollstonecraft and de Gouges could not go. Intellectual development in the Enlightenment ran counter to established thought and institutions.

It is to be hoped that this attempt to draw parallels between the Enlightenment and the development of cultural studies is not overly forced. Nonetheless, if the legacy of the historical Enlightenment is to be re-positioned within cultural studies, then there has to be recognition of the extent to which enlightened thinkers could come from disempowered or marginalised backgrounds and present a progressive challenge to established power. The figure of the radical and organic activist intellectual within the historical Enlightenment is embodied by de Gouges. She was self-taught and transmitted her political and social views through the popular public sphere. As shown in Chapter Four, this included pamphlets but also posters and plays. Even before the

---

<sup>314</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, pp. 29 & 68.

<sup>315</sup> *ibid.*, p. 246.

revolution of 1789, de Gouges was devising political theatre. Polemics against slavery or for improvements in the status of women were devised as plays intended for a mass audience. She was using contemporary popular or mass culture as a site of argument and contestation, intending to communicate enlightened and radical ideas to ‘ordinary’ people. After the Revolution, in both her plays and her other writings, she was attempting to steer the course of political and social development in a direction that was genuinely democratic, pluralistic and humane.

The commitment to democratic praxis entailed continuing to communicate directly with a mass readership or audience within the expanded public sphere of post-revolutionary France. As noted in Chapter Four, de Gouges’s *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* was not an extended essay in book form, as was Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication*, but was instead based directly on the official *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*.<sup>316</sup> She was appropriating a widely circulated official public proclamation and re-writing it as a manifesto for equal female citizenship within the new order. While it would be trite and anachronistic to describe this as ‘culture-jamming’, the salient point is that de Gouges’s strategic interventions represent an Enlightenment which is radical and conducted in the public sphere by people who are outside positions of power and privilege.

The dominant view of ‘the Enlightenment’ propagated by cultural studies, as outlined in Chapter One, is therefore not sustainable. The reductionist idea that there was or is a singular ‘Enlightenment’, that in the name of emancipation inscribes an overly rationalist and oppressive mode of modernity that perpetuates exclusion, cannot continue to be held against the evidence. In this dissertation at least three falsifying

---

<sup>316</sup> It could be argued that Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is similarly based on Paine’s *The Rights of Man*. However, it can more accurately be positioned as a follow-up to her earlier *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, itself a reply to Burke. See Chapter Four.

cases, as embodied by Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges, have been adduced. Radically progressive critiques of the historical Enlightenment existed within the historical Enlightenment. Within cultural studies, there can be recognition that a feminist critique of Enlightenment thought begins not with the '*second wave*' theory of the nineteen seventies, as crucially important as that is, but with the contemporary protagonists of the Enlightenment including Wollstonecraft and de Gouges. The ways in which both women strategically engaged with the public sphere can also be acknowledged in relation to feminist praxis. There can be recognition of the importance of Mendelssohn in the theorisation of cultural pluralism and the secular and constitutional state. As was stated in Chapter Five, I am not seeking to impose prescriptive models. However, continued misunderstanding of the Enlightenment within cultural studies is, to a considerable extent, robbing the field of a crucial resource. To criticise the Enlightenment while affirming it is itself a legacy of Enlightenment.

This dissertation has been concerned with a re-positioning of the historical Enlightenment and its legacy within cultural studies. Such a re-positioning has been achieved by contrasting the narrative of the Enlightenment that predominates within the field with the progressive action of some of its protagonists. The figures of Mendelssohn, Wollstonecraft and de Gouges serve not only as falsifying cases but also as examples of progressive (and transgressive) praxis. It has been demonstrated that the legacy of 'Enlightenment' is more emancipatory than it is oppressive. The question now for practitioners within the broad field of cultural studies is how such a re-positioned 'Enlightenment' can be more widely recognised, and used in the theorisation of progressive social change. This dissertation has served as an intervention towards that end.

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. John Cumming. London: Verso, 1979.
- Adorno, Theodor. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Tiedemann, Rolf (ed.). Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Problems of Moral Philosophy*. Schroder, Thomas (ed.). Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Altmann, Alexander. *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1981.
- Beardsworth, Richard. *Derrida and the Political*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Borradori, Giovanna. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event*. London: Penguin Classics, 1986.
- Burke, Peter and Porter, Roy (eds). *The Social History of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Clark, Timothy. *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot: Sources of Derrida's Notion and Practice of Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Crossley, Nick and Roberts, John Michael (eds). *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing/The Sociological Review, 2004.

De Gouges, Olympe. 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen.' In Macdonald, D.L. and Scherf, Kathleen (eds). *The Vindications: The Rights of Men, The Rights of Woman*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001, pp. 384-92.

Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Politics of Friendship*. Trans. George Collins. London: Verso, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2006.

Dews, Peter (ed.). *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*. London: Verso, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). *Habermas: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

During, Simon (ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge, 1999.

Edwards, Gemma. 'Habermas and Social Movements: What's "New"?' In Crossley, Nick and Roberts, John Michael (eds). *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing/The Sociological Review, 2004, pp. 113-30.

Fitzpatrick, Martin, Jones, Peter and McCalman, Ian (eds). *The Enlightenment World*. Oxon: Routledge, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_. 'Space, Power, Knowledge.' An Interview with Paul Rabinow. Reprinted in During, Simon (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 161-169.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan. New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Politics of Truth*. Trans. Michele Barrett. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*. Trans. Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2008.
- Fraser, Nancy. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. New York & London: Routledge, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser Debates Her Critics*. Olson, Kevin (ed.). London: Verso, 2008.
- Gibson, Mark. *Culture and Power: A History of Cultural Studies*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> corrected edn, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The New Conservatism*. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Trans. William Rehg. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project.' Trans. Nicholas Walker. Reprinted in Passerin d'Entrèves, Maurizio and Benhabib, Seyla (eds). *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, pp. 38-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo de Greiff (eds). Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Trans. Max Pensky. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*. Mendieta, Eduardo (ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Between Naturalism and Religion*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Europe: The Faltering Project*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

Habermas, Jürgen and Derrida, Jacques. 'February 15, or, What binds Europeans together: Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, beginning in Core Europe'. In Levy, Daniel, Pensky, Max, and Torpey, John (eds). *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations after the Iraq War*. London: Verso, 2005.

- Habermas, Jürgen and Ratzinger, Joseph. *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. Trans. Brian McNeil. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006.
- Hall, Stuart. 'On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall.' Grossberg, Lawrence (ed.). Reprinted in Morley, David and Chen, Kuan Hsing (eds). *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 131-50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Question of Cultural Identity.' In Hall, Stuart, Held, David and McGrew, Tony (eds.). *Modernity and its Futures*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, pp. 273-316.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.
- Herman, Arthur. *The Scottish Enlightenment*. London: Fourth Estate, 2003.
- Honneth, Axel, McCarthy, Thomas, Offe, Claus and Wellmer, Albrecht (eds). *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992.
- Hunter, Ian. *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Inglis, Fred. *Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.
- Jenks, Chris. *Culture (Key Ideas)*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Louden, Robert B. (ed. and trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Wood, Allen and Di Giovanni, George (ed. and trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.



- Knott, Sarah and Taylor, Barbara (eds). *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Landry, Donna and MacLean, Gerald (eds). *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Levy Daniel, Pensky, Max, and Torpey, John (eds). *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations after the Iraq war*. London: Verso, 2005.
- Lloyd, Genevieve. *Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Locke, John. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Adamson, John William (ed.). Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007.
- Macdonald, D.L. and Scherf, Kathleen (eds). *The Vindications: The Rights of Men, The Rights of Woman*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001.
- Macey, David. *The Lives of Michel Foucault*. London: Hutchinson, 1993.
- Matustik, Martin Beck. *Jürgen Habermas: A Philosophical-Political Profile*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001.
- McCarthy, Thomas. 'Introduction.' In Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, pp. vii-xvii.
- Mendelssohn, Moses. *Jerusalem: A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Authority and Judaism Vol. 2*. London: Longman, Orme, Brown and Longmans, 1838.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'On the Question: What is Enlightenment?' In Schmidt, James (ed.). *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 53-57.
- Miller, Toby. *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

- Milner, Andrew. *Contemporary Cultural Theory*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991.
- Montfort, Catherine R. (ed.). *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*. Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1994.
- Morley, David. *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*. New York & London: Routledge, 2000.
- Morley, David and Chen, Kuan Hsing (eds). *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Munns, Jessica and Rajan, Gita (eds). *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*. London: Longman, 1995.
- Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Outhwaite, William (ed.). *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.). *The Habermas Reader*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- Outram, Dorinda. *Panorama of the Enlightenment*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2006.
- Outram, Dorinda. 'Le Langage Mâle de la Vertu: Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution.' In Burke, Peter and Porter, Roy (eds). *The Social History of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 120-135.
- Paine, Thomas. *Rights of Man*. Collins, Henry (ed. and introd.). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.
- Passerin d'Entrèves, Maurizio and Benhabib, Seyla (eds). *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.

- Porter, Roy. *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- Robertson, John. 'Women and Enlightenment: A Historiographical Conclusion.' In Knott, Sarah and Taylor, Barbara (eds). *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 692-704.
- Schmidt, James (ed.). *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Schrift, Alan D. *Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.
- Soper, Kate. 'Feminism and Enlightenment Legacies.' In Knott, Sarah and Taylor, Barbara (eds). *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 705-15.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' In Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 217-313.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga.' In Landry, Donna and Maclean, Gerald (eds). *The Spivak Reader*. London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 15-28.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2006.
- Sprinker, Michael (ed.). *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*. London: Verso, 2008.
- Strathern Marilyn. 'Enabling Identity? Biology, Choice and the New Reproductive Technologies.' In Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul (eds). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, 1996, pp. 37-52.

- Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Trouille, Mary Seidman. *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Vanpée, Janie. 'La Déclaration des Droits de la Femmes et de la citoyenne: Olympe de Gouges' *Re-Writing of La Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme*.' In Montfort, Catherine R. (ed.). *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*. Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1994, pp. 55-79.
- Verdier, Gabrielle. 'From Reform to Revolution: The Social Theater of Olympe de Gouges.' In Montfort, Catherine R. (ed.). *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*. Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1994, pp. 189-221.
- Weber, Elisabeth (ed.). *Points: Interviews with Jacques Derrida 1974-1994*. California: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- White, Stephen K. (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Whitebook, Joel. 'Intersubjectivity and the Monadic Core of the Psyche: Habermas and Castoriadis on the Unconscious.' In Passerin d'Entrèves, Maurizio and Benhabib, Seyla (eds). *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, pp. 172-93.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe*. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'A Vindication of the Rights of Men.' In Macdonald, D.L. and Scherf, Kathleen (eds). *The Vindications*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001, pp. 31-98.

\_\_\_\_\_. 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.' In Macdonald, D.L. and Scherf, Kathleen (eds). *The Vindications*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001, pp. 99-343.

Wood, David (ed.). *Of Derrida, Heidegger, and Spirit*. Evanston, Illinois University Press, 1993.

Yearley, Steven. 'Environmental Challenges.' In Hall, Stuart, Held, David and McGrew, Tony (eds). *Modernity and its Futures*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, pp. 117-53.