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## Music and Identity

*Simon Frith*

Henry Rollins once said that music exists to put furniture in your mind, 'because life is so cruel and TV is so mean.'

Gina Arnold<sup>1</sup>

Becoming what one is is a creative act comparable with creating a work of art.

Anthony Storr<sup>2</sup>

It is not easy, however, to be evil when music is playing.

John Miller Chernoff<sup>3</sup>

The academic study of popular music has been limited by the assumption that the sounds must somehow 'reflect' or 'represent' the people. The analytic problem has been to trace the connections back, from the work (the score, the song, the beat) to the social groups who produce and consume it. What's been at issue is homology, some sort of *structural* relationship between material and musical forms.

The search for homology is most commonly associated these days with subculture theory, with accounts of punk or heavy metal, for example;<sup>4</sup> but the supposed fit (or lack of it) between aesthetic and social values has a much longer history in the study of popular culture. This is T.S. Eliot on Marie Lloyd:

It was her understanding of the people and sympathy with them, and the people's recognition of the fact that she embodied the virtues which they genuinely most respected in private life, that raised her to the position she occupied at her death . . . I have called her the expressive figure of the lower classes.<sup>5</sup>

More recently the rise of identity politics has meant new assertions of cultural essentialism, more forceful arguments than ever that, for example, only African-Americans can appreciate African-American music, that there is a basic difference between male and female composition, that the 'globalization' of a local sound is a form of cultural 'genocide'.<sup>6</sup>

The assumptions in such arguments about the necessary flow from social identity (whether defined in terms of race or sexuality or age or

nation) to musical expression (and appreciation) seem straightforward enough in the abstract (who could possibly deny that African-American music is music made by African-Americans; that the difference between male and female experience will be embedded in male and female music; that Phil Collins is an imposition on the soundscape of the Australian outback?). But they are less convincing in the everyday practice of music making and listening: how do we make sense of the obvious *love* of European listeners and players for the music of the African diaspora? Who is expressing what when, say, Ella Fitzgerald sings Cole Porter? When Yothi Yindi *rocks*?<sup>7</sup>

The problem here is not just the familiar postmodern point that we live in an age of plunder in which musics made in one place for one reason can be immediately appropriated in another place for quite another reason, but also that while music may be *shaped* by the people who first make and use it, as experience it has a life of its own. Marx remarks somewhere that it is easy enough to move analytically from the cultural to the material, easy enough, that is, to *interpret* culture, to read it ideologically, to assign it social conditions. The difficult trick is to do the analysis the other way round, to show how the base produced *this* superstructure, to explain why an idea or experience takes on *this* artistic or aesthetic form, and not another, equally 'reflective' or 'representative' of its conditions of production.<sup>8</sup> After the cultural event, as a historian might agree, we can say why expression had to happen this way; before it there is no creative necessity at all. And if art is therefore, so to speak, originally accidental, then there is no particular reason to accept its makers' special claims on it. The interesting question, rather, is how art comes to make its own claims, in other circumstances, for itself.

In examining the aesthetics of popular music, then, I want to reverse the usual academic and critical argument: the issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience – a musical experience, an aesthetic experience – that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity. The aesthetic, to put this another way, describes the quality of an experience (not the quality of an object); it means experiencing *ourselves* (not just the world) in a different way. My argument here, in short, rests on two premises: first, that identity is *mobile*, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being; second, that our experience of music – of music making and music listening – is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*. Music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind; identity, like music, is a matter of both ethics and aesthetics. In exploring these themes I will, among other things, touch critically on their treatment under the label of 'postmodernism', but my main concern is to suggest that if music is a metaphor for identity, then, to echo Marx, the self is always an imagined self but can only

be imagined as a particular organization of social, physical and material forces.

## The mobile self

What's at stake has become clear in the debate about postmodernism and the unstable or 'decentred' subject, a debate which has been dominated by the problems of signification and structure. Postmodernism, that is to say, is taken to describe a 'crisis' of signification systems: how can we now tell the difference between the 'real' and the 'simulated'? The postmodern problem is the threat to our sense of place – hence the mapping metaphors, the use of terms like depth and surface. What is underplayed in such discussions is the problem of process – not the positioning of the subject as such, but our experience of the movement between positions. This is where music becomes an important area for study: what happens to our assumptions about postmodern identity when we examine a form in which sound is more important than sight, and time more important than space; when the 'text' is a performance, a movement, a flux; when nothing is 'represented'?<sup>9</sup>

The broad argument that I want to make here, in short, is that in talking about identity we are talking about a particular kind of experience, or a way of dealing with a particular kind of experience. Identity is not a thing but a process – an experiential process which is most vividly grasped *as music*. Music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective. As Mark Slobin puts it,

Music seems to have an odd quality that even passionate activities like gardening or dog-raising lack: the simultaneous projecting and dissolving of the self in *performance*. Individual, family, gender, age, supercultural givens, and other factors hover around the musical space but can penetrate only very partially the moment of enactment of musical fellowship. Visible to the observer, these constraints remain unseen by the musicians, who are instead working out a shared vision that involves both the assertion of pride, even ambition, and the simultaneous disappearance of the ego.<sup>10</sup>

The experience of identity describes both a social process, a form of interaction, and an aesthetic process; as Slobin argues, it is the 'aesthetic rather than organizational/contextual aspects of performance' that 'betray a continuity between the social, the group, and the individual'.<sup>11</sup> It is in deciding – playing and hearing what sounds *right* (I would extend this account of music from performing to listening, to listening as a way of performing) – that we both express ourselves, our own sense of rightness, and suborn ourselves, lose ourselves, in an act of participation.<sup>12</sup>

The implication of this argument is that we need to rethink the usual sociological approach to aesthetic expression. My point is not that a social group has beliefs which it then articulates in its music, but that music, an

aesthetic practice, articulates *in itself* an understanding of both group relations and individuality, on the basis of which ethical codes and social ideologies are understood.<sup>13</sup>

What I want to suggest, in other words, is not that social groups agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities (the assumption of the homology models) but that they only get to know themselves *as groups* (as a particular organization of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement. Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them. As John Miller Chernoff concluded from his study of drumming in Ghana,

African music is a cultural activity which reveals a group of people organizing and involving themselves with their own communal relationships – a participant-observer's comment, so to speak, on the processes of living together. The aesthetic point of the exercise is not to reflect a reality which *stands behind it* but to ritualize a reality that is *within it*.<sup>14</sup>

And this is not just a characteristic of African music, Philip V. Bohlman concludes his study of the role of chamber music in the lives of the *Yekkes*, the German-speaking Jews in Israel, as follows:

But this essay is not really about an ethnic group. Nor is it about the music per se of that group [though] I am here concerned with the music history resulting from the response of a group with a shared value system to a musical repertory that articulated those values. Such groups have long populated the history of Western music. Sometimes we call them ethnic groups or communities, sometimes national cultures, and sometimes we label by coupling place with abstraction, for example in 'Viennese classicism'. All these acts of labelling suggest the process of standing outside a group and looking in to see what sort of music is to be found. Suppose the group is really the product of its musical activities and the cultural values bound to them? What if excessive concern with the musical text deflects one from seeing the formation of diverse groups and music histories. What if one looked at the *Yekkes*, with their devotion to chamber music, as just another justification for the conditions of absolute music?<sup>15</sup>

Bohlman's target here is musicology. As an ethnomusicologist he is arguing that the meaning of classical music, as an experience, is not to be found in the text, but in the performance of the text, in the process in which it is realized. The *Yekke* chamber music groups don't have an abstract belief in 'absolute' (or transcendent) music; rather the concept of 'absolute music' is dependent on a particular way of being – playing – together.

Bohlman's argument is particularly interesting because it is applied to 'high' music making. His suggestion, with which I strongly agree, is that in terms of aesthetic process there is no real difference between high and low music. As he notes, from his perspective, 'Western art music functions not unlike styles and repertoires most commonly accepted as the ethnomusicologist's field, namely folk and non-Western music.' And I would add, from my perspective, not unlike commercial popular music

either. In short, different sorts of musical activity may produce different sorts of musical identity, but *how* the musics work to form identities is the same. The distinction between high and low culture, in other words, describes not something caused by different (class-bound) tastes, but is an effect of different (class-bound?) social activities.<sup>16</sup>

Let me make the point in a different way, by quoting two music critics, one low and one high, and then considering the difference between them. First the low critic, Frank Kogan, writing about Spoonie Gee in a fanzine in the mid-1980s.

'Spoonin Rap' and 'Love Rap' by Spoonie Gee are my favourite American-made records of the last ten years. They came out about five years ago, 'Spoonin Rap' in late '79 and 'Love Rap' in '80. I've never read a review of either.

On the basis of his voice alone, the way it balances coolness with angry passion while keeping a dance beat, Spoonie is a major artist; in addition, he's a writer. His lyrics are as intense as his singing, and embody the same tensions. Example: both 'Spoonin Rap' and 'Love Rap' start with detailed and explicit bragging – about how cool and sexy he is, about how girls go for him, how they're impressed with his rapping and his car. He puts on his eight-track. He makes love to the girl in his car. In his Mercedes. The seat's so soft, just like a bed. At the moment of sexual triumph the lyrics make a jarring change, as if there's a second song hidden behind the first, as if the bragging were a set-up for something else. . . . And then it's like the first part of the song, but turned inside out – the guys and girls are drawn to his flashy clothes and car only so they can rip him off and leave him in the gutter. The girls are gonna play him for a fool. . . . Then it shifts back to what a great lover he is, nice descriptions of his girl friends. 'Spoonin Rap' shifts around in the same way. It's about how cool he is, about how sexy women are; then it's about don't do dope, don't steal, you'll go to jail and they'll fuck you in the ass. Then it's about jumping the turnstile and the cop pulls a gun but he doesn't shoot.

There's a lot of precedent in black lyrics for jarring emotional juxtapositions – in the blues particularly, also in Smokey Robinson's deliberate paradoxes. But the nearest emotional equivalent isn't in black music, it's in punk – early Stones, Kinks, Velvets, Stooges, Dolls – where a song will seem to be one thing, then be another. The ranting part of 'Love Rap' could be Lou Reed in one of his bad moods – except that, unlike a Jagger or a Reed, Spoonie hasn't calculated – may not even be aware of – his juxtapositions. Which adds to his power. The feelings have great impact because they come from an unexpected source. If Spoonie were in punk or rock his alienation and rage would fill an expectation of the genre. In disco, they seem truer. . . .

Spoonie Gee has made some great records and an equal number of mediocre ones. I think he's a genius, but I don't think he knows what he's doing. He's drawn to a vision of the world as a fake and treacherous place. Maybe something's bugging him. Maybe unconsciously he feels that it's not only the world that's fake, or women that are fake – it's himself.

Spoonie's not one of us. He has nothing to do with punk culture or post-punk culture. I don't know if I could carry on an interesting conversation with him, if we could find any cultural or moral common ground. But there is a common ground, that part of the intellect called the 'emotions', where I do my deepest analysis of life. However much I admire current heroes like Mark E. Smith and Ian Mackaye, people I identify with, I know they don't make music as strong as this. Listening to Spoonie is like hearing my own feelings, and I have to confront my own fear. This means maybe that I'm not really unlike him. Maybe I'm more like him than I am like you.<sup>17</sup>

I've quoted this at length because this is how the piece works as criticism – in the steady move from description to emotion to identity, via questions of voice and genre, text and performance, knowledge, truth and feeling, all here focused on one artist, on a couple of tracks.

Now compare high criticism: Gregory Sandow on Milton Babbitt:

Like any Babbitt piece, *Dual* is a labyrinth of closely packed information: every detail means something, or – which to me is the awe and almost the horror if it – could mean something. The F sharp, E flat, and B natural isolated in the highest register of the piano in the first two measures return in measure six as the first three notes of a melodic phrase, accompanied by the B flat, G natural, and C natural that were the next notes heard in the highest register at the end of measure two and the start of measure three – and these are just the most obvious connections that could be made between two parts of the piece chosen almost at random. Babbitt likes to say that moments in his music can be memories of what came before, and presentiments of what is to come. Serial technique produces ever-new associations of familiar elements giving everything that happens the power of an omen. Following a Babbitt piece in close detail is like reading entrails or tea leaves: every rearrangement in every bar might mean something. So many rearrangements are possible that you never know what the omens really mean; new developments seem, if not arbitrary, then at least wilful. This is a sort of higher-order zaniness, something unpredictable and even wild that transcends Babbitt's logic, and finds its way into something I haven't mentioned yet, which I'll call Babbitt's mode of musical speech. . . .

For in the end I do find Babbitt eccentric. He's a superb musical craftsman, and, I think, an authentically great composer, though in some ways hard to take, but he's also zany, wild, and – I say this again with admiration – more than a little bit mad. His music, and the whole school he represents, are products of the 1950s, as much the symptoms of the eruption of tumultuous subterranean forces into above ground life as monster movies, rock and roll, the beat generation, and abstract expressionism. But in Babbitt's case the eruption is controlled, disguised, and unmentioned, the secret nobody will acknowledge or even name. In a videotaped interview with Ann Swartz of Baruch College, Babbitt calls himself 'a man of the university', whose music 'reflects the life of the academy, in the best sense of the word'. That's partly true, of course, but there's much more there. There's no point in thinking that Babbitt should do or think anything but what he does. . . . But I can't help thinking that he's sold himself short by trying both to extend the boundaries of his art and to remain academically respectable, and by acknowledging only the verifiable (and therefore trivial) aspects of his amazing work. If – like Joyce, Jackson Pollock, or John Cage – so passionate a man had chosen to define himself as an artist and not as an academic, what might he have achieved?<sup>18</sup>

The descriptive terms here are different (the language of notational rather than lyrical analysis), the genre distinction draws attention to a different context (the academy rather than the market), but the overall shape of the review is the same – the move from describing the music to describing the listener's response to the music to considering the relationship of feeling, truth and identity. And Kogan's and Sandow's judgements are, in fact, much the same: both Spoonie Gee and Milton Babbitt show flawed genius; in both cases the critics seem to know better than the artists what they are – or should be – doing.

What links these responses, in other words, is the assumption that music, the experience of music for composer/performer and listener alike, gives us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it. And if both critics begin by stressing their distance from the musicians – both Spoonie Gee and Milton Babbitt are set up as decidedly odd; both critics also end up in a sort of collusion with them: musical appreciation is, by its very nature, a process of musical identification, and the aesthetic response is, implicitly, an ethical agreement.

## Postmodernism and performance

The blurring of the high/low cultural boundary (here between critics) is, of course, a sign of the postmodern, and in bringing Kogan and Sandow together I need to distinguish my position from the one usually adopted. The confusion of the high and low is conventionally indicated by quotation (or appropriation) across the divide: the pop recycling of classical music and the art re-use of pop are taken to mark an underlying shift of aesthetic sensibility. In practice, as Andrew Goodwin has pointed out, such arguments mostly concern a relationship between the artistic avant-garde and certain pop forms (pop art remains the model): the most cited postmodern musicians are people such as Laurie Anderson, David Byrne and Brian Eno, who are clearly 'artists' rather than 'pop stars'. The institutional boundary between high and mass art seems intact – there remains a clear difference between a Philip Glass and a Madonna in terms of packaging, marketing, performance space, recording sound, and so forth; just as we can continue to distinguish between the pop Eno (producer of U2 and James) and the art Eno (producer of ambient video). The *frisson* of blurring of the art/mass boundary depends on the boundary still being clearly drawn.<sup>19</sup>

And if we go back to eighteenth-century debates about musical meaning, and to the origins of the Romantic view of art that underpins high cultural arguments (the view which was duly appropriated by would-be artist rock musicians in the 1960s), it becomes apparent that the high/low distinction doesn't really concern the nature of the art object, or how it is produced, but refers to different modes of *perception*. The crucial high/low distinction is that between contemplation and 'wallowing', between intellectual and sensual appreciation, between hard and easy listening (which is why a comparison of high and low critics becomes interesting).

To add low cultural goods to lists of 'art' objects available for intellectual (or 'serious') appreciation (which is what postmodern theorists tend to do) is not, then, to get rid of the traditional boundaries between the high and the low, and the much more interesting issue is whether we can really continue to sustain the implicit separation of emotion and feeling, sense and sensuality, body and mind. (This is the issue raised, for example, by

the ambient house music of groups like Future Sound of London and the Aphex Twin, music which draws simultaneously on rave culture and minimalism.) The question, in fact, is whether musical experience has ever really been mapped by the high/low, mind/body distinction. The nineteenth century ideologues of absolute music may have worked hard to make musical appreciation a purely mental experience, but this was hard work precisely because most listeners didn't listen to music this way, however much they wanted to. Even high music making and listening remained a physical as well as a 'spiritual' activity, a sensual as well as a cognitive experience; to enjoy music of all sorts is to feel it.

At the same time, musical pleasure is never just a matter of feeling; it is also a matter of judgement. Take the postmodern reading of contemporary pop in terms of pastiche. Digital technology has certainly speeded up the process in which composition means quotation, but what we need to consider here are not so much the specific texts that result, as the way our attention is drawn to the *performance* of quotation. On rap tracks, for instance, far from musical authority being dissipated into fragments and second-hand sounds it is enhanced by the attention drawn to the quoting act itself. As Paul Gilroy suggests, 'the aesthetic rules that govern it are premised on a dialect of rescuing appropriation and recombination that creates special pleasures'. Pleasures in which 'aesthetic stress is laid upon the sheer social and cultural distance that formerly separated the diverse elements now dislocated into novel meanings by their provocative aural juxtaposition', and in which the continuing importance of performance is 'emphasised by [tracks'] radically unfinished forms'.<sup>20</sup>

Hip-hop, in other words, with its cut-ups, its scratches, breaks and samples, is best understood as producing not new texts but new ways of performing texts, new ways of performing *the making of meaning*. The pleasure of montage comes from the act of juxtaposition rather than from the labour of interpretation – and for the listener and dancer too, the fun lies in the process not the result. Not for nothing is rap a voice-based form with an exceptionally strong sense of presence. The aesthetic question about this postmodern music, at least, concerns not meanings and their interpretation – identity translated into discursive forms which have to be decoded – but *mutual enactment*, identity produced *in performance*.

## Space, time and stories

It is conventional, nowadays, in the academy at least, to divide the arts into separate categories such that the performing arts (theatre, dance and music) are differentiated from the fine arts (literature, painting, sculpture) and, on the whole, the performing arts are taken to be inferior to the fine arts, incapable of providing such rich aesthetic experience or social commentary. This is a relatively recent hierarchy, an effect of nineteenth-century conventions, the impact of Romanticism, the simultaneous



emphases on art as individual expression and as private property. 'High' art was thus institutionalized by the bourgeoisie as a transcendent, asocial, experience (in the contemplative bank-like setting of the gallery and the concert hall, the museum and the library).

In the eighteenth century, with its concern for rhetoric and oratory, the distinction between the performing and the fine arts was not so clear and there were ways in which the former were clearly superior to the latter. One way of thinking about the contrast here is to see the fine arts as being organized around the use of space, and the performing arts as organized around the use of time. In spatial arts value is embodied in an object, a text; the analytic emphasis is on structure – a detached, 'objective' reading is possible, and artistic meaning can be extricated from the work's formal qualities. In temporal arts the value of the work is experienced as something momentary, and the analytical emphasis is on process; 'subjective' reading is necessary – a reading taking account of one's own immediate response – and the work's artistic meaning lies in that response, the work's rhetorical qualities.

The first point to make about such distinctions is that they do not, in fact, describe different art forms so much as different approaches to art forms, different ways of framing 'the aesthetic experience', different assumptions about what is artistically valuable or meaningful. The nineteenth century argument that art was 'timeless' meant, then, an attempt to objectify all art, the performing arts too; one effect was to redefine music as a musical object, to put the analytic emphasis on the work, the score, rather than on its performance. And, given that to be 'music' the score had to be performed, the performance itself was also objectified, made the object of repeated performance, such that the tradition, the history of performance could be claimed as defining music's meaning, rather than the immediate effect, which was, by its nature, inevitably distorted by social, historical and material exigencies.

This process of objectification was also a process of academicization (hence, eventually, Milton Babbitt), as art became an object of study, and scholars became guardians of its traditional meaning, as they had always been in matters of religion and law. Here too the emphasis was, by necessity (the necessity of what can be stored and taught), on the qualities of a work in space, structural qualities, rather than on the qualities of a work in time, the qualities of immediacy, emotion, sweat – suspect terms in both the library and the classroom.

It should be stressed too, though, that what I'm describing here is a discursive process, an idealistic attempt to grasp an experience through a particular evaluative framework which was not, and perhaps could not be, entirely successful. In the end, how people (or, rather, critics and scholars) talked about music became detached from how people (musicians and listeners) felt about it. There was always an excess in musical experience, something unreasonable, something that *got away*. And if it is relatively easy to illustrate the problems of treating temporal arts in

spatial terms (analysing a score or a playscript is not, in the end, to treat the experience of music or drama), it is just as important to note that the 'spatial' arts also have temporal elements. We do, after all, experience books in time; poems too have a beginning, a middle and an end. Reading is a process, and an emotional process at that; oratory is an aspect of the fine art experience too.<sup>21</sup>

The linking concept here is narrative – structured time, temporal space: if narrative gives the fine arts their dynamism, it gives the performing arts their structure. Musical pleasure is also a narrative pleasure, even when the music is at its most abstract – compare Greg Sandow's response to Milton Babbitt cited earlier to Greg Tate's appreciation of Cecil Taylor:

Someone once said that while Coleman Hawkins gave the jazz saxophone a voice, Lester Young taught it how to tell a story. That is, the art of personal confession is one jazz musicians must master before they can do justice by their tradition. I couldn't relate to Cecil's music until I learned to hear the story he was shaping out of both black tradition and his complex 'life as an American Negro'.<sup>22</sup>

For Tate, as for other jazz writers, the 'story' in music describes an entanglement of aesthetics and ethics; such a narrative is necessary to any claim that art has something to do with life. A good jazz performance, that is to say (like any good musical performance), depends on rhetorical truth, on the musicians' ability to convince and persuade the listener that what they are saying matters. This is not a matter of representation or 'imitation' or ideology but draws, rather, on the African-American tradition of 'signifying'; it puts into play an emotional effect, a collusion between the performer and an audience which is engaged rather than detached, knowing rather than knowledgeable.

This is the reason why popular music (and I don't believe the argument is confined to African-derived forms, though it does help to explain their remarkable global impact) must be understood not to represent values but to embody them. The point is well made in Christopher Waterman's study of *jùjú*:

*Jùjú* history suggests that the role of musical style in the enactment of identity makes it not merely a reflexive but also a potentially *constitutive* factor in the patterning of cultural values and social interaction. Yoruba musicians, responding creatively to changes in the Nigerian political economy, fashioned a mode of expression that enacted, in music, language, and behaviour, a syncretic metaphoric image of an ideal social order, cosmopolitan yet firmly rooted in autochthonous tradition. This dynamic style configuration, consonant with Yoruba ideologies of the 'open hierarchy' as an ideal pattern of aesthetic and social organization, allowed *jùjú* performance to play a role in the stereotypic reproduction of 'deep' Yoruba values during a period of pervasive economic and political change.<sup>23</sup>

This echoes Paul Gilroy's comments on the ways in which in the history of black culture, 'the politics of trans-figuration strives in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unrepresentable'. If the politics of fulfilment, in pursuit of rational western politics,

seeks to 'assimilate the semiotic, verbal and textual', the politics of transfiguration 'pushes towards the mimetic, dramatic and performative'. Hence 'the traditions of performance that continue to characterize the production and reception of African diaspora musics'.<sup>24</sup> Gilroy notes that

The power of music in developing our struggles by communicating information, organising consciousness and testing out, deploying, or amplifying the forms of subjectivity which are required by political agency, individual and collective, defensive and transformational, demands attention to both the formal attributes of this tradition of expression and its distinctive *moral* basis. . . . In the simplest possible terms, by posing the world as it is against the world as the racially subordinated would like it to be, this musical culture supplies a great deal of the courage required to go on living in the present.<sup>25</sup>

Gilroy thus suggests that 'the history of black music enables us to trace something of the means through which the unity of ethics and politics has been reproduced as a form of folk knowledge', and if music thus may 'conjure up and enact the new modes of friendship, happiness and solidarity that are consequent on the overcoming of the racial oppression on which modernity and the duality of rational western progress as excessive barbarity relied', it also conjures up and enacts dialogue, argument, call and response: 'lines between self and other are blurred and special forms of pleasure are created as a result'. Gilroy quotes Ralph Ellison on jazz:

There is in this a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment . . . springs from a contest in which the artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity; as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition. Thus because jazz finds its very life in improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazz man must lose his identity even as he finds it.<sup>26</sup>

But while music is thus particularly important in the complex history of black identities, this use of music, as that aesthetic process through which we discover ourselves by forging our relations to others, is not confined to black cultures. In Britain, for example, white listeners have long been engaged in their own enactments of black musical values. Take Brian Jackson's 1960s description of the importance of the Huddersfield Jazz Club to its displaced working-class grammar school girls and boys:

If the life of New Orleans was an exaggerated image of working-class life, the stimulating generalized emotions of jazz were a hazy image of what the world of art could offer.

Jackson notes the importance of the jazz 'solo' for these self-conscious individualists as they struggled to make music for themselves (solos in which no one else in the club even feigned interest), but he also notes how

jazz was used in Huddersfield as a musical practice in which to stage an understanding of collectivity:

It didn't lead to social promotion or to high art – there was no 'transfer' at all from jazz to classical music. Its function was to hold together and sustain a steady stream of post-1944 Act pupils. As a floating community, it became admirably and intricately designed for that purpose – and the feeling of how to do *this*, was the real inheritance from working-class Huddersfield.<sup>27</sup>

To turn to a different world altogether, Philip Bohlman explores the role of chamber music – another form of small-scale making-music-together – in shaping German Jewish identity in Israel, in both articulating cultural values and enacting collective commitment to them (from the audience as much as from the performers). In this context the scored basis of 'absolute music' was as ethically binding as the improvised basis of jazz:

Viewed from a performative perspective, the absence of specific meaning within the text allows meaning to accrue only upon performance, thus empowering any group – for example, an ethnic community – to shape what it will from absolute music. A gap therefore forms between the content of chamber-music repertoires and the style of performance situations. It is within the mutability allowed by style that differences in meaning and function of music arise, thereby transforming chamber music into a genre that can follow numerous historical paths. These paths may be as different as, say, the ethnic associations in Israel and the practices of amateur music making found in many American academic communities. Clearly, such cases reflect different attitudes towards both the repertoires of chamber music and the communities that lend the music its distinctive functions and form its different histories.<sup>28</sup>

## From aesthetics to ethics

Underlying all the other distinctions critics continue to draw between 'serious' (European-derived) and 'popular' (African-derived) music is an assumption about the sources of musical value. Serious music, it seems, matters because it transcends social forces; popular music is aesthetically uninteresting because it is determined by them (because it is 'functional' or 'utilitarian'). The sociological approach to musical value has thus meant uncovering the social forces concealed in the talk of 'transcendent' values; the populist reversal of the high/low hierarchy has meant praising the 'functional' at the expense of the 'aesthetic'.

My concern is the opposite: to take seriously the aesthetic value (the aesthetic function, as one might say) of all musics, popular music too. The sociologist of contemporary popular music is faced with a body of songs, records, stars and styles which exist because of a series of decisions, made by both producers and consumers, about what is 'good'. Musicians write tunes and play solos and program computers; producers choose from different mixes; record companies and radio and television programmers decide what will be released and played; consumers buy one record

rather than another and concentrate their attention on particular genres. The result of all these apparently individual decisions is certainly a pattern of success, taste and style which can be explained sociologically, but it is also a pattern that is rooted in individual judgement.

We can, as I suggested earlier, trace such judgements back to material conditions easily enough, by way, for example, of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of taste. We can point to the cultural capital embedded in technique and technology: people produce and consume the music they are capable of producing and consuming; different social groups possess different sorts of knowledge and skill, share different cultural histories, and so make music differently. Musical tastes do correlate with class cultures and subcultures; musical styles are linked to specific age groups; we can take for granted the connections of ethnicity and sound. This is the sociological common sense of rock criticism and the idea of authenticity:

There is not a British rocker on earth who could ever turn Jack Scott's chorus-line,

Lonesome Mary's cuttin' out  
Hate to be around when Johnnie finds this out

into anything approximating a convincing statement.<sup>29</sup>

But while we can thus describe (or assume) general patterns of musical taste and use, the precise fit (or homology) between sounds and social groups remains unclear, which is why commonsense sociology has had to deploy its second set of arguments, about the match of music's *formal* and social functions. This approach is most sophisticated in ethnomusicology, in anthropological studies of traditional and folk musics which are explained musically (in terms of their formal and sonic qualities) by reference to their use – in dance, in rituals, for political mobilization, to solemnize events. Similar points are made about contemporary popular music, though its most important social function is assumed to be commercial – the starting analytical assumption is that the music is made to sell; research focuses on who makes marketing decisions and why, on the construction of taste and 'taste publics'. The appeal of the music itself, the reason why people like it, and what, more importantly, 'liking it' means, is buried under an analysis of sales strategies, demographics, the anthropology of consumption.

From the 'consumers' perspective, though, it is obvious that people play the music they do because it 'sounds good', and even if musical tastes are, inevitably, an effect of social conditioning and commercial manipulation, people still explain them to themselves in terms of something special. Everyone in the pop world is aware of the social forces that determine 'normal' pop music and 'normal' pop tastes, but a good record or song or sound is precisely one that transcends those forces.

From this perspective, pop music becomes the more valuable aesthetically the more independent it is of the social forces that organize it, and one way of reading this is to suggest that pop value is thus dependent on

something outside pop, is rooted in the person, the *auteur*, the community or the subculture that lies behind it. Critical judgement means measuring performers' 'truth' to the experience or feelings they are describing or expressing. The problem is that it is, in practice, very difficult to say who or what it is that pop music expresses or how we recognize, independently of their music, the 'authentically' creative performers. Musical 'truth' is precisely that which is *created* by 'good music'; we hear the music as authentic (or rather, we describe the musical experience we value in terms of authenticity) and such a response is then read back, spuriously, on to the music-making (or listening) process. An aesthetic judgement of effect is translated into a sociological description of cause: good music must be music made and appreciated by good people. But the question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about the people who play and use it but how does it create them as a people, as a web of identities? If we start from the assumption that pop is expressive, then we get bogged down in the search for the 'real' artist or emotion or belief lying behind it. But popular music is popular not because it reflects something or authentically articulates some sort of popular taste or experience, but because it creates our understanding of what 'popularity' is, because it places us in the social world in a particular way. What we should be examining, in other words, is not how true a piece of music is to something else, but how it sets up the idea of 'truth' in the first place – successful pop music is music which defines its own aesthetic standard.

## The imagined self

The experience of pop music is an experience of identity: in responding to a song, we are drawn, haphazardly, into emotional alliances with the performers and with the performers' other fans. Because of its qualities of abstractness, music is, by nature, an individualizing form. We absorb songs into our own lives and rhythm into our own bodies; they have a looseness of reference that makes them immediately accessible. At the same time, and equally significantly, music is obviously collective. We hear things as music because their sounds obey a more or less familiar cultural logic, and for most music listeners (who are not themselves music makers) this logic is out of our control. There is a mystery to our own musical tastes. Some records and performers work for us, others do not – we know this without being able to explain it. Somebody else has set up the conventions; they are clearly social and clearly apart from us. Music, whether teenybop for young female fans or jazz or rap for African-Americans or nineteenth century chamber music for German Jews in Israel, stands for, symbolizes *and* offers the immediate experience of collective identity.

If narrative is the basis of music pleasure, to put this another way, it is

also central to our sense of identity. Identity, that is to say, comes from the outside not the inside; it is something we put or try on, not something we reveal or discover. As Jonathan Ree puts it,

The problem of personal identity, one may say, arises from play-acting and the adoption of artificial voices; the origins of distinct personalities, in acts of personation and impersonation.<sup>30</sup>

And Ree goes on to argue that personal identity is therefore 'the accomplishment of a storyteller, rather than the attribute of a character'. He draws on Sartre and Ricoeur in suggesting that narrative is 'the unity of a life', not something achieved through some essential continuity but rather through a 'recurring *belief* in personal coherence, a belief necessarily 'renewed in the telling of tales'.

The concept of narrative, in other words, is not so much a justification of the idea of personal identity, as an elucidation of its structure as an inescapable piece of make-believe.<sup>31</sup>

This argument has two immediate implications. First, identities are, inevitably, shaped according to narrative forms. As Kwame Anthony Appiah points out,

Invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted, structured by conventions of narrative to which the world never quite manages to conform.<sup>32</sup>

But if identity is always somehow constrained by imaginative forms, it is also freed by them: the personal is the cultural, and, as Mark Slobin suggests, we are not necessarily restricted in terms of such cultural imagination by social circumstances: 'We all grow up with *something*, but we can choose just about *anything* by way of expressive culture.'<sup>33</sup>

In broad terms we may be able to relate social and cultural identities, to finger social and cultural 'theft'. 'The blackface performer,' writes Eric Lott, 'is in effect a perfect metaphor for one culture's ventriloquial self-expression through the art forms of someone else's.'<sup>34</sup> But at an individual level, biology, demography and sociology seem less determining. As I have argued elsewhere, with reference to literary forms and social identities (black writing, women's writing, gay writing, etc.), the question is not 'simply whether such writing can be mapped back onto the reader (reading as a woman, a man, a black) but whether literary transformation – the process of writing *and* reading – doesn't subvert all sociological assumptions about cultural position and cultural feeling'.<sup>35</sup>

And this seems an even more obvious question about popular music, of which the dominant forms in all contemporary societies have originated at the social margins – among the poor, the migrant, the rootless, the 'queer'.<sup>36</sup> Anti-essentialism is a necessary part of musical experience, a necessary consequence of music's failure to register the separations of body and mind on which such 'essential' differences (between black and white, female and male, gay and straight, nation and nation) depend. Hence Paul Gilroy's scepticism about rap nationalism: 'How does a form

which flaunts and glories in its own malleability as well as its transnational character become interpreted as an expression of some authentic Afro-American essence?'<sup>37</sup>

If Gilroy remembers that growing up he was 'provided by black music with a means to gain proximity to the sources of feeling from which our local conceptions of blackness were assembled', he also realizes that 'the most important lesson music still has to teach us is that its inner secrets and its ethnic rules can be taught and learned'.<sup>38</sup> And as a child and young man I also learned something of myself – took my identity – from black music (just as I did later, in the disco, from gay music). What secrets was I being taught?

First, that an identity is always already an ideal, what we would like to be, not what we are. And in taking pleasure from black or gay or female music I don't thus identify as black or gay or female (I don't actually experience these sounds as 'black music' or 'gay music' or 'women's voices') but, rather, participate in imagined forms of democracy and desire. The aesthetic, as Colin Campbell has argued, these days describes a quality of experience rather than a state of being, and the popular aesthetic experience is an effect of 'modern autonomous imaginative hedonism':

The pleasures which self-illusory hedonism supplies are largely aesthetic and emotional, the scenes created in imagination having the characteristics of both works of art and drama.<sup>39</sup>

In his classic account of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman thus emphasizes Simone de Beauvoir's point that in dressing and making up, a woman

does not present *herself* to observation; she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there – that is, the character she represents, but is not. It is this identification with something unreal, fixed, perfect as the hero of a novel, as a portrait or a bust, that gratifies her; she strives to identify herself with this figure and thus to seem to herself to be stabilized, justified in her splendour.<sup>40</sup>

But if musical identity is, then, always fantastic, idealizing not just oneself but also the social world one inhabits, it is, secondly, always also real, enacted in musical activities. Music making and music listening, that is to say, are bodily matters, involve what one might call *social movements*. In this respect, musical pleasure is not derived *from* fantasy – it is not *mediated* by daydreams – but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be. In his discussion of black identity, Paul Gilroy thus argues that it is neither 'simply a social and political category' nor 'a vague and utterly contingent construction' but 'remains the outcome of practical activity: language, gesture, bodily significations, desires'.

These significations are condensed in musical performance, although it does not, of course, monopolise them. In this context, they produce the imaginary



effect of an internal racial core or essence by acting on the body through the specific mechanisms of identification and recognition that are produced in the intimate interaction of performer and crowd. This reciprocal relationship serves as a strategy and an ideal communicative situation even when the original makers of the music and its eventual consumers are separated in space and time or divided by the technologies of sound production and the commodity form which their art has sought to resist.<sup>41</sup>

And once we start looking at different musical genres we can begin to document the different ways in which music works *materially* to give people different identities, to place them in different social groups. Whether we're talking about Finnish dance halls in Sweden, Irish pubs in London, or Indian film music in Trinidad, we're dealing not just with nostalgia for 'traditional sounds', not just with a commitment to 'different' songs, but also with experience of alternative modes of social interaction. Communal values can only thus be grasped, as musical aesthetics *in action*.<sup>42</sup> Helen Myers, for example, quotes Channu, a village singer in Felicity, Trinidad:

Indian music sounds much sweeter. Whatever the Indian sing and whatever music they play, they don't do it of a joke. It's serious thing for whoever understand it. It brings such serious feelings to you. Calypso they only sing. You might hear calypso. You will just feel happy to jump up. But if you hear a real technical piece of Indian music, you might sit down stiff and still, and you might be contrasting so much that you mightn't know when it start or when it finish.<sup>43</sup>

For these Trinidadians, 'Indianized pieces, borrowed from a twentieth-century urban Hindi culture' are therefore heard as 'more authentic than the local Westernized repertory, a reflection of their New World heritage'. Authenticity in this context is a quality not of the music as such (how it is actually made), but of the story it's heard to tell, the narrative of musical interaction in which the listeners place themselves.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives. Such a fusion of imaginative fantasy and bodily practice marks also the integration of aesthetics and ethics. John Miller Chernoff has thus eloquently demonstrated how among African musicians an aesthetic judgement (this sounds good) is necessarily also an ethical judgement (this is good). The issue is 'balance': 'the quality of rhythmic relationships' describes a quality of social life. 'In this sense, style is another word for the perception of relationships.'

Without balance and coolness, the African musician loses aesthetic command, and the music abdicates its social authority, becoming hot, intense, limited, pretentious, overly personal, boring, irrelevant, and ultimately alienating.

And

As the dance gives visible form to the music, so too does the dance give full and visible articulation to the ethical qualities which work through the music, balance in the disciplined expression of power in relationship.<sup>45</sup>

Identity is thus necessarily a matter of ritual, it describes one's place in a dramatized pattern of relationships – one can never really express oneself 'autonomously'. Self-identity is cultural identity; claims to individual difference depend on audience appreciation, on shared performing and narrative rules. As Appiah puts it:

The problem of who I really am is raised by the facts of what I appear to be: and though it is essential to the mythology of authenticity that this fact should be obscured by its prophets, what I appear to be is fundamentally how I appear to others and only derivatively how I appear to myself.<sup>46</sup>

In her study of music making in (the very white) Milton Keynes, *The Hidden Musicians*, Ruth Finnegan persuasively argues that these days people's voluntary, leisure activities are more likely to provide their 'pathways' through life than their paid employment. It was in their musical activities that her city dwellers found their most convincing narratives; it was in their aesthetic judgements that they expressed their most deep-seated ethical views.<sup>47</sup>

This is, perhaps ironically, to come back to music via a spatial metaphor. But what makes music special – what makes it special for identity – is that it defines a space without boundaries (a game without frontiers). Music is thus the cultural form best able both to cross borders – sounds carry across fences and walls and oceans, across classes, races and nations – and to define places; in clubs, scenes, and raves, listening on headphones, radio and in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us.

## Notes

1 Gina Arnold, *Route 666. On the Road to Nirvana*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1993, p. 228.

2 Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind*, Harper Collins, London and New York, 1992, p. 153.

3 John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1979, p. 167.

4 Although the best version of the argument remains the earliest, Paul Willis's *Profane Culture*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978.

5 Quoted in Eric Lott, *Love and Theft. Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1993, p. 91.

6 For the debate about race and rap see, for example, Greg Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk. Essays on Contemporary America*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1992. For the debate about gender and music see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings. Music, Gender and Sexuality*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991. For discussion of national musical identities see Deanna Robinson, Elizabeth Buck and Marlene Cuthbert, *Music at the Margins*, Sage, London, 1991.

7 For an interesting answer to the last question see Tony Mitchell, 'World music and the popular music industry: an Australian view', *Ethnomusicology*, 37, 3, 1993, pp. 309–38.

8 Or, as Charles Rosen put it more recently (and with reference to sexuality rather than class): 'I presume – or I should like to presume – that a rapist and a foot fetishist would write very different kinds of music, but I am not sure how we would go about confirming this'. ('Music à la mode', *New York Review of Books*, 23 June 1994, p. 60).

9 For an interesting answer to these questions, see Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatic Aesthetics*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1992, Chapter 8. Shusterman, like many commentators, takes rap to be the postmodern articulation of popular music. He argues (p. 202) that rap is 'postmodern' in its appropriation, recycling and eclectic mixing of previously existing sounds and styles; in its enthusiastic embrace of technology and mass culture; in its emphasis on the localized and temporal rather than the universal and eternal. By this definition, though, other pop forms besides rap could be suitably labelled postmodern, and Shusterman's most interesting argument about rap does not really raise the spectre of postmodernism at all! Rap, he suggests (pp. 212–13) is unusual in uniting the aesthetic and the cognitive, the political-functional and the artistic-expressive; rap is dynamic culturally (p. 235) because of the formal tension it expresses between innovation and coherence.

10 Mark Slobin, *Subculture Sounds. Micromusic of the West*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover and London, 1993, p. 41.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

12 I develop this argument at much greater length in my *Performing Rites*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, forthcoming.

13 For an influential and pioneering approach to music in this way see Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1982.

14 Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, p. 36. (original emphasis).

15 Philip V. Bohlman, 'Of Yekkes and chamber music in Israel: ethnomusicological meaning in western music history', in Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman and Daniel M. Neuman (eds), *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1991, pp. 266–7.

16 See *ibid.*, p. 255.

17 Frank Kogan, 'Spoonie Gee', *Reasons for Living*, 2, June 1986.

18 Gregory Sandow, 'A fine madness', *Village Voice*, 16 March 1982, pp. 76, 93.

19 For an excellent discussion of the issues here see Andrew Goodwin, 'Popular music and postmodern theory', *Cultural Studies*, 5, 2, 1990, pp. 174–90.

20 See Paul Gilroy, 'Sounds authentic: black music, ethnicity, and the challenge of a changing same', *Black Music Research Journal*, 10, 2, 1990, pp. 128–31.

21 This is most obvious in poetry, but for an interesting argument about painting picking up on some of the points raised here see Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 and the useful review by Sandra Kemp in *Journal of Literature and Theology*, 7, 3, 1993, pp. 302–5.

22 Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk*, p. 25.

23 Christopher A. Waterman, 'Jùjú history: toward a theory of sociomusical practice', in Blum et al. (eds), *Ethnomusicology*, pp. 66–7.

24 Gilroy, 'Sounds authentic', p. 113. Gilroy suggests that the concepts of 'dramaturgy, enunciation and gesture' ('the Pre- and anti-discursive constituents of black metacommunications') thus need to be added to concerns for textuality and narrative in black cultural history.

25 Paul Gilroy, 'It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at . . .', *Third Text*, 13, 1990–1, pp. 10, 12.

26 Quoted *ibid.*, pp. 13–14. And see Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, Chapter 2, for an extensive discussion of what he calls 'the conversational mode' of African music.

27 Brian Jackson, *Working Class Community*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1968, pp. 129, 131.

28 Bohlman, 'Of Yekkes and chamber music', pp. 259-60. For the practices of amateur music making in American academic communities, see Robert A. Stebbins, 'Music among friends: the social networks of amateur musicians', *International Review of Sociology*, 12, 1976.

29 Timothy D'Arch Smith, *Peepin' in a Seafood Store. Some Pleasures of Rock Music*, Michael Russell (Publishing), Wilby, Norwich, 1992, p. 23.

30 Jonathan Ree, 'Funny voices: stories, "punctuation" and personal identity', *New Literary History*, 21, 1990, p. 1055.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 1058.

32 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House*, Methuen, London, 1992, p. 283.

33 Slobin, *Subculture Sounds*, p. 55.

34 Lott, *Love and Theft*, p. 92.

35 Simon Frith, *Literary Studies as Cultural Studies. Whose Literature? Whose Culture?*, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1991, p. 21.

36 I take this point from Veronica Doubleday's review of Martin Stokes's *The Arabesk Debate in Popular Music*, 13, 2, 1994, pp. 231-3.

37 Gilroy, 'It ain't', p. 6.

38 Gilroy, 'Sounds authentic', p. 134.

39 Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p. 246.

40 Quoted (from *The Second Sex*) in Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Allen Lane, London, 1969 [1959], p. 65.

41 Gilroy, 'Sounds authentic', p. 127.

42 This point is emerging in interesting ways from Sara Cohen's current research on ethnic musical communities in Liverpool. See, for example, Sara Cohen, 'Localizing sound: music, place and social mobility', in Will Staw (ed.), *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, Centre for Research in Canadian Cultural Industries and Institutions, Montreal, 1995, pp. 61-7.

43 Myers, 'Indian music in Felicity', in Blum et al. *Ethnomusicology*, p. 236.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

45 Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, pp. 125, 140, 144.

46 Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 121.

47 Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989. And cf. Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs. On the Margin between Work and Leisure*, Sage, Beverly Hills and London, 1979.

# Identity, Genealogy, History

Nikolas Rose

To breed an animal with the right to make promises. How much all this presupposes! A man who wishes to dispose of his future in this manner must first have learned to separate necessary from accidental acts; to think causally; to see distant things as though they were near at hand; to distinguish means from ends. In short, he must have become not only calculating but himself calculable, regular even to his own perception, if he is to stand pledge for his own future.

F. W. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (Second Essay: 'On the origins and genesis of human responsibility')

How should we do the history of the person?<sup>1</sup> What might be the relationship between such an historical endeavour and current concerns in social and political theory with such issues as identity, self, body, desire? More significantly, perhaps, what light might historical investigations cast upon current ethical preoccupations with human beings as subjects of autonomy and freedom, or alternatively, as bound to a national, ethnic, cultural or territorial identity, and the political programmes, strategies and techniques to which they are linked?

I would like to suggest a particular approach to this issue, an approach which I term 'the genealogy of subjectification'.<sup>2</sup> The phrasing is awkward but, I think, important. Its importance lies, in part, in indicating what such an undertaking is *not*. On the one hand, it is not an attempt to write the history of changing ideas of the person, as they have figured within philosophy, literature, culture, etc. Historians, philosophers and anthropologists have long engaged in the writing of such narratives, and no doubt they are significant and instructive (e.g. Taylor, 1989 and cf. the very different approach advocated in Tully, 1993). But it is unwise to assume that one can derive, from an account of notions of the human being in cosmology, philosophy, aesthetics or literature, evidence about the organization of the mundane everyday practices and presuppositions that shape the conduct of human beings in particular sites and practices (Dean, 1994). A genealogy of subjectification is, therefore, not a history of ideas: its domain of investigation is that of practices and techniques, of thought as it seeks to make itself *technical*.

Equally my approach needs to be distinguished from attempts to write

the history of the person or self as a psychological entity, to see how different ages produce humans with different psychological characteristics, different emotions, beliefs, pathologies. Such a project for a history of the self is certainly imaginable and something like this aspiration shapes a number of recent studies, some of which I discuss below. But such analyses presuppose a way of thinking that is itself an outcome of history, one that emerges only in the nineteenth century. For it is only at this historical moment, and in a limited and localized geographical space, that a way of thinking emerges in which human being is understood in terms of persons each equipped with an inner domain, a 'psychology', which is structured by the interaction of biographical experience with certain laws or processes characteristic of human psychology.

A genealogy of subjectification takes this individualized, interiorized, totalized and psychologized understanding of what it is to be human as delineating the site of a historical problem, not providing the grounds for a historical narrative. Such a genealogy works towards an account of the ways in which this modern 'regime of the self' emerges, not as the outcome of any gradual process of enlightenment, in which humans, aided by the endeavours of science, come at last to recognize their true nature, but out of a number of contingent and altogether less refined and dignified practices and processes. To write such a genealogy is to seek to unpick the ways in which 'the self' that functions as a regulatory ideal in so many aspects of our contemporary forms of life – not merely in our passional relations with one another, but in our projects of life planning, our ways of managing industrial and other organizations, our systems of consumption, many of our genres of literature and aesthetic production – is a kind of 'irreal' plan of projection, put together somewhat contingently and haphazardly at the intersection of a range of distinct histories – of forms of thought, techniques of regulation, problems of organization and so forth.

## **Dimensions of our 'relation to ourselves'**

A genealogy of subjectification is a genealogy of what one might term, following Michel Foucault, 'our relation to ourselves'.<sup>3</sup> Its field of investigation comprises the kinds of attention that humans have directed towards themselves and others in different places, spaces and times. To put this rather more grandly, one might say that this was a genealogy of 'being's relation to itself' and the technical forms that this has assumed. The human being, that is to say, is that kind of creature whose ontology is historical. And the history of human being, therefore, requires an investigation of the intellectual and practical techniques that have comprised the instruments through which being has historically constituted itself: it is a matter of analysing 'the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought – and the practices on

the basis of which these problematizations are formed' (Foucault, 1986a: 11; Jambet, 1992). The focus of such a genealogy, therefore, is not 'the historical construction of the self' but the history of *the relations* which human beings have established with themselves. These relations are constructed and historical, but they are not to be understood by locating them in some amorphous domain of culture. On the contrary, they are addressed from the perspective of 'government' (Foucault, 1991; cf. Burchell et al., 1991). Our relation with ourselves, that is to say, has assumed the form it has because it has been the object of a whole variety of more or less rationalized schemes, which have sought to shape our ways of understanding and enacting our existence as human beings in the name of certain objectives – manliness, femininity, honour, modesty, propriety, civility, discipline, distinction, efficiency, harmony, fulfilment, virtue, pleasure – the list is as diverse and heterogeneous as it is interminable.

One of the reasons for stressing this point is to distinguish my approach from a number of recent analyses that have, explicitly or implicitly, viewed changing forms of subjectivity or identity as consequences of wider social and cultural transformations – modernity, late modernity, the risk society (Bauman, 1991; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Lash and Friedman, 1992). Of course, this work continues a long tradition of narratives, stretching back at least to Jacob Burckhardt, that have written histories of the rise of the individual as a consequence of a general social transformation from tradition to modernity, feudalism to capitalism, *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, mechanical to organic solidarity and so forth (Burckhardt, 1990). These kinds of analysis regard changes in the ways in which human beings understand and act upon themselves as the outcome of 'more fundamental' historical events located elsewhere – in production regimes, in technological change, in alterations in demography or family forms, in 'culture'. No doubt events in each of these areas have significance in relation to the problem of subjectification. But however significant they may be, it is important to insist that such changes do not transform ways of being human by virtue of some 'experience' that they produce. Changing relations of subjectification, I want to argue, cannot be established by derivation or interpretation of other cultural or social forms. To explicitly or implicitly assume that they can is to presume the *continuity* of human beings as the subjects of history, essentially equipped with the capacity for endowing meaning (Dean, 1994). But the ways in which humans 'give meaning to experience' have their own history. Devices of 'meaning production' – grids of visualization, vocabularies, norms and systems of judgement – *produce* experience; they are not themselves *produced by* experience (Joyce, 1994). These intellectual techniques do not come ready made, they have to be invented, refined and stabilized, they have to be disseminated and implanted in different ways in different practices – schools, families, streets, workplaces, courtrooms. If we use the term 'subjectification' to designate all those heterogeneous processes and practices by means of which human beings come to relate to themselves

and others as subjects of a certain type, then subjectification has its own history. And the history of subjectification is more practical, more technical and less unified than sociological accounts allow.

Thus a genealogy of subjectification would focus directly upon the *practices* within which human beings have been located in particular 'regimes of the person'. This would not be a continuous history of the self, but rather an account of the diversity of languages of 'personhood' that have taken shape – character, personality, identity, reputation, honour, citizen, individual, normal, lunatic, patient, client, husband, mother, daughter . . . – and the norms, techniques and relations of authority within which these have circulated in legal, domestic, industrial and other practices for acting upon the conduct of persons. Such an investigation might proceed along a number of linked pathways:

### *Problematizations*

Where, how and by whom are aspects of the human being rendered problematic, according to what systems of judgement and in relation to what concerns? To take some pertinent examples, one might consider the ways in which the language of constitution and character comes to operate within the themes of urban decline and degeneracy articulated by psychiatrists, urban reformers and politicians in the last decades of the nineteenth century, or the ways in which the vocabulary of adjustment and maladjustment comes to be used to problematize conduct in sites as diverse as the workplace, the courtroom and the school in the 1920s and 1930s. To pose the matter in this way is to stress the primacy of the pathological over the normal in the genealogy of subjectification – our vocabularies and techniques of the person, by and large, have not emerged in a field of reflection on the normal individual, the normal character, the normal personality, the normal intelligence, but rather, the very notion of normality has emerged out of a concern with types of conduct, thought, expression deemed troublesome or dangerous (Rose, 1985). This is a methodological as much as an epistemological point – in the genealogy of subjectification, pride of place is not occupied by the philosophers reflecting in their studies on the nature of the person, the will, the conscience, morality and the like, but in the mundane practices where conduct has become problematic to others or the self, and in the mundane texts and programmes – on asylum management, medical treatment of women, advisable regimes of child-rearing, new ideas in workplace management, improving one's self-esteem – seeking to render these problems intelligible and, at the same time, manageable.<sup>4</sup>

### *Technologies*

What means have been invented to govern the human being, to shape or fashion conduct in desired directions, and how have programmes sought



to embody these in certain technical forms? The notion of technology may seem antithetical to the domain of human being, such that claims about the inappropriate technologization of humanity form the basis of many a critique. However, our very experience of ourselves as certain sorts of persons – creatures of freedom, of liberty, of personal powers, of self-realization – is the outcome of a range of human technologies, technologies that take modes of being human as their object.<sup>5</sup> Technology, here, refers to any assembly structured by a practical rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal. Human technologies are hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgement, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions about, and objectives for, human beings. One can regard the school, the prison, the asylum as examples of one species of such technologies, those which Foucault termed disciplinary and which operate in terms of a detailed structuring of space, time and relations amongst individuals, through procedures of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgement, through attempts to enfold these judgements into the procedures and judgements which the individual utilizes in order to conduct their own conduct (Foucault, 1977; cf. Markus, 1993 for an examination of the spatial form of such assemblies). A second example of a mobile and multivalent technology is that of the pastoral relation, a relation of spiritual guidance between an authority and each member of their flock, embodying techniques such as confession and self-disclosure, exemplarity and discipleship, enfolded into the person through a variety of schemas of self-inspection, self-suspicion, self-disclosure, self-decipherment and self-nurturing. Like discipline, this pastoral technology is capable of articulation in a range of different forms, in the relation of priest and parishioner, therapist and patient, social worker and client and in the relation of the 'educated' subject to itself. We should not see the disciplinary and pastoral relations of subjectification as opposed historically or ethically – the regimes enacted in schools, asylums and prisons embody both. Perhaps the insistence upon an analytic of human technologies is one of the most distinctive features of the approach I am advocating, an analysis which does not start from the view that the technologizing of human conduct is malign, but rather examines the ways in which human beings have been simultaneously capacitated and governed by their organization within a technological field.

### *Authorities*

Who is accorded or claims the capacity to speak truthfully about humans, their nature and their problems, and what characterizes the truths about persons that are accorded such authority? Through which apparatuses are such authorities authorized – universities, the legal apparatus, churches, politics? To what extent does the authority of authority depend upon a claim to a positive knowledge, to wisdom and virtue, to experience and

practical judgement, to the capacity to resolve conflicts? How are authorities themselves governed – by legal codes, by the market, by the protocols of bureaucracy, by professional ethics? And what then is the relation between authorities and those who are subject to them – priest/parishioner; doctor/patient, manager/employee, therapist/patient . . . ? This focus upon authorities (rather than ‘power’), upon all the diverse persons, things, devices, associations, modes of thought, types of judgement that seek, claim, acquire or are accorded authority, and upon the diversity of ways in which authority is authorized again seems to me to be a distinctive feature of this kind of investigation.

### *Teleologies*

What forms of life are the aims, ideals or exemplars for these different practices for working upon persons: the professional persona exercising a vocation with wisdom and dispassion; the manly warrior pursuing a life of honour through a calculated risking of the body; the responsible father living a life of prudence and moderation; the labourer accepting his or her lot with a docility grounded in a belief in the inviolability of authority or a reward in a life to come; the good wife fulfilling her domestic duties with quiet efficiency and self-effacement; the entrepreneurial individual striving after secular improvements in ‘quality of life’; the passionate lover skilled in the arts of pleasure . . . ? What codes of knowledge support these ideals, and to what ethical valorization are they tied? Against those who suggest that a single model of the person comes to prominence in any specific culture, it is important to stress the heterogeneity and specificity of the ideals or models of personhood deployed in different practices, and the ways in which they are articulated in relation to specific problems and solutions concerning human conduct. It is only from this perspective, I think, that one can identify the peculiarity of those programmatic attempts to install a single model of the individual as the ethical ideal across a range of different sites and practices. For example, the Puritan sects discussed by Weber were unusual in their attempts to ensure that the mode of individual comportment in terms of sobriety, duty, modesty, self and so forth applied to practices as diverse as the enjoyment of popular entertainment, labour and comportment within the home. In our own times, both economics, in the form of a model of economic rationality, and psychology, in the form of a model of the psychological individual, have provided the basis for similar attempts at the unification of life conduct around a single model of appropriate subjectivity. But unification of subjectification has to be seen as an objective of particular programmes, or a presupposition of particular styles of thinking, not a feature of human cultures.

### *Strategies*

How are these procedures for regulating the capacities of persons linked into wider moral, social or political objectives concerning the undesirable

and desirable features of populations, workforce, family, society, etc.? Of particular significance here are the divisions and relations established between modalities for the government of conduct accorded the status of 'political', and those enacted through forms of authority and apparatus deemed non-political – whether these be the technical knowledge of experts, the judicial knowledge of the courts, the organizational knowledge of managers or the 'natural' knowledges of the family and the mother. Typical of those rationalities of government that consider themselves 'liberal' is the simultaneous delimitation of the sphere of the political by reference to the right of other domains – the market, civil society and the family being the three most commonly deployed – and the invention of a range of techniques that would try to act on events in these domains without breaching their autonomy. It is for this reason that knowledges and forms of expertise concerning the internal characteristics of the domains to be governed assume particular importance in liberal strategies and programmes of rule, for these domains are not to be 'dominated' by rule, but must be known, understood and related to in such a way that events within them – productivity and conditions of trade, the activities of civil associations, ways of rearing children and organizing conjugal relations and financial support within household – support, and do not oppose, political objectives.<sup>6</sup> In the case that we are discussing here, the characteristics of persons, as those 'free individuals' upon whom liberalism depends for its political legitimacy and functionality, assume a particular significance. Perhaps one could say that the general strategic field of all those programmes of government that regard themselves as liberal has been defined by the problem of how free individuals can be governed such that they enact their freedom appropriately.

## **The government of others and the government of oneself**

Each of these directions for investigation is inspired, in large measure, by the writings of Michel Foucault. In particular, of course, they arise from Foucault's suggestions concerning a genealogy of the arts of government – where government is conceived of, most generally, as encompassing all those more or less rationalized programmes and strategies for 'the conduct of conduct' – and his conception of governmentality – which refers to the emergence of political rationalities, or mentalities of rule, where rule becomes a matter of the calculated management of the affairs of each and of all in order to achieve certain desirable objectives (Foucault, 1991; see the discussion of the notion of government in Gordon, 1991). Government, here, does not indicate a theory, but rather a certain perspective from which one might make intelligible the diversity of

attempts by authorities of different sorts to act upon the actions of others in relation to objectives of national prosperity, harmony, virtue, productivity, social order, discipline, emancipation, self-realization and so forth. And this perspective is significant also because it directs our attention to the ways in which strategies for the conduct of conduct so frequently operate through trying to shape what Foucault also termed 'technologies of the self' – 'self-steering mechanisms', or the ways in which individuals experience, understand, judge and conduct themselves (Foucault, 1986a, 1986b, 1988). Technologies of the self take the form of the elaboration of certain techniques for the conduct of one's relation with oneself, for example requiring one to relate to oneself epistemologically (know yourself), despotically (master yourself) or in other ways (care for yourself). They are embodied in particular technical practices (confession, diary writing, group discussion, the twelve-steps programme of Alcoholics Anonymous). And they are always practised under the actual or imagined authority of some system of truth and of some authoritative individual, whether these be theological and priestly, psychological and therapeutic or disciplinary and tutelary.

A number of issues arise from these considerations.

The first concerns the issue of ethics itself. In his later writings, Foucault utilized the notion of 'ethics' as a general designation for his investigations into the genealogy of our present forms of 'concern' for the self (Foucault, 1979, 1986a, 1986b; cf. Minson, 1993). Ethical practices, for Foucault, were distinguished from the domain of morality, in that moral systems are, by and large, systems of injunction and interdiction – thou shalt do this or thou shalt not do that – and are most frequently articulated in relation to some relatively formalized code. Ethics, on the other hand, refers to the domain of practical advice as to how one should concern oneself with oneself, make oneself the subject of solicitude and attention, conduct oneself in the world of one's everyday existence. Different cultural periods, Foucault argued, differed in the respective weight that their practices for the regulation of conduct placed upon codified moral injunctions and the practical repertoires of ethical advice. However, one might undertake a genealogy of our contemporary ethical regime which, Foucault suggested, encouraged human beings to relate to themselves as the subject of a 'sexuality', and were enjoined to 'know themselves' through a hermeneutics of the self, to explore, discover, reveal and live in the light of the desires that comprised one's truth. Such a genealogy would disturb the appearance of enlightenment which clothed such a regime, by exploring the way in which certain forms of spiritual practice which could be found in Greek, Roman and early Christian ethics had become incorporated into priestly power, and later into the practices of the educational, medical and psychological type (Foucault, 1986a: 11).

Clearly the approach I have outlined above has derived much from Foucault's arguments on these issues. However, I would wish to develop this argument in a number of respects. First, as has been pointed out

elsewhere, the notion of 'techniques of the self' can be somewhat misleading. The self does not form the transhistorical object of techniques for being human but only one way in which humans have been enjoined to understand and relate to themselves (Hadot, 1992). In different practices, these relations are cast in terms of individuality, character, constitution, reputation, personality and the like which are neither merely *different versions* of a self, nor do they *sum into* a self. Further, the extent to which our contemporary relation to ourselves – inwardness, self-exploration, self-fulfilment and the like – does indeed take the issue of sexuality and desire as its fulcrum must remain an open question for historical investigation. Elsewhere I have suggested that the self, itself, has become the object of valorization, a regime of subjectification in which desire has become freed from its dependence upon the law of an inner sexuality and been transformed into a variety of passions to discover and realize the identity of the self itself (Rose, 1989).

Further, I would suggest, one needs to extend an analysis of the relations between government and subjectification beyond the field of ethics, if by that one means all those styles of relating to oneself that are structured by the divisions of truth and falsity, the permitted and the forbidden. One needs to examine, also, the government of this relation along some other axes.

One of these axes concerns the attempt to inculcate a certain relation to oneself through transformations in 'mentalities' or what one might term 'intellectual techniques' – reading, memory, writing, numeracy and so forth (see, for some powerful examples, Eisenstein, 1979 and Goody and Watt, 1963). For example, especially over the course of the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, one sees the development of a host of projects for the transformation of the intellect in the service of particular objectives, each of which seeks to enjoin a particular relation to the self through the implantation of certain capacities of reading, writing and calculating. One example here would be the way in which, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Republican educators in the United States promoted numeracy, in particular the numerical capacities that they argued would be facilitated by decimalization, in order to generate a particular kind of relation to themselves and their world in those so equipped. A numerate self would be a calculating self, who would establish a prudent relation to the future, to budgeting, to trade, to politics and to life conduct in general (Cline-Cohen, 1982: 148–9).

A second axis would concern corporealities or body techniques. Of course, anthropologists and others have remarked upon the cultural shaping of bodies – comportment, expression of emotion and the like as they differ from culture to culture, and within cultures between genders, ages, status groups and the like. Marcel Mauss provides the classic account of the ways in which the body, as a technical instrument, is organized differently in different cultures – different ways of walking, sitting, digging, marching and so forth (Mauss, 1979; cf. Bourdieu, 1977).

However, a genealogy of subjectification is not concerned with the general problem of the cultural relativity of bodily capacities, but with the ways in which different corporeal regimes have been devised and implanted in rationalized attempts to enjoin a particular relation to the self and to others. Norbert Elias has given many powerful examples of the ways in which explicit codes of bodily conduct – manners, etiquette and the self-monitoring of bodily functions and actions – were enjoined upon individuals in different positions within the apparatus of the court (Elias, 1983; cf. Elias, 1978; Osborne, 1996). Foucault's own studies of the asylum and the prison explore programmes in which the disciplining of the body of the pathological individual not only involved the catching up of that body within an external regime of hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgement, and the imbrication of the body in a molecular regime governing movement in time and space, but also sought to enjoin an internal relation between the pathological individual and his or her body, in which bodily comportment would both manifest and maintain a certain disciplined mastery exercised by the person over themselves (Foucault, 1967, 1977; see also Smith, 1992 for a history of the notion of 'inhibition' and its relation to the manifestation of steadfastness and self-mastery through the exercise of control over the body). An analogous, though substantively very different, relation to the body was a key element in the self-sculpting of a certain aesthetic persona in nineteenth century Europe, embodied in certain styles of dress but also in the cultivation of certain body techniques such as swimming that would produce and display a particular relation to the natural (Sprawson, 1992). Historians of gender have begun to analyse the ways in which the appropriate performance of sexual identity has historically been linked to the inculcation of certain regimes of the body (Butler, 1990). Certain ways of holding oneself, walking, running, holding the head and positioning the limbs, are not merely culturally relative or acquired through gender socialization, but are regimes of the body which seek to subjectify in terms of a certain truth of gender, inscribing a particular relation to oneself in a corporeal regime: prescribed, rationalized and taught in manuals of advice, etiquette and manners, and enjoined by sanctions as well as seductions.

These comments should indicate something of the heterogeneity of the links between the government of others and the government of the self. It is important to stress two further aspects of this heterogeneity. The first concerns the diversity of modes in which a certain relation to oneself is enjoined. There is a temptation to stress the elements of self-mastery and restrictions over one's desires and instincts that are entailed in many regimes of subjectification – the injunction to control or civilize an inner nature that is excessive. Certainly one can see this theme in many nineteenth-century debates on ethics and character for both the ruling order and in the respectable labouring classes – a paradoxical 'despotism of the self' at the heart of liberal doctrines of liberty of the subject (I derive this formulation from Valverde, 1996). But there are many other modes in

which this relation to oneself can be established and, even within the exercise of mastery, a variety of configurations through which one can be encouraged to master oneself. To master one's will in the service of character by the inculcation of habits and rituals of self-denial, prudence and foresight, for example, is different from mastering one's desire by bringing its roots to awareness through a reflexive hermeneutics in order to free oneself from the self-destructive consequences of repression, projection and identification.

Further, the very form of the relation can vary. It can be one of knowledge, as in the injunction to know oneself, which Foucault traces back to the Christian confession and forward to the techniques of psychotherapeutics: here the codes of knowledge are inevitably supplied not by pure introspection but by rendering one's introspection in a particular vocabulary of feelings, beliefs, passions, desires, values or whatever and according to a particular explanatory code derived from some source of authority. Or it can be one of concern and solicitude, as in contemporary projects for the care of the self in which the self is to be nurtured, protected, safeguarded by regimes of diet, stress minimization and self-esteem. Equally, the relation to authority can vary. Consider, for example, some of the changing authority configurations in the government of madness and mental health: the relation of mastery that was exercised between asylum doctor and mad person in late eighteenth century moral medicine; the relation of discipline and institutional authority that obtained between the nineteenth century asylum doctor and the inmate; the relation of pedagogy that obtained between the mental hygienists of the first half of the twentieth century and the children and parents, pupils and teachers, workers and managers, generals and soldiers upon whom they sought to act; the relation of seduction, conversion and exemplarity that obtains between the psychotherapist and the client today.

As will be evident from the above discussion, whilst the relations to oneself enjoined at any one historical moment may resemble one another in various ways – for example the Victorian notion of character was widely dispersed across many different practices – the extent to which this is the case is a matter for empirical investigation. It is not a matter, therefore, of narrating a general history of the idea of the person or self, but of tracing the technical forms accorded to the relation to oneself in various practices – legal, military, industrial, familial, economic. And even within any practice, heterogeneity must be assumed to be more common than homogeneity – consider, for example, the very different configurations of personhood in the legal apparatus at any one moment – the difference between the notion of status and reputation as it functioned in civil proceedings in the nineteenth century and the simultaneous elaboration of a new relation to the law-breaker as a pathological personality in the criminal courts and the prison system (Pasquino, 1991).

If our own present is marked by a certain levelling of these differences,

such that presuppositions concerning human beings in diverse practices share a certain family resemblance – humans as subjects of autonomy, equipped with a psychology aspiring to self-fulfilment and actually or potentially running their lives as a kind of enterprise of themselves – then this is precisely the point of departure for a genealogical investigation. In what ways was this regime of the self put together, under what conditions and in relation to what demands and forms of authority? We have certainly seen a proliferation of expertises of human conduct over the last hundred years: economists, managers, accountants, lawyers, counsellors, therapists, medics, anthropologists, political scientists, social policy experts and the like. But I would argue that the 'unification' of regimes of subjectification has much to do with the rise of one particular form of positive expertise of human being – that of the psy disciplines – and their 'generosity'. By their 'generosity' I mean that, contrary to conventional views of the exclusivity of professional knowledge, psy has been happy, indeed eager, to 'give itself away' – to lend its vocabularies, explanations and types of judgement to other professional groups and to implant them within its clients (Rose, 1992b). The psy disciplines, partly as a consequence of their heterogeneity and lack of a single paradigm, have acquired a peculiar penetrative capacity in relation to practices for the conduct of conduct. They have been able to supply a whole variety of models of selfhood and recipes for action in relation to the government of persons by professionals in different locales. Their potency has been increased by their ability to supplement these practicable qualities with a legitimacy deriving from their claims to tell the truth about human beings. They have disseminated themselves further through their ready translatability into programmes for reshaping the self-steering mechanisms of individuals. It is, of course, true that the psy disciplines are not held publicly in particularly high esteem, and their practitioners are often figures of fun. But one should not be misled by this – it has become impossible to conceive of personhood, to experience one's own or another's personhood, or to govern oneself or others without 'psy'.

Let me return to the issue of the diversity of regimes of subjectification. A further dimension of heterogeneity arises from the fact that ways of governing others are linked not only to the subjectification of the governed, but also to the subjectification of those who would govern conduct. Thus Foucault argues that the problematization of sex between men for the Greeks was linked to the demand that one who would exercise authority over others should first be able to exercise dominion over his own passions and appetites – for only if one was not a slave to oneself was one competent to exercise authority over others (Foucault, 1988: 6–7; cf. Minson, 1993: 20–1). Peter Brown points to the work required of a young man of the privileged classes in the Roman Empire of the second century, who was advised to remove from himself all aspects of 'softness' and 'womanishness' – in his gait, in his rhythms of speech, in his self-control – in order to manifest himself as capable of exercising



authority over others (Brown, 1989: 11). Gerhard Oestreich suggests that the revival of Stoic ethics in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe was a response to the criticism of authority as ossified and corrupt: the virtues of love, trust, reputation, gentleness, spiritual powers, respect for justice and the like were to become the means for authorities to renew themselves (Oestreich, 1982: 87). Stephan Collini has described the novel ways in which the Victorian intellectual classes problematized themselves in terms of such qualities as steadfastness and altruism: they interrogated themselves in terms of a constant anxiety about and infirmity of the will, and found, in certain forms of social and philanthropic work, an antidote to self-doubt (Collini, 1991, discussed in Osborne, 1996). Whilst these same Victorian intellectuals were problematizing all sorts of aspects of social life in terms of moral character, threats to character, weakness of character and the need to promote good character, and arguing that the virtues of character – self-reliance, sobriety, independence, self-restraint, respectability, self-improvement – should be inculcated in others through positive actions of the state and the statesman, they were making themselves the subject of a related, but rather different, ethical work (Collini, 1979: 29ff.). Similarly, throughout the nineteenth century, one sees the emergence of quite novel programmes for the reform of secular authority within the civil service, the apparatus of colonial rule and the organizations of industry and politics, in which the persona of the civil servant, the bureaucrat, the colonial governor will become the target of a whole new ethical regime of disinterest, justice, respect for rules, distinction between the performance of one's office and one's private passions and much more (Weber, 1978: cf. Hunter, 1993a, b, c; Minson, 1993; du Gay, 1994; Osborne, 1994). And, of course, many of those who were subject to the government of these authorities – indigenous officials in the colonies, housewives of the respectable classes, parents, schoolteachers, working men, governesses – were themselves called upon to play their part in the making up of others and to inculcate in them a certain relation to themselves.

From this perspective, it is no longer surprising that human beings often find themselves resisting the forms of personhood that they are enjoined to adopt. 'Resistance' – if by that one means opposition to a particular regime for the conduct of one's conduct – requires no theory of agency. It needs no account of the inherent forces within each human being that love liberty, seek to enhance their own powers or capacities, or strive for emancipation, that are prior to and in conflict with the demands of civilization and discipline. One no more needs a theory of agency to account for resistance than one needs an epistemology to account for the production of truth effects. Human beings are not the unified subjects of some coherent regime of domination that produces persons in the form in which it dreams. On the contrary, they live their lives in a constant movement across different practices that address them in different ways. Within these different practices, persons are addressed as different sorts

of human being, presupposed to be different sorts of human being, acted upon as if they were different sorts of human being. Techniques of relating to oneself as a subject of unique capacities worthy of respect run up against practices or relating to oneself as the target of discipline, duty and docility. The humanist demand that one decipher oneself in terms of the authenticity of one's actions runs up against the political or institutional demand that one abides by the collective responsibility of organizational decision-making even when one is personally opposed to it. The ethical demand to suffer one's sorrows in silence and find a way of 'going on' is deemed problematic from the perspective of a passionate ethic that obliges the person to disclose themselves in terms of a particular vocabulary of emotions and feelings.

Thus the existence of contestation, conflict and opposition in practices which conduct the conduct of persons is no surprise and requires no appeal to the particular qualities of human agency – except in the minimal sense that human being, like all else, exceeds all attempts to think it, simply because, whilst it is necessarily thought it does not exist in the form of thought.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in any one site or locale, humans turn programmes intended for one end to the service of others. One way of relating to oneself comes into conflict with others. For example, psychologists, management reformers, unions and workers have turned the vocabulary of humanistic psychology to account in a criticism of practices of management based upon a psycho-physiological or disciplinary understanding of persons. Reformers of the practices of welfare and medicine have, over the last two decades, turned the notion that human beings are subjects of rights against practices that presuppose human beings as the subjects of care. Out of this complex and contested field of oppositions, alliances and disparities of regimes of subjectification come accusations of inhumanity, criticisms, demands for reform, alternative programmes and the invention of new regimes of subjectification.

To designate some dimensions of these conflicts 'resistance' is itself perspectival: it can only ever be a matter of judgement. It is fruitless to complain, here, that such a perspective gives one no place to stand in the making of ethical critique and in the evaluation of ethical positions – the history of all those attempts to ground ethics that do appeal to some transcendental guarantor is plain enough – they cannot close conflicts over regimes of the person, but simply occupy one more position within the field of contestation (MacIntyre, 1981).

## Folds in the soul

But the question may be asked: are not the kinds of phenomena that I have been discussing of interest precisely *because* they produce us as human beings with a certain kind of subjectivity? This is certainly the path followed by many who have investigated these issues, from Norbert Elias

to contemporary feminist theorists who rely upon psychoanalysis to ground an account of the ways in which certain practices of the self become inscribed within the body and soul of the gendered subject (e.g. Butler, 1993; Probyn, 1993). For some, this path is advocated unproblematically. Elias, for example, did not doubt that human beings were the type of creatures inhabited by a psychoanalytic psychodynamics, and that this would provide the material basis for the inscription of civility into the soul of the social subject (Elias, 1978). I have already suggested that such a view is paradoxical, for it requires us to adopt a particular way of understanding the human being – that carved out at the end of the nineteenth century – as the basis for an investigation of the historicity of being human. For many others, this pathway is required if one is to avoid representing the human being as merely the passive and interminably malleable object of historical processes, if one is to have an account of agency and of resistance, and if one is to be able to find a place to stand in order to evaluate one regime of personhood over and above another (for one example of this argument, see Fraser, 1989). I have suggested that no such theory is required to account for conflict and contestation, and the stable ethical ground apparently provided by any given theory of the nature of human beings is illusory – one has no choice but to enter into a debate which cannot be closed by appeal to the nature of the human being as a subject of rights, of freedom, of autonomy or whatever. Is it possible, then, that one might write a genealogy of subjectification without a metapsychology? I think it is.

Such a genealogy, I suggest, requires only a minimal, weak or thin conception of the human material on which history writes (Patton, 1994). We are not concerned here with the social or historical construction of 'the person' or with the narration of the birth of modern 'self-identity'. Our concern is with the diversity of strategies and tactics of subjectification that have taken place and been deployed in diverse practices at different moments and in relation to different classifications and differentiations of persons. The human being, here, is not an entity with a history, but the target of a multiplicity of types of work, more like a latitude or a longitude at which different vectors of different speeds intersect. The 'interiority' which so many feel compelled to diagnose is not that of a psychological system, but of a discontinuous surface, a kind of infolding of exteriority.

I draw this notion of folding loosely from the work of Gilles Deleuze (1988, 1990, 1992; cf. Probyn, 1993: 128ff.). The concept of the fold or the pleat suggests a way in which we might think of human being without postulating any essential interiority, and thus without binding ourselves to a particular version of the law of this interiority whose history we are seeking to disturb and diagnose. The fold indicates a relation without an essential interior, one in which what is 'inside' is merely an infolding of an exterior. We are familiar with the idea that aspects of the body which we commonly think of as part of its interiority – the digestive tract, the lungs – are no more than the invagination of an outside. This does not prevent

them from being valorized in terms of an apparently immutable body image taken as the norm for our perception of the contours and limits of our corporeality. Perhaps, then, we might think of the grasp that modes of subjectification have upon human beings in terms of such an infolding. Folds incorporate without totalizing, internalize without unifying, collect together discontinuously in the form of pleats making surfaces, spaces, flows and relations.

Within a genealogy of subjectification, that which would be infolded would be anything that can acquire authority: injunctions, advice, techniques, little habits of thought and emotion, an array of routines and norms of being human – the instruments through which being constitutes itself in different practices and relations. These infoldings are partially stabilized to the extent that human beings have come to imagine themselves as the subjects of a biography, to utilize certain 'arts of memory' in order to render this biography stable, to employ certain vocabularies and explanations to make this intelligible to themselves. However, this exposes the limits of the metaphor of the fold. For the lines of these folds do not run through a domain coterminous with the fleshly bounds of the human individual. Human being is emplaced, enacted through a regime of devices, gazes, techniques which extend beyond the limits of the flesh into spaces and assemblies. Memory of one's biography is not a simple psychological capacity, but is organized through rituals of storytelling, supported by artefacts such as photograph albums and so forth. The regimes of bureaucracy are not merely ethical procedures infolded into the soul, but occupy a matrix of offices, files, typewriters, habits of time-keeping, conversational repertoires, techniques of notation. The regimes of passion are not merely affective folds in the soul, but are enacted in certain secluded or valorized spaces, through sensualized equipment of beds, drapes and silks, routines of dressing and undressing, aestheticized devices for providing music and light, regimes of partitioning of time and so forth (Ranum, 1989).

We might thus counterpose a *spatialization* of being to the narrativization of being undertaken by sociologists and philosophers of modernity and postmodernity. That is to say, we need to render being intelligible in terms of the localization of routines, habits and techniques within specific domains of action and value: libraries and studies; bedrooms and bathhouses; courtrooms and schoolrooms, consulting rooms and museum galleries; markets and department stores. The five volumes of *The History of Private Life* compiled under the general editorship of Philippe Ariès and George Duby provide a wealth of examples of the way in which novel human capacities such as styles of writing or sexuality depend upon and give rise to particular forms of spatial organization of the human habitat (Veyne, 1987; Duby, 1988; Chartier, 1989; Perrot, 1990; Prost and Vincent 1991). However, there is nothing privileged about what has come to be termed 'private life' for the emplacement of regimes of subjectification – it is in the factory as much as the kitchen, in the military

as much as the study, in the office as much as the bedroom, that the modern subject has been required to identify his or her subjectivity. To the apparent linearity, unidirectionality and irreversibility of time, we can counterpose the multiplicity of places, planes and practices. And in each of these spaces, repertoires of conduct are activated that are not bounded by the enclosure formed by the human skin or carried in a stable form in the interior of an individual: they are rather webs of tension across a space that accord human beings capacities and powers to the extent that they catch them up in hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, vocabularies, systems of judgement and technical artefacts.

To this extent a genealogy of subjectification needs to think human being as a kind of machination, a hybrid of flesh, knowledge, passion and technique (Haraway, 1991). One of the characteristics of our current regime of the self is a way of reflecting upon and acting upon all these diverse domains, practices and assemblages in terms of a unified 'personality' to be revealed, discovered or worked on in each: a machination of the self that today forms the horizon of the thinkable. But this machination needs to be recognized as a specific regime of subjectification of recent origin – and the aim of a genealogy of subjectification is to unsettle it sufficiently to reveal the fragility of the lines that have made it up and hold it in place.

## **Subjectification today: a new configuration?**

Those who stress the 'postmodern' features of our present suggest that subjectivity, today, has characteristic and novel features such as uncertainty, reflexivity, self-scrutiny, fragmentation and diversity. From the perspective I have outlined in this chapter, the questions about ourselves and our present should be posed rather differently. Are we witnessing a transformation in the ontology through which we think ourselves, a mutation in the techniques through which we conduct ourselves, a reconfiguration of the relations of authority by means of which we divide ourselves and identify ourselves as certain kinds of person, exercise certain kinds of concern in relation to ourselves, are governed and govern ourselves as human beings of a particular sort? Does the diversity of authorities of the self in our present, the pluralization of moral codes, the apparent attenuation of the links between political government and the regulation of conduct, the heterogeneity of forms of life, the valorization of choices and freedom in the shaping of a style of life, the simultaneous celebration of individuality and proliferation of techniques of group identification and segmentation – does all this signify that new modes of subjectification have appeared today?

My aim in this chapter has been to suggest that investigations of such questions should concern themselves with the intersection of practices for the government of others and practices for the government of the self.

This is not the place to undertake a detailed exploration of them; however, let me make a few points in conclusion.

Autonomy, freedom, choice, authenticity, enterprise, lifestyle – this new ethical vocabulary should neither be derided with an aristocratic disdain, nor interpreted as the sign of cultural malaise or the death of God, but be understood in terms of new rationalities of government and new technologies of the conduct of conduct (Rose, 1992b; cf. Rieff, 1966, 1987). In a whole variety of different locales – not just in sexuality, diet or the promotion of goods and services for consumption, but also in labour and in the construction of political subjects – the person is presumed to be an active agent, wishing to exercise informed, autonomous and secular responsibility in relation to his or her own destiny. The language of autonomy, identity, self-realization and the search for fulfilment forms a grid of regulatory ideals, not making up an amorphous cultural space, but traversing the doctor's consulting room, the factory floor and the personnel manager's office, and organizing such diverse programmes as those for the training of unemployed youth and those for the electoral competition of political parties.

A critical analysis of these new ethical vocabularies and their governmental inscription might examine the ways in which they establish new 'dividing practices' within and between subjects. Thus the language of responsible self-advancement is linked to a new perception of those outside civility – the excluded or marginalized who through wilfulness, incapacity or ignorance cannot or will not exercise such responsibility. On the one hand, pathologies are re-individualized, removed from a 'social' determination into a moral order, thus providing the basis for new and harsher strategies of surveillance and control of those who, after all, bear the responsibility for their fate within their own hands – exemplary is the way in which, in the UK, the unemployed person has become a 'job seeker' and the homeless person a 'rough sleeper'. On the other hand, these new sectors of the population are opened up to new forms of intervention by experts, which would re-educate or 'empower' them, equipping them with the techniques of life planning and personal conduct to cope as autonomous subjects, deploying psychological techniques from social skills training to group relations.

Further, it is important to draw attention to the emergence of new modalities for folding authority into the soul associated in particular with the psy forms of expertise. The diverse techniques of the psycho-sciences – those of assessment, classification and discipline, those which produce a knowledge of social dispositions, those which deal with motivations, attitudes and desires – generate a multiplicity of techniques of reformatory intervention upon persons and groups. As I have already argued, the psy disciplines provide an array of techniques for the practical government of conduct in local sites, providing professionals of human conduct with a way of exercising their authority in keeping with, and not in opposition to, the valorization of autonomous subjectivity. In suggesting

ways in which *those who have authority* can exercise it in relation to a knowledge of the inner nature of *those subject to authority*, psy accords authority a novel ethical justification as a kind of therapeutic activity.

Further, a whole new array of authorities of subjectivity have taken shape, in the form of broadcast images of dilemmas for the self, self-conduct and self-formation no longer in the realm of romance or adventure but in quotidian narratives of 'everyday life'. This public habitat of images and stories presupposes certain repertoires of personhood as the *a priori* of the forms of life they display. It is amplified by a relation with the technologies of marketing and the shaping of consumption. These consumption technologies, themselves informed by the theories and techniques of the psy sciences, propagate images of conduct, in terms of new relations between the purchase of goods and services and the shaping of the self. New modes, techniques and images of self-formation and self-problematization are disseminated, spatialized in new ways according to market segments and lifestyle choices, and operating according to the objectives of profit or pleasure, rather than national well-being. They presuppose a certain kind of freedom in those whose subjectivity they engage, freedom here as the desire by each individual to conduct his or her existence as a project for the maximization of quality of life. And, in a kind of reverse move, the technologies of subjectification through advertising and marketing become the basis of a whole new regime for the government of conduct in relation to health, education and security: these too will be enjoined, by both public bodies such as health promotion agencies, and private organizations such as those selling health insurance, not as a matter of morality or public duty, but in the service of the prudent running of the enterprise of one's life and the maximization of its quality.

Finally, one can point to the consonance of the changes that I have noted with the revised problematizations of political rule that can be termed 'advanced liberal'. Advanced liberal programmes of rule seek to dismantle the apparatus of welfare and install novel governmental technologies: extending the rationalities of contracts, consumers and competition to domains where social logics previously reigned; breaking up bureaucracies and governing professionals 'at a distance' through budgets, audits, codes, market demands; making individuals themselves 'interested' in their own government (Rose, 1994). Advanced liberal programmes of rule presuppose the activity of subjects, and seek to act upon that activity to establish a consonance between the self-promoting endeavours of those who are to be the subjects of rule, and the objectives of those who are to exercise rule. Such transformations have been much criticized, especially from the Left. However, perhaps the ascendancy of these new technologies of rule, and the ways in which they have been taken up in so many different national political contexts by political forces of many different complexions, indicates that they have a versatility and a potency not recognized by their critics. This potency lies, in part at least,

in their relentless inventiveness, their ability to find formulas for rule that will allow subjects to come to recognize themselves in the practices that govern them. If we are to gain a critical purchase upon these contemporary strategies for the conduct of conduct, it will be, in part, through historical investigations which can unsettle and de-valorize the regime of subjectification to which they are inextricably linked.

## Notes

1 Versions of this chapter have been given at the following places: Department of Sociology, Open University; School of African and Asian Studies, University of London; Conference on 'De-Traditionalization', University of Lancaster; Department of Political Science, Australian National University. It has greatly benefited from all the comments I have received. A rather different version of some of this argument is published in S. Lash, P. Heelas and P. Morris (eds), *De-Traditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1996. This version was written while I was a Visiting Fellow in the Political Science Programme of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, Canberra, and I would like to thank this institution and all its staff for their generous hospitality and intellectual support.

2 To avoid any confusion, can I point out that subjectification is not used here to imply domination by others, or subordination to an alien system of powers: it functions here not as term of 'critique' but as a device for critical thought – simply to designate processes of being 'made up' as a subject of a certain type. As will be evident, my argument throughout this chapter is dependent upon Michel Foucault's analyses of subjectification.

3 It is important to understand this in the *reflexive*, rather than the substantive mode. In what follows, the phrase always designates this relation, and implies no substantive 'self' as the object of that relation.

4 Of course, this is to overstate the case. One needs to look, on the one hand, at the ways in which philosophical reflections have themselves been organized around problems of pathology – think of the functioning of the image of the statue deprived of all sensory inputs in sensationist philosophers such as Condillac – and also of the ways in which philosophy is animated by and articulated with, problems of the government of conduct (on Condillac, see Rose, 1985; on Locke see Tully, 1993; on Kant see Hunter, 1994).

5 Similar arguments about the necessity for analysing 'the self' as technological have been made in a number of quarters recently. See especially the discussion in Elspeth Probyn's recent book (Probyn, 1993). Precisely what is meant by 'technological' in this context is, however, less clear. As I suggest later, an analysis of the technological forms of subjectification needs to develop in terms of the relation between technologies for the government of conduct and the intellectual, corporeal and ethical devices that structure being's relation to itself at different moments and sites. I develop this argument further in Rose (1996).

6 This is not, of course, to suggest that knowledge and expertise do not play a crucial role in non-liberal regimes for the government of conduct – one only has to think of the role of doctors and administrators in the organization of the mass extermination programmes in Nazi Germany, or of the role of party workers in the pastoral relations of East European states prior to their 'democratization', or the role of planning expertise in centralized planning regimes such as GOSPLAN in the USSR. However, the relations between forms of knowledge and practice designated political and those claiming a non-political grasp of their objects were different in each case.

7 This is not the place to argue this point, so let me just assert that only rationalists, or believers in God, imagine that 'reality' exists in the discursive forms available to thought. This is not a question to be addressed by reviving the old debates on the distinction between



knowledge of the 'natural' and 'social' worlds – it is merely to accept that this must be the case unless one believes in some transcendental power that has so shaped human thought that it is homologous with that which it thinks of. Nor is it to rehearse the old problem of epistemology, which poses an ineffable divide between thought and its object and then perplexes itself as to how one can 'represent' the other. Rather, perhaps one might say that thought makes up the real, but not as a 'realization' of thought.

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