Hospitality and Hope: Self and Other in the Work of Jacques Derrida and Jean Piaget

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Major currents within contemporary continental thought have been significantly influenced by the psychoanalytic tradition, particularly via Jacques Lacan. Thus a pervasive stream of thought conceives of the relationship between self and other as one characterized primarily by conflict, threat, or lack. This reading has often been taken as paradigmatic and broadened to include relations between societies. If not challenged, this paradigm undermines any cause for hope that society might be structured in terms other than us/them, insider/outsider. Jacques Derrida's work opens up a way to think differently, training our attention on the essential *affirmation* of the other that underlies all human experience. The central thesis of this paper is that the developmental theory of Jean Piaget, read against the grain of how his work has often been appropriated, lends robust support to this more hopeful reading, highlighting a self constituted in and by orientation to the other. Currents within contemporary developmental psychology provide substantial support for this more hopeful and hospitable image of self and other.

KEYWORDS Derrida, Piaget, Political Philosophy

The Problem of Self and Other

What we are able to hope for the possibility of human community depends on the trajectory established in how we construe the relationship between self and other. There is a pervasive stream of thought that understands this relationship as one characterized primarily by conflict, threat, or lack, a stream that meanders through the influential work of Jacques Lacan, critical social theory, and currents within contemporary continental philosophy.

According to Lacan, the movement toward self-recognition characteristic of the "mirror stage" always involves alienation due to the necessarily ambivalent relationship with the mirror image. The child is fascinated with the wholeness of the image, a unified picture inaccessible otherwise; however, the child also

recognizes the image as other, as mediated via an outside. This image is thus the foundation of identity, yet simultaneously undermines that identity as well.[1]

Building from Lacan, Julia Kristeva argues that the subject tries to stabilize itself in the face of images from outside, but the border remains permeable, threatened, and incomplete. The process of shoring up the boundary is what Kristeva terms "abjection."[2] The abject is that which is expelled from the self and is repudiated, including physical bodily flows that point to the body's permeability. Anything that crosses the line that we construct around the self persistently threatens the very possibility of drawing it in the first place. As such, the abject marks the border of the self and constantly threatens it.

This reading has been taken as paradigmatic and broadened to include relations between societies as well. Building from Kristeva's work, for instance, Anne McClintock uses the notion of abjection as an important avenue into understanding the paradoxes of modern industrial imperialism. Indeed, McClintock explicitly acknowledges the importance of psychoanalytic insight for what she undertakes when she states, "*Imperial Leather* is written with the conviction that psychoanalysis and material history are mutually necessary for a strategic engagement with unstable power."[3]

McClintock traces how colonial powers both required yet repudiated entire social groups, for colonialism could not have been possible without slavery, or at least cheap sources of labor. She then traces how the attempt was made to hide or disguise this reliance through images that legitimized the treatment of these abject groups, images like the pernicious drawings of the "family of man" with the highest branches always reserved for Europeans. However, McClintock is left unable to articulate what better outcome one might hope for at the conclusion of her compelling analysis, given her reliance on the underlying model of self as formed by repudiation of the other and subject to constant threat.

Edward Said shares some of the same difficulties, once again based on a similar model of identity and difference that he often presumes, yet wants to move beyond. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said carefully traces how the culture of imperialism and the cultures of subjugated peoples are inescapably intertwined. In the process of stepping out from under the legacy of colonialism, he argues that colonized peoples must first see their own culture as having an integrated, coherent identity; the move toward nationalism is thus a necessary step in the process. As a second step, colonized peoples must make what he terms the "voyage in," writing back and infiltrating the dominant culture, breaking down artificial barriers, showing how their history is one of intermingled borrowings. Finally, Said argues that a crucial move must be made toward a more integrative view of human history if nationalism is not to turn into a crude nativism that essentializes national identity and violently repudiates everything that fails to fit.

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[1] J Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection (London: Tavistock; 1977).

[2] Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection, translated by: Roudiez L (New York: Columbia University Press; 1982).

[3] Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (New York: Routledge; 1995), p. 8.

Said argues, then, that there is no reason to insist on the separation and distinctiveness of cultures and identities, and that survival is about finding the connection between them. However, given his underlying model of identity formation, Said does not articulate how this move to connection, this more integrative view of culture, might be possible.

At one point, Said explicitly notes the following contradiction: we live in a political world based on force, since "All cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them."[4] On the other hand, "Survival in fact is about the connections between things…It is more rewarding—and more difficult—to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about 'us.'"[5] We do seem to have a desire to understand others hermeneutically and sympathetically, Said notes, but he cannot account for this desire. Importantly, however, moving to this type of understanding is critical if we are to avoid what he sees as the only other alternative: creating essentialized caricatures of the "other," whether that be "Islam," the "West," or any number of other distorted constructions. Without a model that is capable of acknowledging fluidity and interdependence as non-threatening, we are simply stuck with distorted projections.

Jean Paul Sartre can be situated within this stream of thought in continental philosophy, arguing that conflict typifies all human interaction.[6] The "look," which assures the existence of the other, opens up only two possibilities: looking at and making the other an object, or being looked at and becoming an object for the other.[7] Indeed, struggle underlies every glance, for "while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me…Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others."[8] Although Sartre gives more importance to the interpersonal in his later *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* conflict remains at the heart of intersubjectivity here as well, and the very fragile and transient group-in-fusion will invariably "dissolve into seriality."[9]

Given the bleak possibilities inherent in this image of self and other, especially when broadened to include what might be possible for larger social groups, it should be systematically challenged and made to prove its case. A more adequate model of self and other would be able to articulate how we come to a sense of self without necessarily requiring the repudiation or repression of others.

[4] Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Random House; 1993), p. 100.
[5] Ibid., p. 336.
[6] Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology (New York: Washington Square Press; 1966).
[7] For an intriguing exploration and critique of the underlying notion of vision employed here, see Kelly Oliver, The Look of Love. Hypatia. 2001: 56-78. Her underlying argument is that the idea that vision alienates us from others is premised on the mistaken notion of empty space, an abyss that separates and may never be bridged, a notion challenged by Luce Irigaray's recent work.
[8] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 475.
[9] Jean Paul Sartre, The Critique of Dialectical Reason (New York: Verso; 1991).

Self and Other in Derrida

We will begin our treatment of self and other in Derrida where he began—with Husserl.[10] According to Derrida, it was Husserl whose epistemological reflections thought through to the limits of the Western philosophical tradition, and his thought opens up ready access to the difficulties of drawing any sharp distinction between the knowing ego and the other.

In Husserl's transcendental ego, the self is conceived of as present to itself in the "now," with no intermediary, no exteriority. Speech in the soliloquy of interior mental life is purely expressive, with no need of indication in an internal mental world that precedes all signification. According to Derrida, the stakes are high here, for hearing oneself speak seems an absolute presence to self safe from any external detour: "Requiring the intervention of no determinate surface in the world, being produced in the world as pure auto-affection, it is a signifying substance absolutely at our disposition."[11]

According to Derrida, this exclusion of indication from the "interiority" of consciousness was critical to Husserl because seeing representation through signification as a secondary and derivative process allowed him to preserve an ideal intentional sense that could be safely bracketed from anything exterior to it. If Husserl succeeds, "Language and its representation would be added on to a consciousness that is simple and simply present to itself, or in any event to an experience that could reflect its own presence in silence."[12]

Derrida explores the idea of this seemingly self-present transcendental ego, uncovering a temporalization and a spacing within the very experience of the "present," a temporalization that Husserl both acknowledged yet repressed. For instance, Derrida explores Husserl's reflections on the experience of melody, an experience that requires both retention (of former notes) and protention (fitting the note one hears now into context). Derrida argues that what Husserl says of temporality undermines his attempt to render the transcendental ego immune from difference because the very experience of "now" is itself constituted in that it is only made possible by the trace of that which is absent: the memory of the former moment, and the anticipation of the one to come. According to Derrida, then,

> Time…cannot be thought on the basis of a present and the self-presence of a present being. Like everything thought under this heading, and like all that is excluded by the most rigorous transcendental reduction, the "world" is originarily implied by the movement of temporalization.[13]

As Derrida points out, Husserl struggled with how to reconcile this necessary temporal structure in consciousness with the claimed purity of the present impression, critical in that it reintroduces what Husserl hoped to bracket.

In addition, Derrida maintains that the distinction Husserl drew between indication and expression cannot hold. There is a permanent disjuncture, a non-coincidence

[10] Derrida's first publication was an introduction to Edmund Husserl's L'Origine de la géométrie (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; 1962).
[11] Jacques Derrida, Speech and Phenomena. In: Kamuf P, editor. A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds (New York: Columbia University Press; 1991), p. 23.
[12] Ibid., p. 17.
[13] Ibid., p. 27.

within the self belied by the very word "self-consciousness." This disjuncture enables and requires self-relation, a spacing that implicates every "I" into language for, like any term, "I," or anything I posit or think about myself, must be repeatable, for a purely idiomatic sign cannot carry meaning or significance. Thus Derrida argues that:

> Husserl himself gives us the means to think this against what he says. When in fact I effectively use words, and whether or not I do it for communicative ends…I must from the outset operate within a structure of repetition whose basic element can only be representative. A sign is never an event, if by event we mean an irreplaceable and irreversible empirical particular. A sign which would take place but "once" would not be a sign.[14]

There is no avoiding what Husserl had hoped was the "external" world of sign and indication for all knowledge, including knowledge of self, involves it. Self-experience thus takes place only through signs, signs which reveal the self's openness to iteration and difference.

Derrida also finds in Husserl another important space or break within phenomenology for "Husserl insists that there is no pure intuition of the other *as such*; that is, I have no originary access to the alter-ego *as such*."[15] Husserl has thus prepared the ground for conceiving of the implication of the other in the self *and* for thinking the absolute limit that we encounter in the other.

Derrida thus claims that it is the *non-presence* of the other that gives my "self" to me. In pointing to this non-presence, however, it is crucial to note that he is not saying that others are simply inaccessible. A detour through Derrida's treatment of the trace structure of experience should help us here. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida outlines the active interplay between text and context. For meaning to emerge, any specific word is necessarily marked by the trace of other words within the given language. Just as it is only the mark of the non-"presence" of other words that allows for meaning to emerge, so here absence and disjunction is not the opposite of relation and joining for Derrida—it is its necessary element. It is the otherness of the other, the fact that the other eludes my grasp and appropriation, which makes *relation* possible, and any relation requires a movement of reappropriation. Any experience, any encounter with the other, will necessarily leave its mark or trace on the self. Thus Derrida claims that:

> There is not narcissism and non-narcissism; there are narcissisms that are more or less comprehensive, generous, open, extended. What is called non-narcissism is in general but the economy of a much more welcoming, hospitable narcissism, one that is much more open to the experience of the other as other. I believe that without a movement of narcissistic reappropriation, the relation to the other would be absolutely destroyed, it would be destroyed in advance. The relation to the other—even if it remains asymmetrical, open, without possible reappropriation—must trace a movement of reappropriation in the image of oneself for love to be possible, for example.[16]

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[14] Ibid., p. 10.

[15] Jacques Derrida, Hospitality Justice, and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida. In: Kearney R, Dooley M, editors. Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy (New York: Routledge; 1999), p. 71.

[16] Jacques Derrida, Points…Interviews 1974-1994, Weber E, editor, translated by: Kamuf P (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; 1995), p. 199.

Derrida thus argues that we are in an asymmetrical relationship of openness to and desire for an other that is and can never be given in the sense of appropriation or grasp. Deconstruction finds every avenue, every image, every text that points to the welcome of the other that is the *sine qua non* of experience, a yes to the other that precedes any and all questioning. According to Derrida,

> …there is no *first yes*, the *yes* is already a response. But since everything must begin with some yes, the response begins, the response commands. We must make the best of this aporia, into which we, finite and mortal, are *thrown* and without which there would be no promise of a path. It is necessary to *begin by responding*.[17]

Derrida thus argues convincingly that self-consciousness is relational all the way. My "self" is neither an autonomous possession, nor does it arrive as a reflection from some presence located "outside." According to Derrida,

> The movement of différance is not something that happens to a transcendental subject. It produces the subject. Self-affection is not a modality of experience that characterizes a being that would already be itself (*autos*). It produces the same as self-relation with self-difference, it produces sameness as the non-identical.[18]

We are in an asymmetrical relationship of openness to and desire for an other that can never be given in the sense of appropriation or grasp for the other is not just *in fact* unknown, but is unknowable *as such*.

Self and Other in Piaget

Piaget argues that knowledge is "quite the contrary of a copy of the world; it's a reconstitution of reality by the concepts of the subject, who, progressively and with all kinds of experimental probes, approaches the object without ever attaining it in itself."[19] According to Piaget, however, these concepts are not given or fixed prior to experience. These structures by which we experience the world are *themselves* structured by the activity of the person and stand at the conclusion of a long process of development. According to Piaget, then, cognitive development issues in "the Kantian a priori—but at the end, not at the beginning."[20]

Before exploring Piaget's extensive work on the gradual construction of these cognitive structures, it is important to note some distinctions that Piaget draws in

[17] Jacques Derrida, Adieu to Emanuel Levinas, translated by: Brault PA, Naas M (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; 1999), p. 24.
[18] Derrida, Speech and Phenomena, p. 24.
[19] Jean Piaget, Language & Learning: The Debate Piaget and Chomsky, Piatelli-Palmarini M, editor. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1908), p. 84.
[20] Jean Piaget, Conversations with Jean Piaget, interviewed by: Bringuier J-C, translated by: Miller Gulati B (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1980), p. 33. Clearly there are significant differences between Piaget and Kant on this issue of *a-priori* categories or structures of cognition, for arguing that they are themselves the product of "experience" is just exactly the opposite of what Kant means by *a-priori*. Elsewhere, Piaget explains that he indeed uses the term in a different fashion, that by *a-priori* he means "not of course an innate idea, but a norm, towards which reason cannot help but tend as it is gradually refined and purified." (Jean Piaget, The Moral Judgment of the Child, translated by: Gabain M [New York: Simon & Schuster; 1997], p. 317). Although it is clear that we all move inexorably toward one set of logico-mathematical structures, according to Piaget, there are also places where he hints at a much more open-ended process marked by difference and diversity. We will return to this issue when we address Piaget's understanding of the same-for-all nature of formal thought and some problems inherent in this view.

order to begin to grasp what he means by key terms such as knowledge, structure, and development. As will become apparent, however, Piaget draws these distinctions in order to show the active interplay and interconnection between what is distinguished.

First, Piaget draws a distinction between two general categories of knowledge: instinctual and developmental. By instinctual knowledge, Piaget refers to the capacities or schemes built into the organism through its evolutionary development. For example, early action patterns such as infant attachment behavior would fall into this general category. By developmental knowledge, Piaget means that which requires lived experience. Developmental knowledge is further divided into sensorimotor knowledge, the practical know-how of action, and conceptual knowledge, the know-how of reason and reflection.

Piaget draws these distinctions in order to highlight the essential *continuity* between action knowledge and conceptual knowledge. One difficulty with philosophical epistemology, according to Piaget, is that it has tended to focus exclusively on the conceptual. His goal is to point out that in all behavior there is underlying knowledge, and that conceptual knowledge is the product of a developmental process that is dependent on sensorimotor activity.

Another distinction Piaget draws is between the form and content of knowledge. By content, Piaget refers to the particular content of the event toward which the person's activity is directed. By form, Piaget refers to the internal structure that engages that event or activity. Here again, however, we will see that Piaget draws this distinction initially, but undermines it by highlighting the active *interplay* between structure or form and content.

It is this notion of structure or form that is central to understanding Piaget. By structure, he means a set of elements that are in relation with each other, issuing in a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Piaget uses the phrase *structure d'ensemble* to refer to this self-regulating, transformational totality.[21] It is this structural ensemble that undergoes transformational changes in the course of development. For Piaget, then, structure never refers to something fixed or static, for "structure is always a system of transformations."[22]

The change from one structure to another is a very gradual process. What does come suddenly, according to Piaget, is *prise de conscience*, the comprehension that comes when a structure is complete, a comprehension that involves a conceptual reconstitution that focuses on the mechanisms that allowed certain activities to succeed. For example, the conservation of quantity is a concept that develops over time and is displayed first in concrete activity. Only later is the child able to reflect on and articulate it conceptually.

By development, Piaget means the progressive growth of these internal structures, a process that is not merely maturation of innate capacities, nor is it the steady accumulation of new learning. For Piaget, development is characterized by a progressive *restructuring* of knowledge capacities as the person actively engages the world around and finds current structures inadequate because the

[21] Jean Piaget, Structuralism, translated by: Maschler C (New York: Harper and Row; 1970).
[22] Piaget, Conversations with Jean Piaget, p. 40.

activity engaged in outstrips the interpretive schemes available.[23] By stages, Piaget refers to the differing forms this structure takes in the course of development.

In outlining the dynamic nature of this development, Piaget employs three basic concepts: general schemes, assimilation, and accommodation. General schemes are the person's current cognitive structures. By assimilation, Piaget means the process of fitting experience to these current means of organization. Accommodation, on the other hand, refers to the process of applying schemes to particular contents or events, reorganizing meaning-making structures to adjust to new experience. Describing this overall process, Piaget states that:

> One can say, in regard to this, that all needs tend first of all to incorporate things and people into the subject's own activity, i.e., to "assimilate" the external world into the structures that have already been constructed, and secondly to readjust these structures as a function of subtle transformations, i.e. to "accommodate" them to external objects.[24]

According to Piaget, then, the dynamic process of development is rooted in the interplay between maturation, experience, and the self-regulatory mechanisms of structure. In describing this self-regulatory movement toward balance and synthesis, Piaget deliberately uses the term equilibration rather than equilibrium to stress that he is referring to "a process, not a balance of forces."[25] This process does indeed tend toward equilibrium or balance, but equilibrium is always deferred. In fact, Piaget argues that "equilibrium is never attained—thank heavens!—because the whole world would have had to be assimilated."[26]

The distinction that Piaget initially drew between form or structure and content thus highlights the dynamic relationship between them. For Piaget, schemes are the structures whereby we assimilate experience and understand it in its *generality*. As such, they provide the basis for accommodation to new experience, which is always something *particular* because every event has some element of novelty. Piaget thus claims that, "there is no assimilation without accommodation because the scheme of assimilation is general, and as soon as it's applied to a particular situation, it must be modified according to the particular circumstances of the situation."[27] There is both assimilation and accommodation in *any* experience.

These structures are not observable, as Piaget was well aware. However, he argues that they do become apparent in their change and transformation—what Piaget refers to as their genesis. According to Piaget, the child's view of the world reflects a logic and

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[23] In Memory and Intelligence, (Jean Piaget and B Inhelder, [London: Basic Books and Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1973]) Piaget finds that the salient features of what we remember of a past event reflect our current level of understanding. Accordingly, memory is not a simple reproduction, but it is the event as assimilated by the operative schemes. In addition, memory undergoes a constant restructuring process as new schemes are acquired. Piaget thus proposes a mechanism for understanding Freud's discovery that impressions from childhood, which produced no effect at the time, can have a delayed effect as memories, a "deferred action" (Nachträglichkeit). For a succinct discussion of Piaget and Freud on memory, see Edward S. Casey, Piaget and Freud on Childhood Memory. In: Silverman HJ, editor. Piaget, Philosophy, and the Human Sciences (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press; 1997).
[24] Jean Piaget, Six Psychological Studies (New York: Random House; 1967), p. 8.
[25] Piaget, Conversations with Jean Piaget, p. 44.
[26] Ibid., p. 44.
[27] Ibid., p. 42-3.

consistency that can be discovered, and it is possible to trace structural transformations of this logic through careful and controlled observation.[28] Piaget traces this development through four general stages: the sensorimotor (from birth through 18–24 months), the pre-operational (from approximately age 2–7), the concrete operational (from ages 7–11), and formal operational (beginning around age 12).

Piaget describes infants as naturally narcissistic; however, it is a narcissism without Narcissus for they are initially not able to distinguish between self, action, and the object of action. The infant does, however, have a rich practical know-how, is ready to actively engage and experience, and progressively coordinates and integrates this activity. In observing his own children, Piaget describes how their goal-directed activities result in an increasing ability to coordinate bodily movements, to understand spatial relationships, and to retain perceptual data during what he terms the sensorimotor period.[29]

During this period, as infants act and explore, pre-adaptive schemes are repeated in what Piaget terms "primary circular reactions," the repetition of pleasurable behavior and interesting movements. Gradually the infant varies these behaviors, intrigued with the results of these variations in "secondary circular reactions." This active exploration and variation in activity testifies to the infant's growing sense of action as related to the environment.

By about 6 months or so, infants begin to coordinate these secondary circular reactions, integrating the differentiated schemes in what Piaget refers to as "first order practical operations," with some rudimentary means/ends differentiation and a developing sense of object permanence. By object permanence, Piaget refers to the understanding, developed over time, that an object that disappears from view continues to exist. In his observations of infant behavior, Piaget found that 4-month-old infants typically act as if objects no longer exist when they are not actively engaged with them. By 8–10 months, however, infants will pull away a cover placed over an object. Finally, the search for lost objects becomes a systematic endeavor that marks the attainment of the cognitive representation of the object.[30]

Object formation ushers in what Piaget refers to as the "pre-operational" stage at around 18–24 months, a stage marked by children's initial use of symbols. For Piaget, the use of symbols is both continuous with and depends on the development of the earlier sensorimotor knowledge and on the development of object permanence. During the sensorimotor period, the child deals with signifiers, but they are *signals* that are always perceptual and are undifferentiated from their referent. Now, patterns develop that show that the signifier begins to be differentiated from what is signified in behaviors such as deferred imitation, symbolic play, drawing pictures, mental imagery, and spoken language. In each case, what happens is a form of representation, of rendering present something absent.[31]

[28] Jean Piaget, The Child's Conception of the World, translated by: Tomlinson J, Tomlinson A (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield; 1951).

[29] Jean Piaget, The Origin of Intelligence in Children, translated by: Cook M (New York: Norton; 1963).

[30] Jean Piaget, The Construction of Reality in the Child, translated by: Cook M (New York: Basic Books; 1954).

[31] Piaget does acknowledge that children begin to use words in the earlier stage, but argues that they are initially purely imitative and are not language in the sense of representation (Jean Piaget, Six Psychological Studies).

For Piaget, then, representative thought does not result from a simple incorporation of language from the social environment. Piaget thus argues that the individual child's capacity for speech and language is not simply learned, nor is it simply innate.[32] Both are involved, but language acquisition rests as well on the activity of the child and resulting developmental achievements from the earlier sensorimotor period. With the beginnings of language, then, children who mean and intend all along, are able to both externalize those meanings and accommodate to the symbol system of the culture of which they are a part. Language, in turn, allows for further differentiation and coordination of thought itself, ushering in the next stage of development.

According to Piaget's observations, the pre-operational child described above is embedded in his or her perceptions and perspective. At around age seven, however, children begin to develop the capacity to reflect on their perceptions and move back and forth among them. Their thinking becomes de-centered as they construct a framework of concepts that Piaget calls "operations," certain logical categories that allow the world to appear relatively stable and coherent.

During the stage Piaget describes as concrete operational, the child develops the use of logical operations such as hierarchical classification, serial ordering, and numerical quantification. These categories become relatively self-consistent systems characterized by reversibility (i.e. that any operation implies its inverse) and conservation (i.e. the ability to conserve quantity across changes in appearance), allowing the child to experience the world around as relatively coherent and stable in the face of changing perceptions.[33]

Along with this developing coherence of thought, children also display a growing ability to take the perspective of others during this period. According to Piaget, the concrete operational child moves from egocentrism (defined as embeddedness in one's own perceptions) and develops these logical operations through social interaction with peers, an interaction that requires verification of ideas and perspectives.

Elaborated between the ages of 7–12, concrete operations are theoretical structures, but they remain tied to concrete events. For the typical 10 year old, the world is marvelously concrete and the child is interested in exploring groups and classes of things and the nature of the physical world. There are limitations, however, in that the concrete operational child cannot coordinate their newly acquired concepts in a systematic fashion.

With the advent of formal operations, the islands of logical coherence arrived at in concrete operations can be progressively related and integrated, and thus "the logical operations begin to be transposed from the plane of concrete manipulation to the ideational plane."[34] For example, in one of many tests, children of various ages were faced with five beakers containing colorless fluids and were asked to find the single combination that would yield a yellow liquid. What Inhelder and Piaget found

[32] Piaget explicitly rejected viewing language as the simple outcome of genetic coding in his debate with Noam Chomsky, who argued that language is a species-specific innate structure. See Language and Learning: The Debate between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky, Piattelli-Palmarini M, editor. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1980).
[33] Jean Piaget, Problems in Equilibration. In: Appel M, Goldberg L, editors. Equilibration: Theory, Research & Application (New York: Plenum; 1977).
[34] Jean Piaget, Six Psychological Studies, p. 62.

was that the concrete operational child's efforts are conducted entirely at random. Only with the beginning of what Piaget describes as formal operational thought at around age 12, were children able to hold one variable constant and construct an overall plan for isolating the single variable that will make the desired result possible.[35]

Less embedded in the concrete, the formal thinker can thus construct and test hypotheses using both inductive and deductive reasoning. In addition, the person develops the ability to think in terms of proportions and probabilities, abilities that also involve coordinating a number of differing variables. Another important characteristic of formal thought, according to Piaget, is the ability to work with situations that are contrary to fact and reason using analogy.[36] As Piaget notes, the heart of analogy is the ability to reflectively abstract significant similarities and differences between terms. With the acquisition of these skills, the person moves toward a new equilibration wherein the concreteness of what is represents an instance of what might be. According to Piaget "Henceforth intelligence will be able to operate not only on objects and situations but also on hypotheses and, therefore, on the possible as well as the real."[37]

According to Piaget, all of the above cognitive structures evolve over time and are conserved through their *functioning*. Each stage witnesses an increasing movement from the infant's initial egocentrism in what Piaget describes as a progressive decentration:

> …these successive constructions always involve a decentering of the initial egocentric point of view in order to place it in an ever-broader coordination of relations and concepts, so that each new terminal grouping further integrates the subject's activity by adapting it to an ever-widening reality.[38]

Cognitive development, as outlined by Piaget, is thus a process characterized by the inter-related development of a sense of self and other, a development related to activity and exploration. Piaget's work on moral development points in a very similar direction.[39] For Piaget, the origin of moral development is found in the social relations the child is involved in from birth, and he identified two distinct types of relationship. First, the child is involved in a relationship with parents characterized by unilateral respect issuing in the "morality of constraint." As the child grows, peer relations become more salient and the experience of these mutual respect relationships issues in the "morality of cooperation."[40]

According to Piaget, moral development is thus grounded in the essential other-relatedness of the self, in ongoing experience in the social world, and in reflection on what is necessary to sustain that experience. It is this experience, along with the

[35] Jean Piaget and B Inhelder, The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, translated by: Parsons A, Pilgram S (New York: Basic Books; 1958).
[36] A summary of Piaget's work on the development of the ability to utilize analogy can be found in J Gallagher and D Reid, The Learning Theory of Piaget and Inhelder (Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole; 1981).
[37] Jean Piaget, Intelligence & Affectivity: Their Relationship During Child Development (Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews; 1981).
[38] Jean Piaget, Six Psychological Studies, p. 69.
[39] Jean Piaget, The Moral Judgment of the Child, translated by: Gabain M (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1997).
[40] It is noteworthy here that Piaget distinguishes between the morality of constraint and that of cooperation, usually preferring this to the more familiar Kantian distinction between heteronomy and autonomy. As will become clearer later, this usage stresses the inter-relational element that Piaget views as central to *both*.

growing ability to appreciate the perspective of others, that allows for the elaboration and abstraction of what Piaget terms "constituted" rules or norms. For example, the specific rules for playing marbles are constituted rules, and Piaget contrasts these with rules he identifies as "constitutive." By constitutive, Piaget means those rules implicit in the very structure of relationships themselves, principles that are the condition for the possibility of the elaboration of constituted rules. For example, Piaget here refers to rules such as fairness, truthfulness, promise keeping, all functional principles that make cooperation possible. Constitutive rules are thus the condition for the maintenance of mutual respect relationships. This distinction between constitutive and constituted allowed Piaget to recognize the importance of the reflective abstraction of constituted norms, yet at the same time recognize and *maintain* their roots in interpersonal experience. Autonomy has its birth and its continued existence *only* in relationship.

Thus, it is the ongoing articulation of the *relationship* between self and other that accounts for what is distinctive about both cognitive and moral development from a Piagetian perspective. Michael Tomasello's research supports this view of the gradual emergence of a sense of self and other through activity and exploration.[41] In addition, research has supported Piaget's view of the infant as well-equipped with action patterns that work to ensure movement from embeddedness to relation. Indeed, Piaget may well have underestimated the abilities of the infant, and a wealth of research points to just how wired infants are for relating with their environment: they prefer human faces to other visual stimuli, engage in proto-conversational turn taking soon after birth, and are intent on initiating and sustaining the attention of others.[42] Finally, recent research points to infants as naturally altruistic. Infants as young as 14 months are open to helping others and demonstrate sensitivity to their needs and goals.[43]

Reading Derrida and Piaget in Tandem

Piaget's work has been subject to reevaluation and has been sharply criticized on several scores.[44] Particularly pertinent here is the criticism that he failed to give

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[41] Michael Tomasello, Understanding the Self as Social Agent. In: Rochat P, editor. The Self in Infancy: Theory and Research (New York: Elsevier; 1995).

[42] R Emde, The Infants Relationship Experience: Developmental & Affective Aspects. In Sameroff A, Emde R, editors. Relationship Disturbances in Early Childhood: A Developmental Approach (New York: Basic Books; 1989). A summary of extensive research on the social sources of cognition can be found in J Flavell and P Miller, Social Cognition. In: Damon W, editor. Cognition, Perception & Language, Volume 2 of The Handbook of Child Psychology (New York: John Wiley & Sons; 1998).

[43] Felix Warnekon and Michael Tomasello, The Roots of Human Altruism. British Journal of Psychology. 2009;100: 455-71.

[44] Piaget's stress on the growing autonomy of moral judgment is a frequent source of criticism. First, autonomy seems to deny the situated nature of moral judgment, requiring an abstraction that denies the person's embeddedness in a particular context. Second, the movement toward autonomy seems to also deny our embodiment in terms of specific desires and attachments, thus denigrating the importance of care in moral judgment. In: The Evolving Self: Problem & Process in Human Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1982) Robert Kegan presents a compelling argument that Piaget's work points to the intimate interrelationship between differentiation and attachment and thus "…offers a corrective to all present developmental frameworks which univocally define growth in terms of differentiation, separation, increasing autonomy, and lose sight of the fact that adaptation is equally about integration, attachment, inclusion. The net effect of this myopia, as feminist psychologists are now pointing out, has been that differentiation (the stereotypically male overemphasis in this most human ambivalence) is favored with the language of growth and development, while integration (the stereotypically female overemphasis) gets spoken of in terms of dependency and immaturity" (108-9).

enough credence to the nature and extent of the influence of language. In fact, it has been noted that he *separated* conceptual thinking from language and proposed that language is not necessary for intellectual development.[45] What is somewhat less clear is precisely what Piaget means by language. Often what he means is the production of the first recognizable words, words presumed to have a stable and fixed meaning. Piaget thus viewed language as a group institution whose rules are transmitted from one generation to the next. A strong argument can be made that Piaget's theory adapts well to a more dynamic view of language accessible via Derrida's work.

As noted earlier, meaning necessarily requires the repeatability of signs. In order to convey meaning, any sign must therefore be both repeatable and detachable from its particular context. However, strict repeatability is impossible, since meaning *always* involves context. It is this that accounts for the disseminating drift of language, a drift that both frees and consigns us to the ongoing *construction* of meaning.

If Piaget had included the generation of the ability to symbolize as itself a type of language or text, what Derrida says about meaning could well have been written by Piaget himself. For Piaget, it is through repetition, the repeatability of action, that the child begins to differentiate self, action, and object. Piaget thus explicitly traces the birth of symbolization to the very early repetitive activity of the infant and the continuing elaboration of this activity in early childhood and beyond.

Language, broadly conceived via Derrida's generalized textuality, is present from the *beginning* in Piaget's theory. A more explicit recognition of this generalized textuality and its implications may help resolve at least one extremely serious criticism of Piaget's work—that he fails to acknowledge the possibility of conflict in knowledge. As noted above, although Piaget does have a sense of the dynamic and fluid relationship between the self and the larger environment, it is a part essentially in harmony within an even larger harmonious whole. For Piaget, there is no radical conflict in knowledge for every seeming conflict can be reabsorbed into a more encompassing equilibrium.

Derrida's notion of a generalized textuality, compatible with Piaget's description of the process of meaning making, underlines the fact that language necessarily involves the invention of new meaning and opens up the unavoidability of multiple and divergent meanings. Piaget's theory might then accommodate a much more robust sense of the conflict of *competing* meaning systems and the struggle for equilibrium, thus giving more credence to the self as a historical, linguistic event.

Although this takes Piaget in a direction he never explored or intended, it is reconcilable with his underlying model. In addition, although it is clear that what interested Piaget the most was what is *general* in the development of knowledge, he does not deny that individual differences exist. In fact, there are places where Piaget himself speculates that there must be great diversity in cognitive structures.[46]

In addition, this heightened focus on multiple meanings could enhance Piaget's theory in another critical area. Along with the person's growing ability to

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[45] H Furth, Piaget's Theory of Knowledge. In: Silverman H, editor. Piaget Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press; 1997).
[46] Jean Piaget, Conversations with Jean Piaget.

synthesize and reconcile contradictions, this attention to multiplicity would necessitate an ability to tolerate ambivalence, even at Piaget's formal level. Piaget is well aware that perceptual ambivalence is a *powerful* factor in accounting for the dynamics of development, yet he is too quick to leave this behind when he arrives at the stage of formal operations. Retaining the importance of ambiguity and ambivalence would, in fact, *strengthen* Piaget's overall theory in that an appreciation of the complexity of human life and of the partiality of our historical perspective can be seen as a fund for ongoing, lifelong renewal and change in the face of difference and diversity.

Piaget offers critical support for Derrida's understanding of the open and responsive character of the self. Piaget provides evidence that our own development as persons is a function of our concrete relations with others and this is supported by currents within developmental psychology. In addition, Piaget offers evidence that we grow in our ability to recognize this openness—that we come, over time, to recognize that others have perspectives that are not our own, and to respect and be *transformed* by these differing viewpoints.

Conclusion

It is Derrida who most fully develops the important political implications involved if we take seriously the asymmetry of the relation between self and other. Derrida has been roundly criticized for not deriving a political program from his deconstructive efforts. As Derrida notes, this is not a failure but rather pushes one toward the need for continual political arbitration.

Derrida explores the concrete implications of too much decidability and too little openness to what is to come in his reading of Marx in *Specters of Marx*. According to Derrida, Marx undermined the ideology critique that was so close to his heart by calling for a practice, an actualization that failed to see the necessity of an openness to what is to come, the other that (again) can and will never appear as such, a justice that can never be fully actualized. By thus relegating the spectral to the commodity, Marx's ideas were transformed into a political program blind to its own necessary violence and the need for ongoing and sustained critique. In short, Marx cut off his shot at the future, a future that can only remain open as possibility if the remains, the excess, are *continually* conjured up. The specter points to the open-endedness, to relation with other that interrupts, disturbs, unsettles the givenness of the present. As Derrida notes,

> If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it...[47]

To deny the specter, then, implies the opposite: identity/presence without opening, law without justice, exclusion of the other, a closed system. The denial of the spectral was the recipe for totalitarianism and its appropriation of the spirit of Marx.

[47] Jacques Derrida, Specters of Marx, translated by: Kamuf P (New York: Routledge; 1994), p. 39.

Derrida uncovers instead another spirit of Marx: the spirit of a messianic vision in terms of which there is hope for emancipation from repressive ideology:

> …if there is a spirit of Marxism which I will never be ready to renounce, it is not only the critical idea or the questioning stance (a consistent deconstruction must insist on them even as it also learns that this is not the last or first word). It is even more a certain emancipatory and messianic affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try to liberate from any dogmatics and even from any metaphysico-religious determination, from any messianism.[48]

This is what Derrida refers to as messianic hope, a messianic without messianism, without being filled in with any prior knowledge of exactly what is to be expected.[49] Derrida here returns to what is a constant theme (a constant re-iteration, he might prefer) in his work: if you can count on what is to come, hope is simply calculation extended, more of the "same," and you do not really *wait for* anything or anyone.

Derrida cautions that we have not "arrived" at the democratic future triumphantly announced as the "end of history" by Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man*. Indeed, Derrida identifies the "plagues of the new world order" conveniently forgotten in the revelry: unemployment, homelessness, international economic warfare, the escalation and dissemination of the arms industry, inter-ethnic war. According to Derrida, we need to recognize present-day liberal democracy's complicity in these plagues and make a response.

In devising our strategies and planning our programs, however, it is not to be forgotten that participatory "democracy" is a promise, an expectation to come. To conjure away the specter of democracy by assuring ourselves that it has and can "arrive" is to lose the promise it delivers and the critical edge it assures. According to Derrida, any specific political claims need to pass through the ordeal of undecidability, must be made with some hesitancy, always watching for who is excluded and open to the new and novel. Here again, Derrida argues that "This messianic hesitation does not paralyze any decision, any affirmation, any responsibility. On the contrary, it grants them their elementary condition. It is their very experience."[50]

Deconstruction is a movement toward a democracy to come—structurally to come. Derrida describes it as:

> …just opening which renounces any right to property, any right in general, messianic opening to what is coming, that is, to the event that cannot be awaited as such, or recognized in advance therefore, to the event as the foreigner itself, to her or to him for whom one must leave an empty place, always, in memory of the hope—and this is the very place of spectrality. It would be easy, too easy, to show that such a hospitality without reserve, which is nevertheless the condition of the event and thus of history…is the impossible itself, and this condition of possibility of the event is also its condition of impossibility, like this strange concept of messianism without content, of the messianic

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[48] Ibid., p. 89.
[49] John Caputo's text The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 1997) presents an extended discussion of the relationship between the messianic as a structure of experience and particular historical messianic movements in Derrida.
[50] Jacques Derrida, Specters of Marx, p. 169.

without messianism, that guides us here like the blind. But it would be just as easy to show that without this experience of the impossible, one might as well give up on both justice and the event.[51]

Derrida's reflections on democracy, and his notion that any tradition is open to decision, offer up a radical critique of any closed nationalism or any notion of ethnic purity. Cultures and traditions are necessarily hybrid ensembles for Derrida. Derrida thus calls for a new internationalism that would recognize this hybridity, a recognition that would move us toward thinking about hospitality rather than building and maintaining national barriers.

At the end of the day, it is how open we are to the other, how we stand in regard to the excess, how vigilant we are regarding universal claims, that is critical to *all* areas of life and thought. This allows Derrida to make the somewhat surprising claim (particularly to those who argue that Derrida eschews politics) that political philosophy "structures implicitly all philosophy or all thought on the subject of philosophy."[52]

In closing, we do not need to be reminded that we are capable of the abuse and careless disregard of others—that story in human history is all too well documented. What surfaces in exploring Derrida and Piaget is another narrative—one written in the very structure of experience and the processes through which we grow and thrive as human beings. This story is so intimate, so close, and so pervasive that its significance can easily be missed, yet absent this account of the psychological production of the self available through developmental psychology, it is very difficult to either imagine a self that can come to embrace difference, or hope for societies that might truly practice hospitality. Uncovering this implicit story, wherever it can be discerned, is *crucial* because hope is a precious resource that can open up a different vision of what may be possible for human community in our fractured and fragile world.

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[51] Ibid., p. 65.
[52] Ibid., p. 92.

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