

Chapter Four

Lesson Four: “An Aesthetic Education” in 197 Lines, or, Keeping “Even Pace With ... Dissolution”

[N]ow on this point, now on that, ... in a hopelessly bewildering tangle of contradictory enactments.

—Marx (*Capital* 1: 284, 472, note 1)

1

In the “epistemo-epistemological” movement of Spivak’s 2012 book *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*—an “absurd story” of “my repeated frustration” where “I feel most at home” (*Aesthetic* 135)—there is no better model of Spivak’s “aesthetic education” than that provided by note 57 of her Introduction (28, 516–20). Spivak tells us that “a plea for aesthetic education can hope for no more than a coterie audience ... a recognition of the aporetic, of the double bind” (26). In the next paragraph on this same page, “Kant gave us headwork,” she says. And what is this “headwork”? Headwork is knowledge “as limit-knowing ‘intended mistake’” (26). The next sentence declares: “Strong enough to undermine the unquestioning and impersonal, seemingly rational confidence of the social productivity of capital but

irrelevant to the irreducible personal self-interest that accompanies the rational confidence in productivity” (26). As Engels says of Herr Dühring: All Spivak.

Critical epistemological inquiry is conceived here as an “irreducible” inescapability of a “double bind” in which—or “outside in” which—the master epistemologist single-handedly manipulates the logic. Although on the one hand we are offered the notion of “intended mistakes,” on the other hand it seems that if one makes a mistake in “reading” such ornate language, the misreader is simply failing to grasp Spivak’s depth of thinking. In such an unfortunate situation, we find Spivak singing a different tune: “One is not responsible for one’s readers,” she says, “although I am ever grateful for attention” (583, note 37). For example, Spivak condemns Engels for “empiricist havoc” (192–96)—not, of course, because Engels read Spivak, but rather merely because Spivak reads Engels according to the logic of the double bind.

In any case, on the following page Spivak leads into her note 57 with the idea that, “Behind every ‘ethical’ use of the Internet is ‘good’ education ... in our sense ‘aesthetic’” (27). Whatever this “sense” may be, she continues:

Without this pre-set good education—immigrant literatures and movements as the end, Sino-Arabo-Indic civilizational golden-ageism as alternative, dreams of digital democracy, the feudality without feudalism of world social fora—are all self-serving dead ends. (27)

Can the “logic” be understood, or rather is it merely *logicish* or “intended mistake” in the self-serving obscurantism of a dead end? Let us try again, now as: “Without this pre-set good education ... are all self-serving dead ends.” This is what Spivak says. Pass on to the next sentence, at the end of which we are pointed to note 57. Here is Spivak:

The fear of this bi-polarity [i.e., perhaps, “the forgotten and mandatorily ignored bi-polarity of the social productivity and the social destructiveness of capital and capitalism” (27)] produces two apparently opposed current tendencies: the praise of Empire and alter-globalization, sharing some common sympathies. (27–28)

And so it is that we come upon Spivak's note 57, appearing in all of its self-expanding ("valorizing") glory in a continuous stream of "post"-metaphysical idealism from pages 516 to 520, concluding with this sentence: "An aesthetic education." The note spreads itself over 197 lines, including two appeals each for the "irreducible" (517 and 518) and the "double bind" (516 and 518), as well as the following seven phrases for Spivak's epistemicism:

- "real epistemological effort" (516)
- "epistemic change" (517)
- "epistemological production" (517)
- "epistemologically inscribed" (518)
- "epistemological rearrangement" (518)
- "epistemological shifting" (518)
- "epistemological in its burden" (519)

The burden of "it"! How do the 197 lines work?

2

Lines 1 Through 37. Unafraid, Spivak confronts the fear of bipolarity (a "concept-metaphor") in the first segment of note 57 by reviewing a few "thinkers who recommend empire." Located at the "extreme edge" of this group, she says, are those who "simply recommend empire for empire's sake, as it were." As it were, indeed! No doubt Spivak's four exemplars within this set of "thinkers" would find her pedantic crafting of their "thoughts" quite amusing. The four are: Niall Ferguson (*Colossus*); Jane Burbank and Mark von Hagen (referring to, but never commenting a single word on, an "unpublished manuscript"); and Deepak Lal (*In Praise of Empires*).

Such references to the work of others, as in Sangeeta Ray's "giddy" self-reference to Spivak's self-references (Ray, *Gayatri* 4), are in fact the very opposite of what they appear to be. They are actually tedious strategies for *self*-referencing Spivak's authority and centrality. For example, elsewhere in Spivak's *Aesthetic*, at page 433, she suddenly tells us, "I have not been able to get my hands on Peter Hallward's

book" (*Absolutely Postcolonial*), followed shortly by note 13. In note 13 at page 581 she then blurts out, "I have now read the book," which she finds to be "unrelated to the concerns of this book." For another example, similar to the Hallward inanity, at page 209 she says, "Let us remind ourselves," and proceeds to refer to "the initial redefinition of the Gramscian word 'subaltern,' as recorded by Ranajit Guha." Spivak does not quote from Guha, but instead sends us to note 32. In note 32 at page 550, she tells us: "Checking the passage for reference, I see that he [Guha] says something slightly different, but the difference may prove interesting to the reader." What this "proves," if anything at all, is that Spivak takes her readers to be idiots whose time and energies are completely expendable through such imbecilic exercises in jumping through hoops. In note 40 on page 551, having quoted her mentor Paul de Man at page 214, Spivak says in this note: "I have altered two words. I invite the reader to ponder the changes."

This repetitive self-referral and self-reauthorization demonstrates how Spivakianism mobilizes a "looking-glass" ideological apparatus through which Spivak reveals her most cherished bourgeois belief that *she* is constantly being watched by everyone else—and of course she likes this, very much indeed.¹ It is as if Spivak were always putting these questions to herself: "What do they think of me? What do they think I am reading? ... I have to show them, for after all, I'm *it*." As Charles Cooley puts it, Spivakianism is "most conspicuously" concerned with displaying and acting out Spivak's "own peculiar development" (*Human* 180) as a "secret power" and "hid treasure" (183). In the dialectics of class supremacy, or in the dialectical "looking-glass" of class knowledge, this is exactly what Ray has in mind by her appreciation for the "vast subject" that she imagines as "a" Spivak (*Gayatri* 1). Ironically, Ray's giddiness becomes ever more understandable, but it seems that she confuses the giddy with the *frightening*.

How then does Spivak "read" this group which she labels as "extreme" proponents of "empire"? Ferguson, von Hagen and Burbank "can take on board the argument from 'enabling violation.'" This latter term—"enabling violation"—which Spivak never mentions in her Introduction and never bothers to explain, is itself a self-referencing

to one of her own "concept-metaphors" from *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. The term is classically Spivakian and, in that, also classically bourgeois "postmodern" in its mixture of high-sounding yet simple-minded phraseology. Just like Herr Dühring in his constant refrain of "originality" and singular authenticity, Spivak employs the phrase here—carefully placing it within her own quotation marks—as a means of cloaking her thoughts on the selected "extremists" within an obscurity that is, as Engels said of Dühring, hard to "get hold of."

Nonetheless, the "enabling violation" is a deconstructively diluted version of dialectics, i.e., the oppositional interpenetration and transformability of opposites through struggle. With Spivak, however, as in all variations of "critical idealist" sophistry, the "struggle" element is dissolved. And in fact the confidently asserted "take on board" idiom is precisely an example of such metaphysical dissolution. Thus we have to ask, how is it, and what really is meant by this idea, this notion, this *idiomatism* masking itself as "epistemological in its burden"—that Ferguson and company "can take on board" this thing or that? How "can" they, really, and why "can" they? In idealism, metaphysics and subjectivism, anything is possible, and not just that, but *instantly*, by the magic of thought and, for Spivak, by the quest of aesthetic imagination.

But here lies the trick and spin. If it is the case, as we are told, that Ferguson and company "recommend empire," why doesn't our "Marxist" Spivak come right out and *say* that these "thinkers" who uphold and relegitimize *capitalistic* empire "can" just as well undermine capitalism by "taking on board," shall we say, socialism, communism, or "alter-globalism," whatever that may mean? "Can" they do that, or not? Spivak can't say this, and doesn't say this, because even within her world of "freedom of criticism" she *can* recognize, at least on occasion, when something is too extremely ludicrous. Yet, mechanical idealism "can" find a way easily enough. She *can*, and does, give us the same thing by the mechanical idiomatism of "take on board." What we have is not revolutionary Marxist thinking and critique, but Machism. As Lenin says in his critique of the undercover Machist Alexander Bogdanov, "From the standpoint of naked relativism one can justify any sophistry ... a mere 'convenience' for man or mankind" (*Materialism* 137).

Moving on to “take on” Deepak Lal, we are told that he “understands the ‘enablement’ but not the ‘violation.’” Quoting Lal, Spivak says that he “dismisses ‘human rights, democracy and freedom’” as no more than the “rallying cry of ‘this Western jihad.’” Yet now in a broadminded gesture, Spivak seems to take Lal “on board.” “I have myself often criticized the international civil society,” she says, “and its human rights sector.” Is all “criticizing” of equal weight? Is Lal’s criticizing as “dismissal” more or less equivalent, more or less just as good or bad, just as true or false, just as reasoned or not, as Spivak’s “criticizing”? Are all critical standpoints merely relative, indeed, absolutely relative? Not even the most crudely insipid philosophical liberal would answer in the affirmative to such questions, but this is exactly what Spivak the “comparativist” and epistemic-shifter *suggests* in so many words. But to *cover* these tracks, we are further aesthetically educated from a more high-minded stance of dismissal, which is that Lal’s thinking only amounts to “wish-fulfillment dreams,” and that “any thought” from Spivak’s “tremendous double binds” program simply “cannot be thought of by him.” While Spivak clumsily puts forward her own “extreme edge” of mannerisms—that which “cannot be thought of by him,” for example—she reinforces this relativistic limbo of post-criticism. In this vernacular of “Well, you know, I have myself often ... ,” she assumes the pose of someone who doesn’t want to be seen as a mere hypocrite.

Unable or unwilling to resolve the contradictions of relativism and hypocrisy, Spivak instead reduces them to the “irreducibility” of vacillation. In *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, Lenin’s work of *dialectical materialist* epistemological investigation, he exposes and critiques the “blockheads” and “muddleheads” of reactionary philosophy and epistemology who sought to substitute metaphysics, idealism, subjectivism, relativism, fideism, clericalism and agnosticism for revolutionary Marxist materialist dialectics. Lenin refers most favorably to Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s “epistemological position” in the latter’s book, *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*, particularly quoting from Chernyshevsky’s critique of Kant and his followers (*Materialism* 359–61). Chernyshevsky argued that while Kant’s progeny

"endeavor to construct broad theories of the laws of operation of human thought," they "only repeat Kant's metaphysical theory regarding the subjectivity of our knowledge" (360, quoting Chernyshevsky). Despite the twisting "double binds" of unending obscurantism throughout Spivak's Introduction to the *Aesthetic*, it is nonetheless quite clear that Spivak also desires to follow Kant. The difference is that whereas Chernyshevsky says that the neo-Kantians endeavor to "construct" broad theories of thought, with Spivak the aim is to *deconstruct*, including the deconstruction of Kant; yet this is merely a "post"-Kantian technique for resuscitating and reviving the basic line in more fashionable terms and concocted sophistries. Lenin adds, "For the benefit of the Russian Machians who manage to muddle everything," Chernyshevsky "takes Kant to task ... for agnosticism and subjectivism" (360).

Likewise, Chernyshevsky argues that for the Kantians, "the very laws of thought have only a subjective significance" (361, quoting Chernyshevsky). Lenin adds again, "For the benefit of the Machian muddlers, let us say that for Chernyshevsky, as for every materialist, the laws of thought have not merely a subjective significance; in other words, the laws of thought reflect the forms of actual existence of objects, fully resemble, and do not differ from, these forms" (361). By contrast, in Spivak we see how the "laws" of human thought operate according to the subjectivistic whims of each fleeting moment. At first something is "extreme," and next, "I have myself often," and next, something "cannot be thought of by him," and so on—"irreducibly."

The dialectical materialist lesson from Lenin, however, is that this propensity to muddle everything is not "merely" or purely as subjective as it appears, although it *is* subjective and individualistically vacillating; in this very aspect, it *reflects* the objective class position to which Spivakianism corresponds, namely, the bourgeois intelligentsia "thinking" on behalf of the capitalist system itself and its need to obscure and mystify through its own "immanent" logic. This kind of logic, as Marx says, is a pedagogy of "docility" which "perfectly expresses the spirit of the factory" in "its undisguised cynicism," and it "blurts out the

stupid contradictions of the capitalist brain" (*Capital* 1: 411). In other words, subjectivism is also objectively linked to the struggle of classes.

In any event, the reader is turned back around to Niall Ferguson's "cynicism," says Spivak, where it is pointed out that "within the context" of Ferguson's "faith in empire," he nevertheless supports the "occasional project of training into citizenship." Although we have just been told that Spivak regards Ferguson's cynicism as "altogether striking," now she declares, "You cannot ignore this enablement in the violation." The "you" here is not a polemical address to Ferguson but rather to Spivak's readers. Hence we "cannot ignore" this "mochlos" given by way of Spivak's doubly-binding reading, which she regards as the "lever to turn the collaboration between the abstractions of capital and the class-ignoring of culturalist identitarianism into productive ab-use." Whatever else this jumble of words may mean according to Spivak's "strict sense," and which we "cannot ignore" on pain of losing the double bind, the sum of it is that Ferguson, while "extreme," isn't altogether so bad after all. Spivak can "ab-use" his position, and this semantic mechanism itself is "not abuse" (*Aesthetic* 14); that is, what Spivak is doing is not oppositional critique.

Thus the shift on the "extreme edge" concludes on an upbeat and energetic note. "Again," says Spivak, this is "real epistemological effort." In other words, her reading is "*some thought* of the effort" (emphasis added). And it is "*some thought* ... in bringing the will into desiring the possibility of law *must be imaginable!*" (emphasis added). *Some thought must be imaginable!* Indeed, but where? The "real epistemological" question is the *angle* of that thought and that imagination, the political *line* of the thought. Upon careful inspection, this angle and this line are not merely imaginable with Spivak, but quite clear to her. It is "some thought" of common liberalism and eclecticism in epistemology which has nothing in common with the dialectical materialism of Marxism. In Spivak's words, we are given "some thought" of "a Kant-Schiller-Marx-de Man trajectory" (3), a "continuing nuance" (15) which "can itself be (or not be) read" (15) as "a philosophy of balance" (24).

3

Lines 37 Through 75. What kind of balance is the Spivakian double bind: epistemological balancing in the service of what, for what purpose? "Our task," says Spivak in one of the numerous parenthetical commentaries of her Introduction, is "transforming balance to *an open series of double binds*" (19, emphasis added). Thus "we can have an enlightened practice that is *not merely oppositional*" (18, emphasis added). And continuing in the next sentence, set off "aesthetically" by itself as a (sort of) sentence and a (sort of) paragraph: "Again, a double bind" (18).

Let us "take on board" Spivak's double-binding of Derrida and Kant. "I suggest," she says, that Kant's phrase—"transcendental deduction"—"can be put in the place of" Derrida's word—"transgression"—"and it would make sense" (23). To extend this suggestion further, she parenthetically quotes the phrase, "the closure of a framework," which appeared just two sentences earlier in this same paragraph as a quotation from Derrida. In the prior incantation, however, the phrase appeared as "'the closure of *this* framework'" (23, emphasis added). Is it "a" or "this"? For Spivak, it doesn't matter because such words and phrases "*can be put in place*" of one another, and "it would make sense." Such is the "as if" world of double-binding. Immediately following this suggestive argument from her epistemologically shifting fantasy, the next one-sentence paragraph is presented as a summation:

I therefore think that it is the connection of the "as if" with the suppression of the trace-structure in the interest of the more secure birth certificate of the transcendental deduction, establishing the performative conventions of philosophy, as it were, that makes Derrida write, nearly forty years later, in a section subtitled "The Neutralization of the Event," that the idea of a "world," as in "worlding" or "globalization," is itself one of those architectonic, trace-stopping, event-neutralizing "as ifs" in Kant's thought. (23)

"I therefore think ... *as it were.*" The "as if," according to Spivak, "*makes* Derrida write." No doubt it is this same "as if" that *makes* Spivak write such "neutralizing" muddle aimed at "living in the double bind" (20) and "learning to live with contradictory instructions" (3).

By contrast, however, this same double-binding writer has no trouble when “thinking” so simply that “Academic and mechanical Marxists are ... superstitious about the words ‘ethical’ and ‘aesthetic’” (18). It is *as if* such obscurantism—to wit, “[i]n my fancy” (22)—were ethically and aesthetically “good” for anything other than maintaining the dominance of bourgeois pseudo-intellectualism in the humanities. The political and ideological reason that Spivak’s ultracomplex machinations suddenly vanish into thin air in such instances as this, is that the “Marxism” she finds absolutely untenable is any “Marxism” and any revolutionary *dialectical materialism* that challenges or otherwise contests the illusory “rigor” of her program in double-binding.

Who exactly are these “academic and mechanical Marxists”? Exactly what “Marxist” current, trend or line is she referring to? We are not told. And we are not told because this kind of sweeping *as it were* attack on Marxist thought is so broad and undifferentiated in its softly worded condemnation. It is in this manner that the “open series” of double binds inevitably finds its own ideological limits: in other words, Spivak’s aesthetic education program is not so “open” anymore. Likewise, exactly as Engels pointed out with respect to Herr Dühring’s “very convenient” methods of exposition more than a century ago, “instead of proving anything he need only use general phrases” and “make assertions,” with the “further advantage that it offers no real foothold to an opponent” (*Anti-Dühring* 136).

Just how thoroughly this *as ifism* in postmodern post-theory is readily absorbed among Spivak’s reading audience is clearly evidenced by a Spivak interview appearing in 2012. In the preface to an “informal coffee date” interview with Spivak in Seattle, Washington, Rahul Gairola explains that Spivak’s *Aesthetic* offers a “collection of meditations” exploring “what she has called ‘the double bind,’ which can be read as the *elliptical shuttling* between two subject positions where at least one, but more often both, are sites of the other,” or, “in other words, ... a binary in which two subject positions can *simultaneously oppose yet construct* one another” (Gairola, “Occupy,” emphasis added). But how far does this elliptical shuttling and simultaneous opposition “yet” construction go?

Gairola is quick to point out that despite Spivak's "multiple contributions to myriad, divergent elements in higher education," she has been "no stranger to accusations of 'obscurantism,'" and that such accusations only "trivialize the gravity of her work." He cites the "infamously high profile case" of the "literary critic Terry Eagleton," around 1999, wherein the latter "criticized Spivak for producing work that belongs to 'a politically directionless Left'" (quoting Eagleton). Gairola interprets ("constructs") this case of criticism and these accusations as an "overall assault" on postcolonial studies and a "degradation of an entire field of studies."

And "yet," for someone with such keen interest in the "double bind," it is curious that Gairola completely neglects to mention that in this very same "high profile case," Eagleton also asserts very clearly that Spivak "is among the most coruscatingly intelligent of all contemporary theorists," and that she "has probably done more long-term political good, in pioneering feminist and post-colonial studies within global academia, than almost any of her theoretical colleagues" (Eagleton, "Gaudy"). Gairola also neglects the next sentence in Eagleton's degrading "accusation": "And like all such *grandes maitresses*, she has now to deal with that ultimate source of embarrassment, her devoted acolytes." How did Gairola manage to overlook these "other" and "elliptically shuttling" positions in Eagleton's ostensibly accusatory opinion? A "critical" reader of the interview, I think, would want to ask Gairola: What *is* the social role of a "critic"? What *is* "criticism"? What *is* "critique"? Can you distinguish these things from "accusation" and acolytism, or do you aim to obscure the differences?

So goes the "double bind" of aesthetic education for those who "often feel," as Gairola says, that they are "the subaltern of academia." Naturally, Spivak plays the guru. Gairola confidently asserts that for those "who would continue to accuse Spivak of 'obscurantism,' and thus miss the gravity of her work—this dialogue is our response to you." This is Gairola's warning against critique. But as Lenin says, it is also indicative of the *partisanship* in philosophy masked by "elliptical shuttling" and other such jumbles of words.

While reopening the Eagleton file with the aim of saving the new megadoctrine of the double bind from attack, Gairola conveniently overlooks the “gravity” of the fact that the very doctrine itself is perfectly suited and applicable to the case at hand—that is, Eagleton’s own “elliptical shuttling” between a criticism of obscurantism and a reconfirmation of Spivak’s presumably superior intellectual rank. If Gairola wants to stand up for Spivak’s brand of aesthetic education, that is certainly his right. However, is it not reasonable to expect that he should know *how it works* and what its effects are? Ideologically, Gairola’s menacing “response” on the issue of obscurantism only serves to underscore the fact that Spivakianism confounds *any* critique whatsoever, even those that are laced with compliments. It testifies to the fact that the model Spivak reader is a docile academic robot, as shown in our interviewer’s satisfied reply to one of Spivak’s “summaries” of a talk: “Wonderful,” says Gairola.

Returning to lines 37 through 75, Spivak turns to consider the thought of fellow Columbia University theorist Joseph Stiglitz (*Globalization and Its Discontents*, *Fair Trade for All*, and *Making Globalization Work*), which represents, according to Spivak, “a welfare-state liberal position.” Stiglitz’s own words spoken to the Occupy Wall Street participants perhaps make his basic line somewhat more clear. He said that what “we” have now is “a system where we’ve socialized losses and privatized gains. *That’s not capitalism!*” “That’s not a market economy,” declared Stiglitz. Then what is it? “That’s a distorted economy, and if we continue with that, we won’t succeed in growing, and we won’t succeed in creating a just society” (Stiglitz, “Speaks,” emphasis added). Stiglitz is absolutely certain that individualistic greed is “not capitalism!” Rather it is a “distorted economy,” or, “distorted” capitalism. The task is therefore *not* to attack and transform capitalism but rather to “cure” it and get rid of its “distortions.” This is how “we” will all “succeed in growing” and creating a “just society”: a just society of “undistorted” capitalism.

Spivak’s reading of Stiglitz, however, is a bit more “nuanced.” Stiglitz “is certainly critical,” she says, of “the ‘colonialism’ of the IMF” and “the inequities of the WTO.” But this “general attitude of the developed

folks' burden," according to Spivak, "leads to a 'good' imperialism," adding with irony, "certainly the best we can hope for." Yet again, or, on the other hand, "*Discontents* [Stiglitz's book] does indeed look for a mind-set change across degrees of 'development.'" But what Spivak is "calling 'good imperialism' comes clear" if we turn to "the representative passage" in *Discontents*. She then quotes an ellipsized sentence from "the representative passage," "beginning 'The greatest challenge is ... in mind-sets.'" Next sentence: a one-sentence quotation, without commentary, culled from the legal scholar Ugo Mattei: "An imperialistic desire attempts the global imposition of its values and fundamental structures of government and modes of thought worldwide." The Spivakian account on Stiglitz is thus, more or less, evenly "constructed," with Mattei weighing in on the debit column, as follows:

- (+) certainly critical
- (—) but leads to "good" imperialism
- (+) does indeed look to mind-set change
- (—) but "good imperialism" comes clear (plus Mattei)

Mattei will certainly be pleased with his inclusion on the "critical" side of things. In any case, now "Our way to lay down the possibility of epistemic change is contained in Aesthetic Education." Here again, Stiglitz isn't so bad, for his "notion of 'asymmetries of information' can lead to our way." Forget the foregoing assertion that his "general attitude" also leads to "good" imperialism. In addition, we are now suddenly and fleetingly informed that Stiglitz "can take on Gorz," whatever this means, referring to André Gorz's book *Critique of Economic Reason*, more or less in the same manner as Mattei was invoked—that is, in a purely doctrinal, self-evidentiary spirit.

Observing that in *Making Globalization Work* Stiglitz's "emphasis seems to have swung toward enforcement for the many excellent policy suggestions that he has assembled," Spivak notes that this "begins to resemble the justified impatience of the human rights lobby"—"locally and globally"—which is "also beginning to swing toward enforcement." Next sentence: as if in a very straightforward manner, she refers to something called "Solid formal classroom discussion" and "extensive

informal questioning.” These things, whatever they are, “make it clear that it is the general assumption that the financial sector cannot police itself unless ‘forced’ to do so.” And with this, at last, we get the big hoof and huff that concludes her “comparativist” treatment of Stiglitz, to wit: “*I have no patience*” (emphasis added), decries Spivak, “with upper-middle-class theorists who implicitly justify a ‘political society’ based on this species of conviction—generalized—coming from the postcolonial urban underclass.”

The gravity of it all! No wonder she has no patience, and who can blame her? After all, nothing’s worse than “this species of conviction—generalized—coming from the postcolonial urban underclass.” Nonetheless, the depolarization of Stiglitz is accomplished quite well. One ends up with a perfect species of Spivak’s own conviction—generalized—of not knowing what’s what.

4

Lines 76 Through 87. With the phrase, “On the other side,” we are apparently shifted into the realm of the “apparently opposed” (*Aesthetic* 27) tendency of “alter-globalization.” In “our quick summary” fashion, Spivak dispenses with Charles Tilly’s *Democracy* in one sentence, quoting ten words and subjecting Tilly to one her theses of irreducibility. According to Spivak, Tilly may be credited with two “convictions,” although the reader must bear in mind here that I am *breaking down* (de-concocting) the first part of her long sentence.

Conviction 1: Tilly has a conviction of “bearing burdens for the common good.”

Conviction 2: Tilly has a conviction of “making it possible that a government will provide equitable treatment to the subaltern.”

Spivak, of course, refers to both of these at the same time as “Tilly’s conviction.” Here again, as Engels remarked of Hegel in connection with Herr Dühring, if Tilly were not already dead, he might very well like to see Spivak “convicted” of aggravated academic buffoonery, if that were a recognized offense. In any case, “Tilly’s conviction,” we are told, “does indeed lead to a ‘transformation and an enhancement.’”

However, Spivak finds this unsatisfactory and, therefore, proposes a supplementation, as follows:

but our quick summary should illustrate that such transformations and enhancements irreducibly require epistemological production of the internal conditions of citizenship which may be potentially capable of wrenching its external conditions without interminable global benevolence and an unquestioning insistence on enforcement alone.

So much for Tilly's conviction. This is the last we hear of it. But what exactly are *Spivak's* convictions here?

Conviction 1: Tilly's transformations and enhancements, whatever they may be, "irreducibly require epistemological production."

Conviction 2: This "epistemological production" will or should produce "the internal conditions of citizenship."

Conviction 3: These "internal conditions of citizenship" *may be potentially capable* of "wrenching its external conditions." But what is the "it"? Does this refer to "the subaltern"?

Conviction 4: However, in the "wrenching" of the "external conditions," this must or should be done "without interminable global benevolence," and also without "unquestioning insistence on enforcement alone."

These are Spivak's "post"-Tillyist convictions—*pro forma*, of course, since this is precisely the statutory and skeletal character of her empty comment on Tilly's book. Yet that is not all, for we find in one more sentence that the skeleton has grown an extra limb. "With Gramsci and Du Bois," says Spivak, "one might want to see things in a different light." But would this be a different light from the light of Tilly, or is it from the irreducible light of post-Tillyism? Whatever the case may be, "with" Gramsci and Du Bois added into the mix, "there is no looking forward to a just society" unless we have (Spivak says "without") a "rearrangement of desires." And this rearrangement would move "toward the impossible willing of the law, persistently and epistemologically inscribed." The impossible willing of the law—what law, what "impossible willing"? Yet, persistently, and "epistemologically inscribed." Who, besides Spivak perhaps, could "see things" by this "different light" of agnostic mysticism?

5

Lines 88 Through 147. Ranking second in Spivak's account of alter-globalization are Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, whose "three challenging books" (*Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth*) she laboriously manages to reduce to a *xian pian er* (闲篇儿), that is, an idle, rambling talk. Such diversions, however, are not without ideological purpose and consequence, and they cannot be taken merely at face value. As we shall see, the digression into Hardt and Negri serves to reproduce the pettifogging *pian pian* (偏偏): it turns into just the opposite of what one might reasonably expect. Again, this mystifying, seemingly astute, "coruscating" and subtle choreography of the *pian pian* reveals the unconscious dialectics of bourgeois ideology at work in Spivakianism.

One way to summarize Spivak's spin on the "post"-Marxists Hardt and Negri is as follows: on the one hand, while attempting to distinguish her positions from Hardt and Negri, Spivak ends up, on the other hand, concocting a jumbled confusion and mix-up. But these shifting hands are not merely equal in their thought-content. Rather, it is exactly this "other hand" of meticulous, tedious pettifoggery that reflects most accurately the *actual relation* of commonality between the urbane post-colonial subalternist and the gurus of postmodern multitude.

In other words, there is not much difference at all between them from the standpoint of class line; or, to put it another way, whatever differences there may be between their positions are of a superficial character. The aesthetic education of jugglery and muddling in Spivak's survey of Hardt and Negri turns out, in the irony of intra-bourgeois ideology, to provide the most *clear* vision or view of their common ideological position: namely, as reactionaries in epistemology and politics who espouse "Marxism" *minus* revolutionary class analytics and struggle. In Spivak's case, this line is undertaken through the rarified mystique of "the subaltern"; whereas for Hardt and Negri "the multitude" of "labor"—which is "the essence" of capital, according to Negri ("Archaeology" 226)—serves to displace the primacy of revolutionary class struggle, the fundamental aim of which is to overcome and suppress the capitalist class and its hangers-on and put an end to

exploitation. Neither subalternity nor multitude even raise this task, and that is no mere coincidence of their brilliance, originality or coruscating intelligence; rather it is a direct result of their class outlook, advantageously helped along by a common love affair with flowery language designed at once to glorify and mystify the key ingredient of bourgeois "radicalism" in the epoch of transnational capitalism: the "posting" or elimination of revolutionary class violence. Let us see Spivak's imaginary calculus.

One Hand. According to Spivak, the legal scholar Susan Marks has given "a sober account" of how to integrate questions of international law "into Hardt and Negri's declaration of a rupture between imperialism and Empire," referring to pages 449 to 446 of an article by Marks. But ...

Other Hand. In the very next sentence, Marks' "sober account" is implicitly, subtly dismissed. Why? On Spivak's view, it is "of course abundantly clear to those who work"—like herself—"for epistemological rearrangement," that the question of the law's "enforcement is not a practical unitary goal." It is as simple as that, "abundantly clear," and Hardt and Negri also "remain conservative" in this area. Hardt and Negri's "idea of democracy" also "ignores the double bind between ipseity and alterity." This double bind, as Spivak puts it, "rides democracy" all the way from Plato to Gandhi. Thus with a superior but relatively congenial wave of the hand, "I remain bemused by these two fellow travelers," and "I cannot fully endorse their notion of the contemporary scene." And so ...

Back to the One Hand. Notwithstanding their conservatism and ignorance of the transhistorical "ride" of double-binding, Spivak allows that "insofar as they say"—followed by a long quotation from the fellow travelers—then "I can go along with them." Yet ...

Back to the Other Hand. However, while Spivak discerns some "epistemological shifting" in Hardt and Negri's multitude, "for me," she says, this is and should be "a preparation rather than a political organization." Furthermore, she "can never accept" the notion that the multitude "'authors' itself in 'an un-interrupted process of collective self-transformation.'" Her reason here is that their program involves

producing “a desire for a real” commonwealth “in a robust extra-moral sense.” Whatever this nonsense as paraphrasing may mean, it is clearly out of the question for Spivak, who says that it “needs a reality-check.” She cautions that “we can only ever be on the way”; that “we cannot always understand each other,” and this is “beyond the irreducible mis-understanding in successful human communication even monolingually.” Of course, “some might want to preserve that mystery ... in the service of a world.” Still further, Spivak believes that it is “not enough to imply, as they do,” that in biopolitics “the body is the mind.” Their idea of biopolitics, she says, is “ill defined, if at all.” But still ...

Back Again to the One Hand. All of the foregoing being taken into account, Spivak still affirms that “I am with them in their celebration of habit,” allowing in a most open-minded fashion that “[d]ifferent kinds of (con)text-specific aesthetic education” are needed in “this variegated world of ours” which is “forever not yet a globe.”

Spivak pours out these endless gems of bourgeois sophistry, “forever not yet,” “only ever ... on the way,” but she complains bitterly when finding something “ill defined, if at all.” In this same spirit, Spivak bemoans, “And the service sector ... cannot just be given the new sexy name ‘immaterial production!’” No doubt the fellow travelers would be equally “bemused” by the sexy name of Spivak’s “subaltern urban underclass.” Naturally from such a “sober” plateau, she wraps up this mare’s nest on Hardt and Negri by quoting, with an air of genteel esteem, from an “unpublished email” by Professor Jon Solomon. This, she says, is “cogently written” and “counseled.” Spivak’s aesthetic education here is, as Marx finds in the Factory Acts laws, a “hopelessly bewildering tangle of contradictory enactments” (*Capital* 1: 284, 472, note 1; see Figure 4.1).

Absent from this rigmarole of qualifications is any “notion” at all of class or exploitation under the “era of globalization.” Instead, Spivak plays “global” law professor and lawyer in a non-enforceable arbitration with a rival partnership of obscurantists. The essence of the shifting, alternating differences lies in the confusion and intermingling of their ideological “commonwealth.”

I want to pause now to look back on Spivak's clear views on "enforcement" by comparison with Marx. Spivak laments that "law is seen as little more than an instrument of enforcement," but that it is "of course abundantly clear ... that enforcement is not a practical unitary goal." In his examination of the Factory Acts legislation of the 1800s, Marx argues that this factory legislation is "just as much the necessary product of modern industry" (i.e., capitalism) "as cotton yarn, self-actors, and the electric telegraph"; further, he observes that the "wording" of the Factory Acts "makes it easy for the capitalist to evade them" due to "the fanatical opposition of the masters to those clauses which imposed upon them a slight expenditure ... for protecting the limbs of their workpeople" (*Capital* 1: 451–52). Such opposition to the law, and such opposition to the enforcement and enforceability of the law by the capitalist masters, "throws a fresh and glaring light on the Free-trade dogma, according to which, in a society with conflicting interests, each individual necessarily furthers the common weal by seeking nothing but his own personal advantage!" (452)

"One example is enough" (452), says Marx. He refers to the growth and extension of the flax industry in Ireland and the consequent proliferation of scutching mills, where the raw materials of flax fibers are processed for the subsequent manufacture of threads to be woven into linen fabrics and textiles. "In one scutching mill" at Kildinan, Marx says, between 1852 and 1856 there occurred "six fatal accidents and sixty mutilations." Every one of these tragedies "might have been prevented by the simplest appliances, at the cost of a few shillings" (452). Quoting from the official report of a Dr. White, the certifying surgeon for factories in Downpatrick, we learn that such injuries and deaths are of "the most fearful nature," to wit: "In many cases a quarter of the body is torn from the trunk, and either involves death, or a future of wretched incapacity and suffering." Dr. White therefore proposes that "it will be a great boon" if the operations of the scutching mills and these kinds of "dreadful results" are "brought under the legislature," which is to say, brought under the purview of the Factory Acts. "I am convinced," asserts Dr. White, "that by proper supervision of scutching mills a vast sacrifice of life and limb would be averted" (452).

Now Marx in turn asks, "What could possibly show better the character of the capitalist mode of production, than *the necessity that exists for forcing upon it*, by Acts of Parliament, the simplest appliances for maintaining cleanliness and health?" (452, emphasis added) On the following page Marx says that the "very root of the capitalist mode of production"—that is, "the self-expansion of capital, large or small, by means of the 'free' purchase and consumption of labour-power"—recognizes, through the human personification of capitalists, that it would be "attacked" by such legislation and its enforcement, and hence such legislation is continually "brought to a deadlock" (453). Six pages on, Marx again points out that such legislation, from the viewpoint of capital and its operatives, is regarded "as a mere interference with the exploiting rights of capital" (459).

Yet we recall now that the "Marxist" subaltern critic, in her cynical criticisms of the multituders, announces how "abundantly clear" it is, from the standpoint of "those who work for epistemological rearrangement," that "enforcement" of "the law" is "not a practical unitary goal." The masters of China's coal mining industry—in the contemporary capitalistic "scene," to use Spivak's word—would certainly find great favor in our "global" epistemologist's view of "enforcement." Da Sulin of Nanjing University, for example, points out that "the guiding principle" running through the coal mining industry is that "economic development" (a code for maximization of profits) "has surpassed coal miners' lives in importance, deactivating China's supervision of coal mines" (Da, "Reform").² According to Da, while in 2009 China's coal production accounted for 37 percent of the world's total, the number of Chinese miners' deaths accounted for almost 70 percent of the world's total. In short, the enforcement of the most basic safety supervision and protocols, by the miners themselves as well as by officials, is subverted and "deactivated" by the underlying social, economic and political laws of capitalistic "development." As Da says, "Ineffective supervision and weak law enforcement *deeply rooted in the pursuit of profit* result in too many lives lost. [...] This has its *deep roots in the economic structure* of the coal-producing areas" (emphasis added).

But for Spivak, it is “abundantly clear” that “the law” is seen as “little more” than an instrument of enforcement. This “little more,” however, is the difference between life and death on a daily basis for China’s coal miners, who refer to their labor as “digging coal from hell.” Not a “practical” goal? Not a “unitary” goal? Ask the miners and their families. Ask the widows and children left behind after their husbands and fathers have been taken by the deep roots of the pursuit of profit.

It does indeed become abundantly clear, from the viewpoint of *critique* in Marx, that Spivak’s trade in mystifications calls back into operation the “characteristic feature” of “‘mysteries’ ... into their secrets none but those duly initiated could penetrate” (*Capital* 1: 456). As Marx notes, the essence of this *code of silence* is handed down in the 13th century prescriptions of Etienne Boileau, “to love his brethren with brotherly love, to support them in their respective trades, not wilfully to betray the secrets of the trade” (1: 456, note 3).

6

Lines 147 Through 197. The 197 lines are signs of what Marx calls the “characteristic bourgeois instinct” (*Capital* 1: 345). Having successfully worked its way into the arena of contemporary “Marxism,” its main ideological task is to confound, confuse, obscure, mystify, and obfuscate everything with which it comes into contact, everything on which it offers aesthetically educated “commentary,” in order to dissolve and diffuse the transformative essence of Marxist theory and practice, which is class struggle to liberate the entire human race from the shackles of capitalistic exploitation.

Whatever the constantly reappearing and shifting terms of art may be—e.g., irreducibility, catachresis, aporia, chiasmus and chiasmatic reversal, double bind, and so on—the class objective is to blur and fade red into white, so that the fundamental division of class under capitalism becomes either a non-issue altogether or becomes so inexorably convoluted and conundromatic that only a “speculative” circle of academic intellectuals can trouble themselves with it, and build their careers doing so. Let us turn now to two specific examples of this cyclical

pattern of bourgeois ideology as they inevitably "crop up" in this last segment of the 197 lines.

ERRONEOUS CONJECTURE 1:

Naomi Klein's "Incisive Critique" Can "Hardly Be Distinguished" from "the Old Socialist One"

Spivak thinks it is "excellent" that Jose Correa Leite's "excellent book" (*The World Social Forum*) "includes Naomi Klein's incisive critique," without in any way identifying what that "incisive critique" may be, in any of Klein's books (*No Logo, Fences and Windows, The Shock Doctrine*) or writings. "Yet," she says, Klein's critique "can hardly be distinguished from the old socialist one," thereupon referring to page 174 of Leite's "excellent book."

This astute-sounding attempt by the master of irreducibility to draw a thick black circle around Klein as the proponent of an "old socialist" critique, is a recurring and obscured reflection of what Lenin called the "chaos and arbitrariness that had previously reigned"—and continues to reign—"in views on history and politics" ("Three Sources" 25). In bourgeois ideology, the imperative point and effect of such arbitrariness and vagueness is to shroud in secrecy the revolutionary dynamics of history as originally expounded by Marx; namely, the historical law of motion by which, "in consequence of the growth of productive forces, out of one system of social life another and higher system develops" (25). One of the constituent ideological aspects of Spivak's authoritarian wielding of "irreducibility"—of which the 197 lines form one intensely concentrated and extended example—is precisely to conjure-up, quite in spite of herself, the most vulgar over-simplifications and reductions of complex political phenomena, especially in the sphere of contesting and contradictory theories, and in fact still more particularly with regard to those critical currents that threaten to upset the "radical" sanctity of Spivak's academic "left perch" (*Aesthetic* 25), as she puts it with the usual, droll cynicism.

This irreducible reduction (by turns "excellent ... incisive ... yet") of Klein to the dreary dungeons of "old socialist" critique is but another case in point. The reader is underhandedly compelled here, for

example, to merely forget the old master's own harping on the dubious "fact" of her being an "old-fashioned Marxist" and a "communist so early, right?" (*Aesthetic* 57; Ray, *Gayatri* 4)³ But the case of Klein in the Spivakian gaze brings into operation its own double-handed and ever-widening political logic. On the one hand, Klein's flag is waved and dismissed in summary fashion, and on the other hand this entire configuration of so-called "old socialist" critique is walked out as anachronistic, like the old family mare going out to pasture.

According to Matthew Sharpe, Klein's *No Logo* "can be read as a *neo-Marxist* tome" ("Logo" 1, emphasis added).⁴ In the very next sentence, however, Sharpe says that he wants "to suggest that Klein's work is (knowingly or not) *deeply Marxian* in its argument, in more senses than just this" (1, emphasis added). It is not at all clear what is meant by the "in more senses than just this," except perhaps that, "[i]n the broad sense," as Sharpe puts it, Klein is "clearly interested in trying to forge a link between theoretical reflexivity and political practice" (1). In any case, "she feels no need to draw authority from Marx's name" (1).

To clarify his "guiding idea" further, Sharpe says that it "struck me as I reflected on *No Logo* that its structure could be read as an exemplary operation in Marxian defetishising critique" (2). This Kleinesque (neo)Marxian "exemplary operation" and "structure" is so compelling for Sharpe that he later describes *No Logo* "as a latter-day rendition and contemporisation of *Das Capital*" (19, sic).

The plot thickens. In order to carry forward his "guiding idea" in sexier fashion, Sharpe employs the services of the early Jean Baudrillard. Hence we are offered a kind of "post"-Baudrillardian gloss of *No Logo* for the post-postmodern milieu. Baudrillard, as Sharpe puts it, sought to "*sophisticate*" Marx "by drawing on contemporary semiotics and Lacanian psychoanalysis" (15, emphasis added). Pointing back to Klein, what this means for Sharpe is that, "if Baudrillard anticipates Klein, he *draws* from Marx" (17, emphasis in original). Baudrillard's "anticipation" of Klein (or does he really mean Klein's Baudrillardianism?) is so clear for Sharpe that he calls it "obviously prescient." Let us see how he makes it "obviously" clear. The point he wants to make, says Sharpe,

is how obviously prescient of Klein's observations concerning the logo as a signifier of immaterial experience or "vibe" Baudrillard's position on consumption is. (16)

Obviously! Sharpe informs us that "critics" of Klein's book are "impressed with the considerable sophistication and aesthetic quality of Klein's writing," a "valuable compendium of data" on the "new economy," favoring "informality and crispness over jargon" (1). The author of *No Logo* may herself be "shocked" by such doctrinal greetings from this "critic" of post-contemporary critical criticism who pretends to "read" her "observations concerning the logo as a signifier of immaterial experience," and so on.

The only thing more amazing than the "considerable sophistication" of Sharpe's point here is that he neglects to enlist Spivak in his reading of Klein. What is beyond question is that Sharpe, as Marx says, "lays special claim to critical acumen" (*Capital* 1: 87). Given the Baudrillardian insertion of Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is only a short step from here, in this "sophisticated" (neo)Marxian reading, to Sharpe's casual inclusion of Slavoj Žižek. Without citing any particular text from Žižek, Sharpe merely observes, "As Žižek remarks, Marx's gripe with capitalism" (sexy!) was "that capitalism's ruthless undermining of all inherited and religious value systems generates a quasi-religious spectrality ... or 'real abstraction'" (18).

Sharpe concludes his eclectic "contention" on behalf of Klein's book—as "an operation in Marxian defetishising critique"—by asserting that his reading can be "supported by the following observation" (20). Next sentence, Sharpe's observation:

This is that, while Klein insists in chapter 5 that her book shouldn't be read as the *mea culpa* of an ex-identity politician, it nevertheless stands as a very forceful critique of what is often called postmodernism. (20)

The obviousness that Sharpe's interpretation of Klein's "critique" is an eclectic muddling of Marxism (with tissues of Baudrillard, Lacan and Žižek) does not in any way negate the fact that he is able to *distinguish* Klein's position from what Spivak confidently refers to as "old-fashioned socialism," which Spivak claims *can't* be distinguished from

Klein's "critique." In his own flashy "left" philosophical way, Sharpe provides proof of the fact that Spivak doesn't know what she is talking about.

Nonetheless, Sharpe's "reading" of Klein into the interstices of postmodern neo-Marxism and post-Marxism only serves to raise onto a higher level the question of distinguishing the class politics of Klein's bestselling revelations about "corporate" capitalism, "disaster" capitalism, and what she regards as the grand newness of "neoliberalism." If Klein "feels no need to draw authority from Marx's name," as Sharpe says, then how *does* she draw her authority, how *does* she "feel" about the socialist project and its tasks, "old" or "contemporary"? In other words, in the lingo of logos, what does her "critique" stand for?

When given the opportunity (or as Spivak says, the "go-ahead") to distinguish her position, Klein's own brand of evasive clarity makes its appearance in an interview with *Socialist Worker*. Anthony Arrove asks Klein what she means by "'disaster capitalism' historically" (Arrove, "Naomi Klein"). Does Klein mean "a new mode of capitalism," a "new period in capitalism?" She says that disaster capitalism is "both old and new," and that it would be "absurd to claim that this is a new analysis." The idea that capitalism "*relies on crisis and violence*" (emphasis added), according to Klein, "is a pretty classic Marxist analysis—drawing particularly on Rosa Luxemburg." But she goes on to say:

At the same time, it's clear that we're in a new phase. Yet as I tour with the book [*The Shock Doctrine*], I'm always coming up against "old school" Marxist-Leninists at speeches who just don't want to admit that neoliberalism is a new phase of capitalism that requires a new—or at least updated—analysis.

In the published interview, Arrove never comes back to question Klein any further about this "both"-ness of old and new capitalism *coupled with* her insistence that this "new phase of capitalism ... requires a new—or at least updated—analysis"; likewise, he passes over her directly related and blatantly self-contradictory admission that it would be "absurd to claim that *this* is a new analysis." Does "this" not refer to her own book and her conception of "disaster capitalism"? If so, doesn't "this" book offer any "new analysis" as she "requires"? Or

rather, isn't she precisely saying here that: "*It would be absurd to claim that this is a new analysis ...*"

But Arrove allows his own pointed question to go by the way-side as Klein floats between the old and new and continues to drift on about "an earlier stage of capitalism" which is "always with us"; that it "becomes complicated" because it "doesn't disappear, so it isn't like a neat line"; and back to the bogey of "neoliberalism" and "privatization frenzies" that "mint billionaires," and "the narrative of incompetence." Referring to that "earlier stage" of capitalism, she says that "we" are still there "with all of the violence inherent in that project."

Klein says that she goes on "tour with the book," but one would like to know considerably more about how and why she is "always coming up against" these "'old school'" Marxist-Leninists, and why Arrove, on behalf of *Socialist Worker*, allows this celebrity such full rein to obscure the foundations of Marxist and Leninist thinking. In the same fashion as Sharpe, Klein and her would-be interlocutor (Arrove) end up laying the stress on "updating" and "sophisticating" our understanding of the capitalist system. But what is apparently too "old school" for them to study and practice is *dialectics*. Klein rehearses the familiar bourgeois postmodern "method" (dogma) of wishing away the dialectical movement and interpenetration of old and new by pleading the alibi that things "become complicated," and "so it isn't like a neat line." Yet if we pressure Klein's "narrative" of "disaster capitalism," we might discover that the fundamental line of the struggle of classes—of the contradiction between the exploiters ("corporations," "billionaires" and "elites," as she variously puts it) and the laboring masses—is still right under her "new" nose for commentary, where she simultaneously claims to be on "the point" with "a pretty classic ... drawing ... on Rosa Luxemburg."

What Klein is doing, as the "old school" Lenin argued in 1904, is "making a practice of presenting ... readers with conundrums," "[i]nteresting and edifying puzzles" (Lenin, "Circumstances" 196) and "abstract commonplaces" (Lenin, "One Step" 476). In Lenin's critique of Luxemburg's criticisms of his book *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (The Crisis in Our Party)*, carefully analyzing and exposing a repetitive

series of “bogeys” and “confusion,” Lenin says, “Comrade Rosa Luxemburg’s talk ... is nothing but a vulgarisation of Marxism, a perversion of true Marxian dialectics” (“One Step” 482). Klein should be familiar with this “old school” text because it is “pretty classic” as a revolutionary Marxist critique that draws a “neat line” between dialectics and eclectic muddle.

This vulgarization of Marxist dialectics in Klein’s “critique” of “disaster” capitalism manifests itself in her inclination “to emphasize,” as she tells Arno, how capitalism “uses” and “relies on crisis and violence.” This is a stress which she admits as being “absurd” to call “new analysis.” But what is actually at work here is the drawing up of two interrelated bogey strands, or ideological distractions.

The First Bogey. To emphasize the capitalist system’s use of, manipulation of, or reliance on crises and violence is a “bogey,” as Lenin says, *if the analysis along this line ignores or otherwise obscures the underlying exploitative laws of the capitalist system, which inevitably cause and give rise to the crises and violence in the first place.* Klein asserts that “it isn’t like a neat line.” Perhaps for someone who “tours” with books and speeches, gradually it becomes rather difficult to *consistently recognize and emphasize* the “neat line” between the exploiters and the exploited: the interlocking structural contradiction between the class of the owners of the means of production, on the one hand, and on the other hand the class of wage slaves. From the standpoint of someone who intermittently and casually shifts between such concepts as “capitalism,” “corporations,” “elites,” “billionaires,” “neoliberalism,” “social democracy,” “major players,” “super-capitalist laboratories,” “hollowed-out government,” a “privatized state,” “a public sphere,” “principles of universality,” “regional banks,” “infrastructure,” “amazing collective amnesia,” “national psyche,” and so on, *eventually* the line of class merely becomes an indistinguishable element in the overall “left” vibe.

An example. Referring to her “analysis” (new or old?) of Hurricane Katrina, Klein says that “New Orleans is, to me, the most heartbreaking example.” What exactly is it an example of? She refers, on the one hand, to “naming the failures of a hollowed-out government and a privatized

state," and she refers, on the other hand, to "such an unmistakable indictment of neoliberal theory and the legacy of neoliberalism." Then, in sum, the "real disaster," according to Klein ("to me"), was "the collision between heavy weather and weak state infrastructure." Shocking indeed, "to me"! This is apparently also an example of what is meant by "new" or at least "updated" analysis, for the "drawing" on Rosa Luxemburg is not to be found. By implication, if only there *had been* "strong" state infrastructure in this collision of "heavy weather" ... , *what then?* Maybe it would have been just plain old capitalism instead of "disaster" capitalism. Klein's "new analysis" explains absolutely nothing because it employs what Lenin calls "abstract commonplaces" (hollowed-out phrases) in order to sound intellectually and technocratically specific and "concrete." But the Marxist theoretical abstraction, that the "state" in question is the capitalist "state," the state of the ruling class, has been conveniently removed.

The Second Bogey. It matters not one iota whether the "analysis" is "new" or "old school." This is simply because any genuine "analysis" of a phenomenon in its dialectical complexity and simplicity must necessarily be new and old at once. The fundamental question is the *class politics* of the analysis, not whether it is "new" or "old." The emphasis around the question of new/old in terms of analysis, thinking and critical reflection is an obscured mode of putting "technique" and expertise above politics. Klein considers it rather puzzling and even comical, on the one hand, that she is "always" being confronted by "old school" Marxist-Leninists, while on the other hand she says that it would be "absurd" to think of "disaster capitalism" as "new analysis."

An edifying conundrum, is it not? But as noted earlier, Klein opportunistically and cynically leaves the reader wondering what exactly was the thought-content of any of these instances of "coming up against" Marxist-Leninists. How much of a "bother" would it really be to at least sketch-out the nature of this "coming up against," especially since we are told that this is "always" happening on Klein's tours. Once again, what we come up against are "abstract commonplaces" as trimmed-down anecdotes from the "tour."

Let us return to consider Klein's heartbreaking example of Hurricane Katrina somewhat more carefully in its "concrete" intellectual and political vacuum. Of course, what she offers the "left" Arnove here is merely a *summary* analysis. But in what critical sense does it reflect newness or oldness? The question of identifying either weak or strong "infrastructure" development is as old as the scientific and practical working-out of engineering itself, extending back before the ancient Egyptian "state" of the Pharaohs founded on the slavery of the masses. Yet even without the conscious use of such terms as "infrastructure" or engineering, as long as human societies have struggled to build roads or direct the flow of water, people have practiced "engineering" in one way or another. Likewise, the comparative question of how competent, incompetent, advanced or backward a given society's level of achievement in the development of infrastructure—this question is also nothing but an expression of political and social assessment, to which it would be ridiculous to apply the label new or old.

However, one "old" element in such assessment is ambiguously lacking in Klein's analytic summary, and that is the Marxist investigation of class: the role played by the dominant class and its "state" apparatus in the development, or the negligent underdevelopment, of "infrastructure" *by means of* the capital and the wealth of products, materials and engineering-related capabilities created by the labor of the working class. Klein's summary analysis is apparently much "newer" than this perspective, since with Klein we find that the dreaded "neoliberal" monster—in "collision" with "heavy weather"—holds the key to the disaster. Thus, gradually it appears that, on the one hand, "infrastructure" and engineering marvels can't possibly be built without the collective labor of the workers, while on the other hand, it is the ruling class and its state that determines and guides such development itself.

But with Klein we have no such class contradiction; rather we get the "collision" between "heavy weather" and the bogey of "neoliberalism"—a "state," nonetheless. She may agree, however, that the people paid the price. Such is the confusion and lack of political explanatory power resulting *directly*—however pettifogging it is—from the kind of "new" analytics she insists is "required." Yet again, it is the learned

Klein who asserts that the old-schoolers, as she phrases it exactly, "just don't want to admit" that neoliberalism embodies a "new phase" "requiring" new analysis. Looking at the matter dialectically, is it not Klein who "just doesn't want to admit" that her "theory" of capitalism and class contradiction is miserably poor, misleading, and in a state of disarray? But the phrase "just don't want to admit" is brandished exclusively to the advantage of Klein the celebrity.

Klein's quizzling attitude toward the new and the old is not altogether so absurd, however, once the reader figures out, as perhaps the old-school Marxist-Leninists have, that she *uses* this kind of conundrum in order to avoid the question of revolution to end capitalism. Just as in this interview with *Socialist Worker*, when she has the opportunity to spell out the ABC of Marxist revolutionism, she can't address the question of what is to be done. In Klein's own words, "There's a sheepishness in those crucial moments."

In 1913 Lenin read Luxemburg's book, *Accumulation of Capital*. Lenin was so repelled that he, in turn, undertook to write an extensive critical annotation and commentary. At the heading of this commentary, Lenin says that Luxemburg has "got into a shocking muddle" and has "distorted Marx" (Lenin, "Comments"). Marginal notes in Lenin's text clearly indicate his view of Luxemburg's thinking: "What nonsense!!"; "a mess"; "What a mess!!!"; "rubbish"; "Amusing!"; "What erudition!"; "Sensational, flashy, empty"; "Rubbish" again; and "non-sense" again.

Luxemburg finds Marx in error or otherwise inadequate and unsatisfying, such that she deems it necessary to "supplement" and "correct" Marx, a move that Lenin considers to be a code and cover to "distort" Marx (Lenin, "Rosa"). Now we have seen that Spivak likewise insists on "supplementing" Marxism; that Spivak finds in Klein an "incisive critique," but one which is "hardly distinguishable" from some "old socialist" critique; that Sharpe insists, *a la* Baudrillard, Lacan and Žižek, on the "sophistication" of Marx in order to bring Marx into line with Klein; and lastly that Klein herself confusedly insists that something "new" is happening with "capitalism" and that the old-schoolers "just don't want to admit" it. A shocking circle becomes a spiral.

Is Klein's theory hardly distinguishable from "old-fashioned" socialist critique? Here, I believe, is how "old" Lenin would *read* and reply to Spivak:

?? [U]nderstand this who can! [...] She repeats naked words without troubling to grasp their concrete meaning. She raises bogeys ... nothing but manufactured formulas ... grandiloquent declamation ... impossible to discuss seriously. (Lenin, "One Step" 475–76)

*ERRONEOUS CONJECTURE 2:
On "Turning the Enlightenment ... on its Head"*

I want to turn now to an especially representative sample of the inanity of Spivak's occulted writing on Marxist thinking in the 197 lines. Two sentences forward from the scrapping of Klein's "incisive critique," we are presented with the following "post"-Marxist re-vision of Marx: "Marx's nineteenth-century vision, turning the Enlightenment goal of the public use of reason on its head, must be seen as epistemological in its burden." This is how Spivak "reads" Marx.

The theory here is that Marx's "vision" consists of "turning the Enlightenment goal of the public use of reason on its head." Notice still more carefully: Marx's "vision" was that of "turning ... reason on its head." And still more closely: Marx's "vision" was to "turn" the social use of reasoning "on its head." Spin? ...

Spivak's deployment of this curious phraseology, "turning ... reason on its head," offers a case of the strategy and tactics which are so pervasive throughout her "oeuvre" of tricky, yet also often quite unconscious, obfuscations. Every reader of Marx's *Capital*, since around 1886, has first of all been presented with a series of prefaces and afterwords, as written by Marx or Engels, to the various editions of the work in English, French or German. In the volume I have used throughout this book, there are no less than seven such texts—five prefaces and two afterwords. The longest of these texts is Marx's eight-page "Afterword to the Second German Edition," dated 24 January 1873. It is in this text where we come across the peculiar "passage," as Spivak likes to say, which corresponds most exactly with Spivak's dissembling attempt at

paraphrasing Marx's "vision" from the scattered archive of her memory as aesthetic education. It is here that Marx directly addresses the question of his theoretical relation to Hegel, and through Hegel, the entire mental edifice of the bourgeois Enlightenment, the "rule of reason," of equality, of harmonious humanity under the dominion of capitalism and its intelligentsia.

"To Hegel," Marx says, "the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea,' he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'" (*Capital* 1: 29). But Marx has already said that "[m]y dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite." Thus Marx continues, critically *comparing* and *contrasting* his materialist dialectics to the idealist, metaphysical dialectics of Hegel. "With me, on the contrary"—that is, by sharp contrast and opposition to Hegel's idealism—"the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought."

In the next paragraph on the same page, Marx points out that, notwithstanding his "direct opposite" method of dialectics from that of Hegel, the "mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner" (29). And thus, "With him," i.e., with Hegel, according to Marx, the dialectical method "is *standing on its head*" (emphasis added). "It must be *turned right side up* again," says Marx, "if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell" (emphasis added). This is Marx's exact way of dialectically talking about the "discovery" of materialist dialectics, of dialectical materialism, from the mystical idealist dialectics of Hegel's work.

Here is the specifically relevant "passage" again: With Hegel the dialectic "is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell." Now let us compare this with Spivak's paraphrasing from memory. With Marx's "vision," she says, we have the "turning" of the "Enlightenment goal of the public use of reason *on its head*" (emphasis added).

And this vision “must be seen,” she asserts, as “epistemological in its burden.” Again, notice and distinguish the two discoveries:

MARX:

“standing on its head ...
must be turned right side
up again”

SPIVAK:

“turning ... reason
on its head”

With Marx, “reason” in Hegel—“ideas” and “the Idea”—is idealist and metaphysical because it (reason) *is* misunderstood and mystified as if it (reason) were “on its head” and not *reflecting* the real, actual and material basis of society in human labor, production, and the extraction of surplus-value from workers by capitalists.⁵ But with Spivak, we are told that *Marx* has the “vision” of “turning” reason “on its head”: that is, standing reason “on its head” again. Whereas Marx is saying that reason “must be turned right side up again”—put on its feet in a *materialist* and dialectical way—Spivak is saying *that Marx is saying* (his “vision”) that reason “must be” turned “on its head,” with the feet apparently somewhere up in the air, if anywhere at all, just as in Hegel!

A shocking discovery, and purely from Spivak’s aesthetic memory. Whose “vision” is this? Logically, if one can speak of logic here, this would be Hegel’s “vision” of Marx, or, Marx’s “vision” of Hegel *turned upside down again!* Spivak’s “vision” of Marx is a convolutedly syncretic way of forcing Hegel’s mystifying “vision” through Marx’s eyes; or, to put it another way, her “reading” is syncretically foisting Hegel’s (and her own) words into Marx’s mouth. In a word, “it” is the very opposite of what Marx says. And hence the resulting “epistemology” becomes idealist and metaphysical: “turning ... reason on its head.” No wonder Spivak finds it a “burden”—yet a highly rewarding one, to be sure—for she has, in effect and in her own words, in her own poverty of philosophical memory, reduced Marx to an old Hegelian and thus reduced dialectical materialist epistemology to idealist and metaphysical “epistemo-epistemology.” And Spivak is proud: “An aesthetic education,” she says in the final line of the 197 lines. Indeed, a classic post-theory rediscovery on behalf of bourgeois “aesthetic education.”

7

The *spintellectual* task of Spivak's aesthetic education is the resurrection of idealism and metaphysics: a *returning* of reason "on its head" just as Hegel conceptualized idealist dialectics. Hegelian dialectics "standing on its head" crystallized the obscure intellectual "conscience" of capitalism, while Spivak's disarming puzzles reflect this same "conscience" as its very ability to "reason" and justify its existence disintegrates and "scatters" itself in an endless farrago of post-critical bluffs and self-contradictions. Spivakianism enacts the ideology of the declining and decaying bourgeoisie. Decadent and self-righteous, this manufactory of ideology enjoys the privileges of bourgeois rule while also cynically frowning upon its crises and "defects." It is impossible not to notice the perpetually reappearing tendencies and techniques of vacillation in which erudition is fused with ludic unknowability. These tendencies are spun in ever more self-conscious and modifying forms, yet never dying out—instead becoming *moribund* in essence.

This moribund and necessarily parasitic "post"-reason is taught to capital's ideal "reader," whose lesson, as Alexander Herzen writes in his reading of Jules Michelet, is to become accustomed to "this whole vast farrago of incompatible opinions" in a "tragic frivolity" (*Russian* 170). Lenin theorized the social boundaries within which Spivak's mode of reading is symptomatic: "When the old society perishes, ... [i]t disintegrates in our midst; the corpse rots and infects us" ("Reports" 434). Lenin immediately points out: "No great revolution ever proceeded otherwise; no great revolution can proceed otherwise" (434). Teaching "otherwise" is the dialectical knowledge of "disintegrating capitalism" and the "struggle against it" (434). And this task, of course, is to reclaim the *materialist* "history of ideas" in which, according to Eagleton, Spivak has supposedly "kept faith ... with the socialist tradition" ("Gaudy"). If Spivak has "kept faith" with anything, it is better explained by Marx and Engels:

What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class [...] and

... the dissolution of the old ideas *keeps even pace with the dissolution* of the old conditions of existence. (*Manifesto* 55–56, emphasis added)

Notes

1. The original idealist theory of the “looking-glass self” is in Charles Horton Cooley’s 1902 work of social psychology, *Human Nature and the Social Order*. Cooley writes that the “aggressive self manifests itself most conspicuously in an appropriateness of objects of common desire, corresponding to the individual’s need of power over such objects to secure his own peculiar development, and to the danger of opposition from others who also need them” (180). “Even the miser gloating over his hidden gold can feel the ‘mine’ only as he is aware of the world of men over whom he has secret power; and the case is very similar with all kinds of hid treasure” (183). “We always imagine, and in imagining share, the judgments of the other mind” (184–185).
2. See also e.g., He Bolin, “Too Many Coal Mine Accidents” (*China Daily*, 15 Apr. 2010); Zhi Yun, “Accidents in Mines Covered Up in July” (*China Daily*, 8 Aug. 2012); and Chen Xin and Zhi Yun, “China’s Coal Mines Still Risky” (*China Daily*, 25 Aug. 2012).
3. “I am, in the strictest sense,” says Spivak, “a postcolonial” (*Aesthetic* 57). “I am also a feminist who is an old-fashioned Marxist” (57). See Lenin’s “The Russian Radical Is Wise After the Event,” critiquing “people who regard themselves as enlightened ... free-thinkers or radicals” who in fact “drift with the tide” in the “mood of the moment,” “unable to resist what is fashionable” (239).
4. References are to the numbered paragraphs of Sharpe’s essay as it appears in the journal *Cultural Logic*.
5. On dialectical materialist theory, see Engels’ *Anti-Dühring*: “Hegel was an idealist, that is to say, the thoughts within his mind were to him only the images made real of the ‘Idea’ existing somewhere or other already before the world existed. This mode of thought *placed everything on its head*, and completely reversed the real connections of things in the world” (30, emphasis added). “The reasoning intellect [of, e.g., “the great French philosophers of the eighteenth century”] was applied to everything as the sole measure. It was the time when, as Hegel says, the world was *stood on its head* ... in the sense that the human mind and the principles arrived at by its thought claimed to be the basis of all human action and association [...] [H]enceforth, superstition, injustice, privilege and oppression were to be superseded by eternal truth, eternal justice, equality grounded in Nature and the inalienable rights of man” (23, emphasis added). “We know today that this kingdom of reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie; that eternal justice found its realisation in bourgeois justice; that equality reduced

itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the essential rights of man; and that the government of reason, the Social Contract of Rousseau, came into existence and could only come into existence as a bourgeois democratic republic. [...] [T]he representatives of the bourgeoisie ... put themselves forward as the representative not of a special class but of the whole of suffering humanity" (24).

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