

## Review

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Haim Gordon, *Quicksand: Israel, the Intifada and the Rise of Political Evil in Democracies*. East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 1995. \$27.95.



### **Political Evil, Ideology Critique and the Question of the "Outside"**

Postmodern theory's most pressing question for emancipatory thought and politics is whether there is any external ground for critique and action. Postmodern theory implicates those neutralized sites which have traditionally provided for such an "outside"- the sovereign subject and state, knowledge as an arena of disinterested inquiry aiming at historical progress--originally posited within modernity as the suppression of irrationality and violence as articulations of a more global and dangerous (because occluded) mode of violence.<sup>1</sup> This has legitimated new politicizations, but at the price of rendering political knowledge and action undecidable.

This is the case because once the reliance of modern politics on the self-legitimizing subject has been ungrounded, any positing of another ground seems to be delegitimated in advance as an act of violence. Politics becomes a perpetual resistance to closure, which is ultimately textuality's own immanent resistance to closure.<sup>2</sup> The result is a choice from among the proliferating options of "radical democracy," predicated upon a "constitutive outside" (which is itself a result of the attempt to impose closure), which are all the same insofar as they exclude any determinate relation between thought, social conditions and the political action which would thereby be rendered "decidable": right or wrong, progressive or reactionary, reformist or revolutionary, or, to anticipate, "free" or "evil."

Haim Gordon's *Quicksand: Israel, the Intifada, and the Rise of Political Evil in Democracies*, although it betrays no awareness of any of these issues, nevertheless constitutes a powerful intervention in contemporary political theory, especially with regard to questions of ground, the "outside," and decidability. Gordon's aim is to recover and deploy the category of political evil, and to recenter politics on the struggle against such evil, which he argues has been buried under the functionalism and pragmatism of contemporary political discourse (academic and popular), and which provides him with a powerful language of denunciation and analysis.

Gordon knows that the recovery of evil as a viable and central political category also requires the recovery of an expansive notion of freedom as the definitive political category, and this he borrows from Hannah Arendt: "Arendt described the political realm as the space where freedom emerges, or as she put it: 'the *raison d'etre* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action'" (20). Gordon also aligns himself with Arendt's distinction between "behavior" (acting in accord with pre-existing rules, inclinations, desires, etc.) and "action" (starting something new, initiating something that couldn't have been predicted).

Gordon's appropriation of Arendt is instructive in its contrast with the way in which Arendt has been taken up by postmodern political theorists like Susan Bickford, Lisa Disch, Bonnie Honig and others.<sup>3</sup> For these theorists, it is Arendt's "performative" and "dialogic" theses that are privileged at the expense of Arendt's concern with political evil and anti-political violence as the destruction of a common world where politics can first become possible. Left implicit in these works, then, is the acceptance of liberal pluralist politics and institutions, which merely need to be opened up further, while Arendt's strongest questions were directed at the compatibility of such institutions with politics in any meaningful sense.

Gordon unequivocally interprets Arendt's political thought as a defense of political courage and determined struggle against the highly organized political evil so pervasive in the contemporary world. He thus finds compelling in Arendt's work precisely those elements which have been treated most skeptically and dismissively by liberal humanists and postmodernists alike: her recovery of the praxis of the Greek polis, with its animating principles of glory, courage, justice and the striving for immortality.

This emphasis enables Gordon to bypass the "quicksand" into which political discussions among left-humanists and postmodernists alike have sunk: the questions of identity, subjectivity and agency which have reduced politics to an ever more micro level concerned with the modulations of coalitions and the proliferation of sites of "resistance." Making these concerns the substance of politics ultimately leads to the elimination of any position outside of ideology, which is to say outside of the logic whereby the constitution of sites of freedom and neutralization emerge as extensions of the violence they appear to counter.

For left humanists this immanentism takes the form of a renewed dis-articulation of "truth" and "power" and hence the relocation of agency to the alignment of "truth

speakers" and "progressive forces." However, the rearguard defense of "speaking truth to power" entails the requirement that one trace the ever more sophisticated marginalization of "truthfulness" so that it not only concurs with complete powerlessness but is reduced to moments of disruption and testimony.

Postmodernists, meanwhile, locate "agency" in the aporias of the dominant, modern modes of identity and textuality. These aporias are possible because of the implication of all identity and textuality in a specifically postmodern technological violence that reduces everything to banal surfaces, for Baudrillard, or "performativity" for Lyotard. This is a violence, though, which ultimately reverses itself: the globalization of "transparency" (Baudrillard) induces the indifference and cynicism of the masses, leading to various modes of interruption; for Lyotard, the imperative toward performativity leads to the need for "complexification" and hence the possibility of paralogic phrases and the emergence of differends.

For Gordon, by contrast, political evil must be actively exposed and confronted, and this must be done on the basis of decidable principles of justice. This is possible because these are not epistemological questions for Gordon, or an issue of normative rule following (the target of much of the postmodern political theory of Derrida<sup>4</sup> and Judith Butler, for example), but rather of identifiable ontological modes of being-in-the-world. Gordon's book enables us to see the privileging of undecidability as still tied to a politics of subjectivity which, once "rights" are internationalized and technology becomes inseparable from the constitution of power, does become "undecidable."

Can a democracy decide to violate the human rights of immigrants? If not, can the democratic will be overridden on basic questions of inclusion and exclusion regarding the political community? Given the advanced administrative modes of cooperation required for any systematic human rights abuses, and developments in the media which preclude secrecy and require a sustained effort to remain "ignorant" of such abuses, how far and in what senses does implication in these abuses spread? Every claim not only brings forth a counter-claim with an equal claim to legitimacy, but also opens an abyss underneath state sovereignty, a recognition of which is still a prerequisite for making "claims." But we only end up with a philosophical legitimation of such undecidability if we refuse to develop categories which go beyond "consent" and the various ways in which it is measured, manifested, thwarted, etc.; categories which don't take as given the primacy of the relation between ruler and ruled.

Gordon's approach is also usefully contrasted with a prominent postmodern political theorist who also foregrounds the question of freedom. Wendy Brown, in her *States of Injury*, critiques humanist theories of liberation which rely upon the category of "rights," drawing upon both Marx's early critique of rights in *On the Jewish Question* and the Nietzschean concept of *ressentiment*. Brown argues that the prevalence of "rights-talk" in contemporary political struggles structures political activity in a very disabling way by requiring oppressed groups to focus on constructing themselves reactively, as "injured parties" demanding restitution, with the attendant need to "prove" or, in fact, "perform," the extent, depth, "worthiness," etc., of that "injury."

What has been lost in all of this, Brown claims, is a notion of political action as freedom, which necessarily "overflows" claims based on "rights." However, Brown, while drawing upon Arendt, ultimately relies more upon a Foucauldian notion of freedom as self-fashioning, which means that freedom as a mode of praxis is neither for nor against anything in particular. So, while privileging "world" over identity, Brown still sees politics as "involving conversion of one's knowledge of the world from a situated (subject) position into a public idiom" (51), in which case rather than marked by sharp antagonisms, postmodern political spaces "must be heterogeneous, roving, relatively noninstitutionalized, and democratic to the point of exhaustion (50). The possibility of "fixed," clearly demarcated positions not based upon the construction of a subject cannot even be considered in this case.

Gordon's philosophical approach also contrasts sharply with the post-Althusserian developments in cultural studies, which understand ideology in terms of the production and reproduction of subjectivities. This understanding is opposed to Gordon's focus on the centrality of categories aiming at elucidating political responsibilities. For example, along with his critique of the modern social sciences for their effacement of responsibility, Gordon focuses relentlessly on the pervasive *cowardice* which is encouraged by these social scientific pseudo-knowledges and by consumerism and capitalism more generally. Obviously, speaking of "cowardice" in explaining the maintenance of political evil is very different from speaking of "hegemony" in explaining the failure of the working class to effectively struggle against the ruling class.

"Cowardice" assumes a positive ontological possibility, which citizens are obliged to struggle for, while "hegemony" implies a conflation of one's own interests with those of the oppressor via the universalization of the latter, that is, a failure to recognize one's interests. Gordon's quite clear rejection of the category of "interest," therefore, means that political activity involves a direct struggle against evil, rather than an educational or organizational relation to the exploited and oppressed. Thus, Gordon's categories eliminate the entire question of the relation between intellectuals and the masses, in the name of a mode of political struggle that obligates all who participate in the public arena.

All of this enables Gordon to maintain an "outside," from which it is possible to judge "decidedly"--a relation to knowledge (for Gordon, as for Arendt, this is primarily a question of exposing and preserving the "fabric" of basic factual reality, which evil practices must attempt to conceal or rationalize); a relation to political responsibility (the public space of freedom--to act and from violence); and to social conditions: here, Gordon increasingly comes to emphasize, as the book proceeds, the centrality of capitalism as the primary source of the alienation, serialization, and banalization which support political evil. The question, for example, of how "subjects" are "interpellated" in various contradictory, complex, ambivalent, etc., ways, and then how they can be "counter-interpellated" cannot even arise within this framework: one is a subject or a citizen, and the issue of the minute intermediate stages between one and the other is a false one.

Rather than a theory of ideology, then, Gordon offers a theory of complicity. He builds upon Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil," which suggests that evil is ultimately less a willed violation of norms (because the problem of norms which support evil is precisely what is at stake here) than a refusal to think. Arendt's concept can be productively linked to the increasing importance of the concept of "cynicism" in contemporary cultural and political thought, insofar as cynicism is understood not merely as projecting one's self-interested actions onto the "nature" of reality but as "playing the game," precisely when one knows and willingly ignores the consequences of the "game."

Gordon develops a series of concepts based on Arendt's argument: "secrecy," "tribalism," "consensus," "proceduralism," concluding his analysis of the rise of political evil with a dissection of "the treaty between the pseudo-intellectual and the mob." In his discussion of the "secretive society," for example, Gordon refers less to the national security state developed in the U.S. and Israel (and elsewhere of course), than to the "open secrets" pervasive in "democratic" societies: those things which "everyone knows" but willingly agrees and "conspire[s]" to "not know," like the existence of Israel's nuclear arsenal.

Similarly, in his discussion of "The Consensus," a term he appropriates from Israeli political discourse, Gordon is interested in what could be considered a kind of "hermeneutic circle" which is always a vicious one: the individual abdicates his/her responsibility for thought and action in deference to what "everyone says" and what "everyone says" in turn legitimates the privatism, consumerism and cynicism implicit in this abdication, all the while providing whatever "opinions" are necessary for the "idle talk" that passes for serious discussion. Finally, Gordon describes the treaty between the pseudo-intellectual and the mob as a "bond of cowardice" (202). The pseudo-intellectuals of the academy and media downplay the obligations of citizenship, whitewash the systematic existence of evil, diffuse responsibility until it becomes imperceptible, and thereby provide "hints" and "suggestions" to the "mob" (those who have abandoned citizenship for subjecthood), who continue to support and perpetrate such practices.

This entire analysis, as I suggested earlier, relies upon the category of "cowardice," the explication of which in its relation to evil Gordon rightly takes to be his main advance over Arendt; the problem here is that his understanding of cowardice relies upon a Sartrean notion of "bad faith." In other words, there are two concepts of freedom at work in Gordon's book: in addition to Arendt's concept of political freedom there is Sartre's concept of freedom as freedom to choose one's self. In fact, Gordon's examination of the possibilities of public freedom draws upon Arendt, while his analysis of the failure of most to act freely depends primarily upon existentialism.

One consequence of this is Gordon's interest in the evil practiced by "non-banal" people, by which he means intellectuals, who "think." There is much room for debate over Arendt's concept, which she herself never developed, but Gordon's assumption here that middle-level bureaucrats like Eichmann are "banal," while social scientists, philosophers, etc., are not is certainly a weak interpretation. Arendt is very clear that intellectuals have no monopoly on thinking--everyone thinks, and anyone can refuse to

think. More important, Arendt explicitly states that the elaborate calculations and functionalist schemas devised by social scientists, "strategists," and other "intellectuals" are prime examples of such a refusal to think.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in moving "beyond" the banality of evil in *this* way, Gordon fails to develop the more productive question Arendt opens up regarding the relation between thought and politics. Instead, collusion in evil becomes more of an individual moral failing, rather than implication in a mode of responsibility proper to political action. This becomes evident in Gordon's argument, which takes up the book's final chapters, that the courage required for genuine political activity is rooted in a morally coherent life, dedicated to wisdom, beauty and truth. In thus drawing upon Plato for this classical conception of rectitude, Gordon reduces the struggle for justice to a mode of personal authenticity, thus undoing the break with classical and liberal politics Arendt's work represents.

This move is necessary for Gordon precisely because his use of Sartre enables him to radicalize Arendt in certain respects, first by placing her political theory within an antagonistic framework (the struggle for justice, against evil) which is excluded by the "spontaneity" central to Arendt's conception of politics; and, second, by using Sartre's concept of "seriality" to politicize everyday life (which Arendt explicitly refused to do). This is what enables Gordon's powerful critiques to develop a focus on multinational corporations, the U.S. government and its clients/allies which further encompasses not only the academy (he polemicizes very effectively against academic conferences, journals, and administrative practices) but human rights organizations (like the Israeli organization B'Tselem) which provide a fig leaf for the evil practices of their governments, as well as the Israeli media. This, though, also opens up the question of setting priorities, which Arendt at least could refuse to address in a manner consistent with her theoretical position: struggle when, where, and against what? Rather than try to answer this question, Gordon calls for a "unified response," and "seeing and judging as a unified act" (70), drawing upon the ancient Hebrew prophets and existentialist literary texts such as those of Dostoyevski and Conrad.

But this is an inadequate answer, because which manifestations of evil one "sees" and is called upon to "judge" depends upon which manifestations one addressed yesterday, the day before, the day before that, etc.; that is, upon the way in which one's political activity has become associated with a set of problematics, antagonists, allies, conditions, etc. Rather than appropriate these questions for the political philosophy he wishes to revive, Gordon argues for an immediate, subjectively coherent response, thus evading the question of the relation of thought (for Arendt, stepping back, dissolving the common sense, questioning the relations between visible and invisible, etc.) to politics.

In other words, if Gordon wants to move Arendt's political theory into the arena of day to day struggles against the various institutionalized modes of evil, he must take up and develop the question of alterity, present in Arendt's thought under the concept of "plurality." For Gordon, the "Other" is less the condition of thought and action than, as in existentialist individualism, "the origin of most of the unthought thoughts that infiltrate a person's mind" (159). That is, one thinks as an Other instead of as "an independent,

genuine person." Gordon can only understand the Other as the "Consensus," even though the "Other," the victims of political evil, in particular the Palestinians, are clearly in a central sense the basis of his own political activity.

As I suggested earlier, what separates Gordon's book from left humanists and postmodernists alike is his exclusion of the question of agency; in concrete terms, what this means is that one will not find in his book what might be expected in the work of an oppositional Israeli intellectual, and especially a human rights activist: a discussion of the problematic status of a "privileged" Israeli citizen working on behalf of Palestinian rights. There are no inquiries into Palestinian agency, or the complex "negotiations" which underlie Israeli or Palestinian political "identity." Again, one can act as a citizen and not otherwise; such action does not emerge out of the contradictions or antinomies of subjectivity; hence one can only struggle as a citizen so as to clear the ground for more such activity. This of course does not imply any denigration of Palestinian political activity (although it might be useful for Gordon to explain whether he considers the organizational forms of the Intifada spaces of public freedom) but rather the rejection of a "bottom-up" model of politics, or the assumption that "resistance" (implicit or explicit) somehow "grows" into effective struggle for change.

Once one rejects this assumption, i.e., rejects the immanent link between victimization and agency, one must also recognize that the Other (as victim of political evil) is both present (as basis and cause) and absent (as ally or "identity") in emancipatory politics. In other words, one cannot act responsibly as a victim: one can "testify" or "perform," those privileged modes of postmodern politics, but not act. But the Other must be understood in another, related way here, closer to Gordon's own sense: as an alienated public space, reduced to the circulations of subjectivity, in which complicity and powerlessness are structurally interrelated and where, as Gordon suggests, responsibility is endlessly deferred and obscured. I would argue, in fact, that the ideological forms of contemporary global capitalism are invariably attempts to square the circles of victimization and agency, complicity and powerlessness, always starting from some point within the circle itself.

Understanding complicity as an "originary" (pre-political) relation to the Other, rather than a failure to assert oneself against the Other, would also enable a theorization of the relations between politics and ideology which takes into account structures and antagonisms which are not reducible to the categories of freedom and evil. Here Gordon's failure to offer a critique of Zionism, as a founding ideology embedded in the institutional structures of the Israeli state, is very telling. Zionism binds all Israeli Jews to modes of cooperation intrinsically antagonistic to Palestinian rights and national existence: every Israeli Jew, in his/her most insignificant and routine activities--like buying an apartment--is complicit with these structures. If one were to simply ask what the "average" Israeli would have to surrender if justice (as least according to a "restitution" model) for the Palestinians was a priority in Israeli political life, and remember that every Israeli knows this and recognizes this complicity on some level, we will have little trouble explaining their acceptance of such widespread political evil.

The burden of Gordon's book is to show why the framework he proposes better serves the interests of justice than one which proposes that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a real one, rooted in material interests: not a conflict between "right and right" as Israeli liberals like to say, but one between colonizer and colonized who will nevertheless have to share the same land. The problem for Gordon is that such an analysis very quickly begins to look too "functionalist" and "pragmatic": instead of actions to be judged, we have "forces" and "tendencies" to be analyzed and openings for historically specific practices to be located. (How, for example, does one critique the Oslo accords as an Israeli peace while nevertheless using them to open whatever space they more offer for Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of Palestinian institutions of self-government?)

It is with regard to such questions, though, that Gordon's insistence on an "outside," on a principled politics grounded in ontologically "originary" categories is most necessary. But this requires, in the interests of responsible politics, that politics in capitalist, class society be understood as conditioned by the possibility of civil war; while revolutionary politics further entails the non-reducibility of politics to civil war; which means the ongoing effort to both foreground fundamental antagonisms and "elevate" them to the question of constituting a genuine political space.

In this case, the fundamental antagonism, that of class--the ground of the contradiction between the irreversibility of universal dispossession under capitalism and the necessity of citizenship as pedagogical accountability--must be implicated in the anti-political violence aiming at the destruction of politics itself, i.e., the conjoining of power, thought and responsibility for the world. Anti-political violence is cynical and evil insofar as it implicates subjects--as individuals and members of collectives--in the negation of the very categories (rights, democracy, freedom) which enables the recognition and activity of those subjects in the first place. And this takes place through the cynical affirmation of those categories, with exclusionary and exceptionalizing "riders" attached.

Nevertheless, to take a defense of the "true" meaning or content of these categories as the basis of politics is to remain on the level of resistance to pre-political violence: subject against subject, right against right, (double) standard against (double) standard. All the forms of inequality, exploitation and oppression have a pre-political side, in which the dominant sets the "standard" that the exploited seeks to reverse, appropriate, re-signify, etc. All these forms also manifest an anti-political side, in which the diffusion of the "standard" confuses lines and boundaries, creates exceptions and implicates everyone in shameful and evil practices. Revolutionary political action, I am suggesting, is founded on the establishment of a firm line between pre- and anti-political violence; which is to say on the constitution of a space of pedagogical accountability.

Gordon's "Appendix" reveals the limitation of a political philosophy which fails to make such a distinction, and must therefore ultimately refer back to "conscience" rather than the "world" as the basis of politics. His Appendix contains two studies carried out by Gordon along with Rivka Gordon. One is on "The Response of Israeli Academics to the Intifada"; the other, of which I will critique a short section here, is on "Racism in the Israeli Press." This study provides five "approaches" for identifying and analyzing



explicitly or implicitly racist statements. I will focus on "The Stupidity Approach," which Gordon and Gordon associate with Socrates, according to whom "the source of evil is ignorance, and a person who bases his views on ignorance when he has the opportunity to learn is acting stupidly" (232).

The example used here is from an article by Dan Margalit in the liberal paper *Ha-Aretz*. Gordon and Gordon quote Margalit on the relation to the law of Israeli draft resisters and of Jewish settlers on the West Bank: "The leftists cut through the fence of the law and the rightist settlers come after them with destructive explosives." Gordon and Gordon comment that "anyone who has read even a second-year college textbook in political science will soon notice that Margalit does not distinguish between civil disobedience and law breaking. What is more, one can understand from the article that all law breaking is of equal value... No, as we read Margalit they aren't on equal footing, because the draft resister is responsible for the settler's act of murder because he cut through the fence of the law. Thus Margalit's ignorance leads to the conclusion that racism is a manner of breaking the law that is equal to a decision of conscience that results in civil disobedience" (232-3).

There is some confusion in this critique, which is symptomatic of the limitations of Gordon's philosophical and political position. Leaving aside the important question of how much settler violence is actually against Israeli (as opposed to international) law, Gordon and Gordon's claim is not true: they are not on an equal footing insofar as "cutting through a fence" and "coming through with destructive explosives" are hardly morally equivalent acts. Also, even if Margalit is "hinting" at a kind of "moral equivalence," his analysis needs to be addressed, because he is pointing to the unintended consequences of the civil disobedience of draft resisters: an issue to which Gordon's philosophical position is allergic, and which his critique aims at totally avoiding.

There has been a split among Israeli liberals on the question of draft resisters since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982; the split, as Gordon and Gordon's discussion makes clear, is between strengthening the "letter" (and procedures, institutions, etc.) of the law and defending its (democratic) "spirit." Margalit is apparently taking the position of those liberals who want to fortify the "rule of law"; in relation to *these* standards there *is* a link between different types of political law breaking. Furthermore, to state a relation between cause and consequence is not to state a relation of moral equivalence or "resemblance." And taking responsibility for such consequences is central to politics.

Gordon and Gordon's referral to the "spirit" (against the petrified letter) of the law; the appeal to "conscience" (as if settlers who establish illegal settlements are not acting in accord with their "conscience"); and the "double standard" analogy ("we need only go one step further beyond Margalit's stupid arguments and we can say that Mahatma Gandhi resembled Hitler--both were law-breakers"[233]), are all particularly feeble here. The point is to clarify these splits among liberals and leftists, and to clarify the politics of draft resistance itself, which takes on both personal ("conscience") and political forms. Such a clarification, finally, needs to lead to positing, as against the ultimately reformist aims of all modes of civil disobedience, the possibility of a more general refusal to

"cooperate" with liberal-democratic categories themselves; a refusal which takes those categories as closing down enabling sites of pedagogy.

In other words, protesting the manipulation of the antinomies of the law will not make those antinomies disappear. Positing the spirit of the laws as superior to the letter, setting authenticity against proceduralism, one norm against another, etc., may be necessary for initially opening up public space, but remains pre-political and becomes anti-political once the possible consequences of such actions (taken under conditions not of one's own making) are simply "blamed" on opponents rather than taken as opportunities to produce an "other" space: one which brings into view the difference between the dominant, alienated public space and one founded on pedagogical accountability. What is objectionable about Margalit's statement is not that it charges draft resisters with undermining the rule of law, but that it fails to follow up on their necessarily limited actions with an interrogation of the limits of Israeli democracy they reveal, an interrogation which would have further implications regarding the boundaries of consent and obligation at other sites as well.

I am not saying that Gordon needs to prescribe a set of activities for the draft resistance movement in Israel or offer a sociological analysis of its causes, origins, or measurable political effects on "public opinion" or anything else. But, if organized draft resistance is a (conditioned) mode of acting in the world, it surely "interferes" with the presently constituted boundaries separating and relating military and civil, legal and illegal, national law and international human rights, private and public, and many others. Rather than an occasion to refer back to the unity and freedom of the subject, what needs to be thought in relation to draft resistance is how such activities set up the various political positions in Israel and Palestine (for a start) so as to implicate them in global capitalism's reconstruction and destruction of these and other "boundaries," in such a way as to disperse and re-display those positions. Taking "draft resistance" as a way to open up such questions is not a performative politics (which re-signifies normative identities and re-presents them as "constructed"); nor a politics of testimony (which resists logocentric closure by implicating the Same in the unassimilable Other); nor does it entail any "negotiation" with evil or the elimination of the "outside." It is a politics of pedagogical accountability, aimed at clearing a space for explanation and analysis against the ideological suppression of thinking, and at the instigation of other pedagogical acts.

In fact, a kind of Hegelian reconciliation might occur between Margalit's position and that of the draft resistance, if the Israeli army is streamlined, professionalized and turned into one of a series of interlocking regional forces policing the interests of global capital; and increasingly empty appeals to conscience will only make the draft resister all the more politically responsible for such a result. Recognizing such a possibility does not entail a functionalist analysis which reduces Israeli draft resistance to an instrument of such undeniable tendencies, but unless "functionalism" can itself be reduced to the bad science propagated by cowardly intellectuals the tendencies that it outlines must be real possibilities.

Resistance to the consequences of functionalism requires theorizing political action as located in the space between (productive) capacities and (general, social) needs. It is the celebration of capacities qua capacities (as alienated from needs) that is implicated in the evil prevalent in the contemporary world. Such a celebration is rooted in the accumulation of capital through the exploitation of labor: it is the circuit of M-C-M that destroys political space and short-circuits thought. The accumulation of capital brings all activities and capacities (including action and thought) within this circuit; it thereby obliterates the substance of politics as *justice*, which at this historical moment means the commensuration of capacities and needs. The struggle to theorize against this *lawful* historical tendency sets parameters for action (such as the need for explanatory knowledges) which "conscience" and the "joy" of struggle cannot account for.

The struggle against anti-political violence demands the kind of ideology critique Gordon cannot offer: one which implicates not only intentions and actions, but allegiances to the antinomic categories of bourgeois thought which are now a possession of everyday life. Political evil operates today through the proliferation of "margins," "grey areas," and "limit cases" which any politics of subjectivity is complicit with insofar as any such politics is necessarily alienated from its consequences. Ideology critique is interested in locating these antinomies in exemplary practices and grounding them in their historical conditions. In this interest, it is at one with Gordon's urgent call for not only describing and analyzing evil in the abstract, but also exposing and confronting its concrete manifestations.

The difference is that ideology critique also wants to implicate these instances in the liberal and post-liberal forms which simultaneously make evil appear problematic and render it "exceptional": in other words, the whole array of "yes, buts" which endlessly redistribute power, agency, victimization and complicity are objective insofar as they are built into the subjective "call" for justice. These (non)responses, along with the "call" itself, can only be implicated in a more general anti-political (ideological) violence aimed more at destroying and neutralizing the categories, concepts and principles necessary for boundary thinking than at the capacity for self-determination. Addressing such maneuvers thus entails the ability to analyze those contradictions between theory and practice, action and outcome, which are most relevant pedagogically and hence of prime interest to political theory.

Maintaining the category of "evil," as an objective mode of acting serves to maintain a focus on the most urgent destructive operations against political action. Nevertheless, categories based on the concept of "will" (like "cowardice" and "courage") are not able to account for exemplary instances since they presuppose a unity in the subject precisely where there is a historical contradiction. In this sense the "banality of evil" has not been surpassed: what is at stake is still ideology as a circular mode of "anti-thinking" which protects the subject against a contradictory reality and thereby renders citizenship invisible.

### Notes

1 See, for example, Campbell, Connolly, Dumm, Reinhardt, and Shapiro.

2 For a recent articulation of this position, see Keenan.

3 See Bickford, Disch, and Honig.

4 See "Force of Law," and *The Politics of Friendship* in particular.

5 See 108-110 in *Crises of the Republic* on the lack of "thinking" among strategists, and the "Introduction" to *Thinking*, especially page 13.

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