'Svelte Discourse' and the Philosophy of Caution

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Recently, *Radical Philosophy* was offered a piece by Jean-Francois Lyotard, one of the leading lights of the postmodernist movement, entitled 'Svelte Discourse and the Postmodern Question'. The piece came not from Lyotard himself but from his translator, Mark S. Roberts. So odd did this particular piece of writing look ('remarks ... without theoretical pretensions or specific order' as the author freely admitted[1]) that the editorial collective did not at first know how to treat it. Was it perhaps 'news from France'? (and hence the responsibility of the journal's news editor); 'comment'? (a halfway house between news and article status where problem cases often are consigned); or an article? (subject, therefore, to the full editorial refereeing procedure). It did not quite seem to fall naturally into any available category.

In the event, 'article' was the final choice, but to no avail, because as an article 'Svelte Discourse' met rejection at the hands of the *RP* editorial collective meeting, the consensus being that it did not satisfy the requirements of philosophical discourse as conventionally understood by a journal like *RP*. Comments such as 'off the top of the head' were voiced frequently about the piece at the meeting, and indicate the general drift of the discussion. This is by no means the first time such an accusation has been levelled against recent French philosophy (cf. anti-Derrida commentators) and there is a distinct sense of unease in English philosophical discourse about allowing elements of this alien discourse to creep into our own.

But this particular case of rejection (to which I was a party) does raise some interesting points about the nature of the respective discourses (what we each require of, and expect from, philosophy) which I feel are worth further exploration. As the author of an essentially critical piece on Lyotard in *RP* 44, ('Lyotard and the Politics of Antifoundationalism'), I would stress that I have not *substantially* changed my mind on the demerits of his work (I still think it is ideologically somewhat dubious); but I now wonder whether it might not be more productive, and instructive, to examine him in a slightly different, less overtly critical manner. I am advocating a bracketing exercise, in other words, in order to determine whether we might be missing something by failing to create a space for dialogue with such material. This means treating the *RP* editorial collective decision as a symbolic act in terms of relations between the discourses, rather than being concerned with the actual mechanics of that decision. Very briefly, I would characterise the difference between the two opposed discourses as being that between a philosophy informed by a sense of caution, and one informed by a sense of risk.

What I would like to consider is whether we can identify areas of common concern between Lyotard-discourse, as exemplified in its least forthcoming form in 'Svelte Discourse', and socialist philosophy, English model (inasmuch as one can so generalise), and see where that exercise will take us in terms of rethinking the nature, preoccupations, and effect of our own discourse. It could well be that not just the content of the argument but the style also – and it is in the area of style where the problems really lie, I think – will have significant things to tell us about the limitations of the philosophy of caution. We may happily choose to retain these limitations (limitations can be beneficial in protecting the ideals of a discourse) but we may also choose to modify our relatively hostile opinion of the alien discourse, and perhaps even accord it a role in the more general socialist philosophy enterprise of confronting and undermining late capitalism and its cultural production.

I

There now follows a quick paraphrase of 'Svelte Discourse' and some surface reactions.

Lyotard presents an argument against capitalism, which he considers to be our greatest current cultural problem (no dissent here from the Left):

> Everybody thinks that the greatest problem facing society today is that of the State. But this is a serious mistake. The problem which stands above all others, including that of the modern State, is that of capital.

Capitalism is conceived of as an act of will which involves the ceaseless exploitation of resources, and brooks no inhibition of its restless dynamic:

> Capitalism is one of the names for modernity, and presupposes that the will is invested with infinity ... capitalism has known how to subordinate itself to the infinite desire to know – which is what animates the sciences – and to submit this realization to the technical criteria at its heart, namely, the rule of performativity that requires the constant optimization of the input-/output relation.

States and political classes serve capitalism, although they sometimes obstruct its progress; yet capitalism remains the primary enemy, and ways of countering its excesses need to be found if the desired condition of 'justice in the domain of politics' is to be realised. The method of counteraction posited is 'sveltness': a guerilla-like attitude of flexible response to capitalism's many and insistent pressures:

> Stendahl had already said it at the beginning of the 19th Century: the ideal is no longer the physical strength of

classical man, it is suppleness, speed, the capacity for change (go dancing at night, wage war the following morning). Sveltness, readiness: at once an Italian and Zen term.

In general terms there is much for a socialist philosopher to sympathize with in these sentiments: 'sveltness' in particular, with its intimations of scepticism in the face of capitalism's anti-rationalistic 'it works' philosophy, seems worthy of support and even elaboration. So what is the problem?

The problem is that to an English-trained philosopher 'Svelte Discourse' hardly qualifies as philosophical argument at all. Positions are established by means of assertion and generalization –

> 'Everybody thinks that the greatest problem facing society today is that of the State;'

> 'Capitalism is one of the names for modernity;'

> 'Language is the entire social bond'

– with an almost complete absence of proof or evidence to support them. The periodic appearance of 'if' is as close as we get to any feeling of debate: 'If what you call contemporary French philosophy has been postmodern in this way, it is because it has focused its discourse on the deconstruction of language.' But a few hypotheticals do not add up to a reasoned argument. Redefinition abounds – capitalism is 'one of the names for modernity', or 'a metaphysical figure', or 'the real romanticism', for example – and anyone can win an argument by using the redefinition ploy. What is precisely at issue is whether such casually-assumed equivalences are justified. In fact we are given no clear definitions of either modernity or postmodernity in the piece, which does not help matters (especially in a movement which covers such an alarmingly wide spectrum of response, from conservative reconciliationism to *avant garde* poststructuralism). Moving from 'if' to 'because' is a considerable leap and not one that can simply be assumed (with one mighty bound Lyotard was free ...). Proof in the guise of intermediate, cautiously-constructed, explicitly logically-related steps of argument must be on view if this is to qualify as philosophical argument, rather than mere rhetoric (the anti-rhetorical bias remains strong in the Anglo-American tradition).
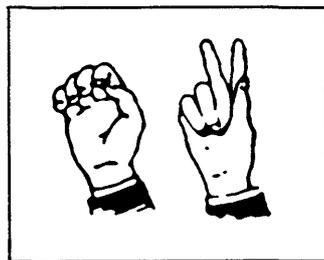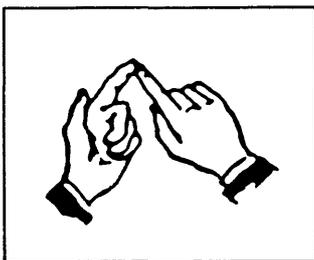
It likewise remains to be proved that, for example, Augustine was 'the first modern', as Lyotard claims. And we might ask, why Augustine anyway? Perhaps he is felt to be so because of the anxiety-ridden quality of *The Confessions*. This is a possible line of argument (anxiety being a key element of the modernist aesthetic), but it does need to be spelled out, being by no means self-evidential or beyond all possible debate. Association of ideas, however, is a poor method to employ for spelling-out. It simply comes across as off-the-top-of-the-headness.

As a piece of philosophical discourse, therefore, this piece of writing does not really qualify. There are some interesting ideas – 'sveltness' is a bizarre concept in a philosophical context, yes, but an intriguing and quite original one, nevertheless – but these ideas are not being harnessed to concepts and logical structures of argument. Lyotard often gives the impression of letting his (ample) imagination run away with him, and it is probably a hostage to fortune to declare that 'the following remarks are without theoretical pretensions or specific order'. The average English-trained critic pounces on the throwaway remark (in such cases careless talk costs reputations) and the reasons for rejection in our tradition, even at the radical end of the spectrum, become abundantly clear. There is just not enough argument to meet the standards of professional philosophical discourse, and the political overtones are basically gratuitous to an English audience.

II

A demolition job on such material is relatively easy to perform: its faults and silences declare themselves quite openly and positively invite attack. In common with Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* there is much political naivete and loose reasoning on offer. Either the author has not thought through the full implications of his remarks (bad philosophical practice in itself) or he has disguised ideological commitments, conservative variety, which are seeking to trap the unwary. But this is to remain in the critical mode of 'Lyotard and the Politics of Antifoundationalism'. What we might now do is temporarily to suspend value-judgement and ask what the piece is doing in its own terms of reference. Adopting a sympathetic mode we might come up with the following form of analysis.

The argument has an anti-capitalist orientation, so we might follow that route of shared concern for a while. Capitalism is the enemy. Capitalism equals modernity. Capitalism does not like order. Therefore modernity, order, and romanticism are all enemies. *Whose* enemies? 'Everyone thinks' ... but not everyone thinks that capitalism is beyond salvation: 'I do not mean the owners and managers of capital ... this applies to workers as well.' So here we have a resistance group (apparently unspecifiable in traditional class terms) who wish to cultivate postmodernity, disorder, and antiromanticism within the province of capitalism; and this may even mean disorder within the ranks of the workers, at which point we are attacking the most favoured category in Marxist sociological terms. But as Lyotard notes, for all socialism's efforts 'Capitalism still is a figure'. Point taken: more than a century after *Capital* capitalism still *is* a figure – and if it continues a figure perhaps our traditional analyses no longer really apply. The postmarxist argument depends heavily on Marxism's perceived political failure in the West, and though it cannot be adjudged to constitute an argument, that 'still is' has a powerful rhetorical presence which compels critical reflection.

Our area of shared concern seems to be fast dissolving. Perhaps we need to go for the *spirit* of Marxism ('Marx was well aware of all this, especially in the *Manifesto*. He tried to show at what point the figure of capitalism became incoherent'), and construct a new mode of being to counteract our common enemy. In Lyotard's terms of reference this would seem to be a case of 'go dancing at night, wage war the following morning'. Dancing, warring: this might stand as a description of the infinitely flexible, post-capitalist human being of Marxist speculation, and we would seem to be moving into a Marxist frame of reference now.

But hang on a moment, Steiner wrote about concentration

camp guards who read Goethe at night, tortured and killed in the morning.[2]. Sveltness there, surely? Psychologically supple, semiotically fast, and aesthetically changeable, no question about that – and there seems something very wrong indeed with a set of preferred qualities that can just as easily characterise fascist terrorism as the enemies of capitalism. We appear to have reached a limit at this point, and we cannot conclusively prove shared concern in the anti-capitalist sense. Lyotard may well have got the spirit right – the anti-authoritarian, celebratory spirit that has informed so many revolutions – but spirit alone cannot override the more insistent objections our discourse raises (whether assertion answers theory, or whether transitory states-of-affairs demolish the claims of over-arching theory, for example). We need now to turn to other topics to see if bracketing can yield more substantial benefits.
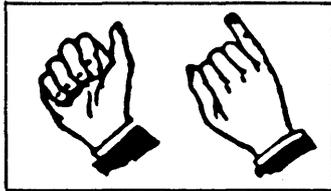

Lyotard's remarks on language look to be part of an antitheoretical turn in recent French work on the subject. In common with the poststructuralist movement, Lyotard stresses the limitations of language in the communication of thought. Like Derrida before him, Lyotard celebrates the non-correspondence of language and meaning, and the logical impossibility of plenitude being achieved in either communication or meaning. Meaning is held to be a local and transitory phenomenon at best, and the idea of meanings holding over time (say, in texts) is considered a delusion. 'Language is not an "instrument of communication"', as Lyotard puts it; which proves to be an interesting statement in that it contradicts itself in the act of making its point. If language does not communicate, it surely cannot communicate its incommunicability. Nevertheless, paradox has traditionally had an important role to play in philosophical discourse (Zeno and onwards) and the relentless seeking after and cultivation of paradox that marks out poststructuralist and postmodernist discourse has at least some antecedents in the analytical tradition (in the presence of a contradiction in a logical proof, as a case in point, assume what you want). Paradox becomes a method of striking at capitalism's colonisation of language; at its desire for 'optimal performativity' in this domain.

Lyotard's conception of language as 'an highly complex archipelago formed of regimes of domains and statements' recalls that of Wittgenstein, with his 'multiplicity of language-games';[3] but it is even less of an organic entity than the latter's 'ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods'.[4] Lyotard refuses to entertain the notion of local communication that Wittgenstein's adjacent neighbourhoods suggest, and he insists on the impossibility of translation: 'we cannot even translate a statement from one regime ... into one from another'; from descriptive to prescriptive modes, for instance. There are echoes of Quine here, and of deconstruction also – as when Lyotard asserts the existence of 'an irremedial opacity at the very heart of language'. For Geoffrey Hartmann, the hallmark of Derrida's writing style is an 'elegant opacity'[5] which declines to reconcile 'warring truths'.[6] Paradox is being allowed free rein in both cases, whereas in analytically-based philosophy it is closed off once it has achieved its objective of

enabling you to make your desired assumption. We might be looking at the difference between paradox as a tactical weapon, and paradox as a desired state in its own right at such points. The latter is something our discourse cannot really countenance. You have crossed over a boundary into another mode of thinking (perhaps poetry) by embracing paradox in such an unequivocal manner.

We are supposed to welcome the absence of standardly-perceived communication in our postmodern world. In such a world language forever misleads us, cheats us, raises false hopes in us: never does what we want it to, what we think it does, or what we assume it must. Within language there is not the possibility of clarity, but instead the necessary and ineradicable presence of unclarity; unclarity which will infect our every utterance, no matter how carefully formulated. Clarity's absence is to be flaunted in the face of the authoritarians, who are held to be refusing to acknowledge the chaos that lies at the heart of things. It is the postmodernist's role to 'underscore the paradoxes' that make this point. Lyotard contends that this chaos has been identified by a succession of 'postmoderns' over the centuries, of whom Laurence Sterne is cited as one prominent example. Sterne provides a crossover into an English tradition, and one at least tangentially related to philosophy: the tradition of empiricism and scepticism associated with John Locke and David Hume.

Given the echoes of several Anglo-American discourses that we have noted in 'Svelte Discourse', it is perhaps gradually being rendered more acceptable to that cultural tradition. Zeno, Wittgenstein, Quine, Sterne, Locke and Hume serve to edge Lyotard towards at least a measure of respectability. The acceptability-level increases as we move from 'opacity' to 'incommensurability'. Opacity is a very suspect notion in our discourse, but once you manage to reach incommensurability you are on safer ground in the company of those accredited philosophers Kuhn, Lakatos, and their followers.[7] Incommensurability is not taken to constitute an excuse for a lapse into opacity in Anglo-American philosophy, however, whereas it all too often is in its French counterpart. Difference declares itself with a vengeance at this point. Opacity is a weapon turned against the powers-that-be in the one tradition, a philosophically-inadmissible mode of argument in the other. Encouragement confronts exclusion, and shared concern is not so easily pursued in this area either.
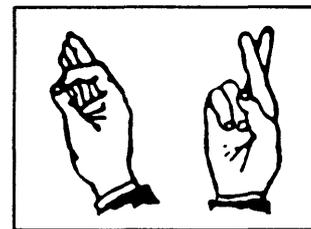
Difference declares itself too in the attitude adopted at chaos-at-the-heart-of-things. Marxists do not much like chaos. Chaos may be deemed to exist at the heart of capitalism (that complex of contradictions) but it is a Marxist's duty to suggest ways to correct the disequilibrium for the benefit of all the victims of this unjustly-organised system. Marxism retains a rationalist orientation in this regard. If the world is out of joint, it is so because certain human beings have manoeuvred it into that position for specific ideological reasons; that is, to serve

their interests for determinable socio-political and socio-economic ends. To admit chaos as a necessary part of our ontology is to admit the impossibility of goal-directed action, socially-engineered change, and the revolutionary overthrow of the oppressing order. It is to admit anarchism as the true nature of things. 'Without specific order' becomes the most revealing, and indictable, of admissions for the anti-Lyotardean.

The ideological problem that comes to the fore at this point might be stated as follows: opacity serves imperialism, because imperialism will be the most likely beneficiary of the babble of incommensurable, and hence politically unharnessable, discourses which will be the outcome if we embrace postmodern sensibility. Which might be to say that opacity serves neo-conservatism. Yet Lyotard insists no: 'I don't really believe that'. Not as long as he can fall back on sveltness, his strategy for coping with the individual experience of incommensurability. 'It is above all a question of language, because language expends very little energy to create from the new (Einstein at Zurich)'. Leaving aside for the moment the vexed question of the relationship between language and thought (was Einstein's really a *linguistic* revolution in physics?; is it really *language* that challenges paradigms?), this is an odd observation to make if language is imprinted with an 'irremedial opacity' at its core. If this were indeed the case it is hard to see how we should ever establish a paradigm in the first place, let alone challenge its hegemony. How would we ever agree on what constituted the new? (except through the exercise of terror or some such similarly authoritarian behavior). The manner in which 'readiness' would recognise and appropriate its object remains unclear, therefore unreproducible for revolutionary purposes. The spectre of adventurism raises its head – and most Marxists are not going to be too happy with *that*.

Neither does the readiness seem transactional, and thus the kind of attitude that could promote the desirable quality of revolutionary solidarity. The Zen reference carries that implication of incommunicable experience which alters individual behaviour – but only in a solipsistic sense. The vision is ultimately somewhat Leibnizian: of a monadically-structured culture in which 'learning, inventing, knowing, and circulating' remain essentially internalised activities that cannot escape from their fixed position in the archipelago. 'Language machines don't cost much', but neither do they seem to communicate much. Reconciling their sveltness with capitalism's 'infinity of the will' appears to be a case of reconciling the incommunicable to the unheeding.

Reconciliation has become a buzzword of metatheory of late and it is fairly easy to pick it apart in an act of *ideologiekritik* – to reconcile can be to undermine dissent[8] – yet in Lyotard's case there might well be a justification for the reconciliationist impulse. The svelte individual and the infinitely-wilful system can stand as models for the raw materials of any social theory, socialism included. Areas of conflict here are many and varied. The individual can all too often appear to be an anarchistically-inclined entity to the prevailing political system, no matter how liberation-conscious the latter may consider itself to be. Similarly, the system (whether corporate capitalism or corporate state) can appear to be authoritarian and oppressive on occasion to even the most socially-minded of individuals. Sveltness may well act as a reconciliatory corrective to the latter condition, even if it does carry unfortunate overtones of unpredictability of behaviour.

Not all individuals, however, share the same objectives, and not all conceive of themselves as victims of the system. Some wish to use their sveltness to rise in the hierarchy and attain positions of power and influence over others. Authoritarian

sveltness is only too easy to imagine. Armies and police forces frequently manage to go dancing at night, wage war the following morning. For sveltness here read cynicism perhaps. Even so, Lyotard has pinpointed an area of real difficulty for social theorists: the nature of the balance between individual and system. It is yet another area of shared concern where the problems are more apparent than the solutions; indeed, where the presence of each of the opposing elements seems to preclude a solution. Lyotard is at least right in his assertion that it is necessary *in some sense* (the 'sense' being the focus of argument, of course) to reconcile individual and system.

Returning to language as an agent of paradigm change ('Einstein at Zurich') we might well ask if language is being required to do too much by postmodernists, particularly since it is being classified as 'not an instrument of communication'. In the same way that we have come to have texts without authors we now seem to have language without agents ('language expends very little energy to create from the new'), to the extent of depersonalisation: 'language machines don't cost much'. This all depends on what Lyotard means by 'language machines' of course (individual or network, it is not quite clear), but it does have a somewhat sinister ring. Just as it has been pointed out that no-one was ever warmed by a sign, it can surely be objected that no revolution was ever created by a language. We are very much in danger of losing the human dimension to our philosophy (already too much of a threat in this subject-area) if we follow this line of reasoning too far, although Lyotard is alive to the problems which can arise when language is simply treated as 'productive merchandise'. Whether a disinformation campaign run by subversive language machines will restore language's purity is highly questionable: the degree of reification involved at such points is extremely alienating, for all Lyotard's belief that 'It is a mistake to worry about alienation'.

On the other hand, perhaps there is a note of irony to be detected here. Whatever else states may be able to do they cannot legislate (successfully anyway) against the production of language machines – whether individual or network – and the state cannot in fact exist without these permanently potential antitheses to its will: that is the price of dealing with human beings. Recent French philosophical discourse is so different from ours, however, that it is not at all clear whether such passages as the above are to be read by us as sloppy thinking or authority-challenging irony. The gulf between the respective traditions, between caution and calculated risk, looms particularly large at such moments.

III

Perhaps we can turn the piece back on itself and state what theoretical pretensions it actually does have (whether buried or undertheorised) as well as its order (anarchic or otherwise) of argument. To echo, or work around, the theories of others in an intertextual manner (as we have seen Lyotard doing) is to position oneself theoretically, even if the objective is to unravel the thoeretical pretensions of those others. Theory cannot be divor-

ced from critique, and it is critique – *prescriptive* critique too – that we have in 'Svelte Discourse', as its closing statement makes clear: 'We must arrive one day at an international agreement on a concerted reduction of labor time without any loss of purchasing power'. The 'must' in this assertion signals pretension in my opinion, and at the very least antitheory lies behind it. We could, in a bracketing spirit, alter that prefatory comment to read 'The following remarks have antitheoretical pretensions', and thus bring it into the domain of a very specific trend in recent intellectual history.[9] This would not reconcile us to Lyotard – that is not the point of the exercise – but instead enable us to see him as a fellow-traveller, if perhaps a highly eccentric one by our standards, who appears to have similar targets to us. We are on the same road even if we do have different (perhaps incommensurable) maps.

Then too, the piece delights in paradox (language may not communicate, but we are nevertheless exhorted to perform certain 'musts', whose force derives from shared linguistic norms), and paradox is a sophisticated philosophical tactic designed to undermine or dismantle a specific theory: in Lyotard's case to underscore the pretentions of commensurability theorists. There is no escape from theory in this antitheoretical imperative either. No writer who could argue that capitalism is a metaphysical figure can be considered to be without theoretical pretensions. Language such as this, far from being a-theoretical, is already saturated with theoretical commitments.

As to order: we start with a problem (capitalism), we investigate its ramifications in contemporary culture, and we then put forward a concept, sveltness, as a method of countering, at individual level, the problems posed for us by capitalism's alliance with the State. Loosely-constructed insights, granted, but held together by a controlling vision (whether you agree with that vision or not). It is off-the-top-of-the-head in the sense that it offers little in the way of proof. Indeed, what we are presented with in 'Svelte Discourse' is what looks suspiciously like stream-of-consciousness philosophy, and that is manifestly not what most of us in the non-French academic tradition are trained to process. We are trained, in fact, to recoil from the association-of-ideas mode, and style is a real barrier here, as Hartmann among others has noted. But the off-the-top-of-the-headness is designed to appeal to a certain contemporary constituency – which it does – and its appeal needs to be acknowledged and reflected upon. It cuts through the overtheoretical quality and dry-as-dust style of much Anglo-American professional philosophy, Marxism included. It also represents a bid for a constituency whose interest is less likely to lie in philosophy as an internalised discipline, with highly specialised theoretical pretensions for all practical purposes removed from the world of politics, than in philosophy as an agent of social change. And it would have to be admitted that philosophy has a poor record as an agent of social change in the English-speaking world: otherwise capitalism would *not* still be a figure. In other words, it is the sheer *crudeness* of the piece that appeals; the way it casually assumes the death of philosophy, and scatters around a few paradoxes to unsettle readers and make them reflect on their own theoretical commitments. We might conclude, brackets firmly in place, that it does not meet the standards of Anglo-American philosophical discourse *therefore* it is useful.

The standard philosophical mode in English tends to be cautious in tone, with its carefully-formulated propositions, learned footnotes, and painstakingly-compiled references all conspiring to stifle debate. Lyotard can be seen as one of the latest in a line of Continental philosophers running back through Derrida to Nietzsche, who have decided that they must break free from the philosophy of caution (their general unpopularity in the English-speaking academic world suggests mission accomplished). The desire to break free – and *still* be a philosopher – is a powerful one, but the analytical tradition can only regard the desire as incompatible with the act of being a philosopher: that being a business where one should restrict, not proliferate, one's statements (and the risks they involve) in accord with what Jonathan Rée has referred to as 'that streak of hesitancy which is such an important (and amiable) part of traditional philosophical institutions'.[10] If there is one thing that we cannot accuse 'Svelte Discourse' of, however, it is a 'streak of hesitancy'. It is unashamedly aimed at the *emotions*, that area where the philosophy of caution fears, indeed generally refuses, to tread.

Herein lies 'Svelte Discourse''s value, in its bypassing of a tradition that some would consider has long since ossified into a kind of modern scholasticism (whether of the amiable or stifling kind makes little odds), and whose ossification has infected even the counter-discourses that have developed within its - sphere of influence. It is one of the virtues of such a text that its many paradoxes and silences provoke ideologically-loaded responses, and the responses so released reveal the shape of the reacting discourse's own theoretical pretensions with considerable clarity. At the very least it should make us confront again the claims of post-philosophy, as well as to question the point in a post-philosophical (or at best not very philosophically-oriented) world of endlessly, scholastically, refining obsolete structures of argument.
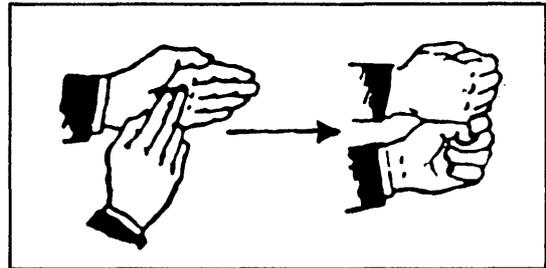
Even its most hostile critic could not deny that postmodernism has had its effect on French and Anglo-American intellectual circles, and that this effect is perceptibly growing and even becoming dominant in some areas (architectural theory and literary practice are two areas that come readily to mind). Postmodernism shares many preoccupations with socialist philosophy, therefore, and we are surely advised to pay attention to its effects as a result. There is an element of iconoclasm about postmodernism that can be quite refreshing, even if it sometimes carries with it more than a hint of intellectual irresponsibility (but that is an oh-so-Anglo reaction...). Philosophy is hard work, and 'Svelte Discourse' gives out no impression of hard intellectual labour (go dancing at night, dash off some loosely-constructed insights in the morning?), therefore it will tend to alienate an audience imbued with the Protestant work ethic. But perhaps our discourse is the one to lose out by not including a looser mode of argument with a risk-taking element. It may well be that loose argument is the way to break out of the philosophical ghetto: and that, post-Marx, must surely be the ultimate goal of any socialist philosopher. In its free-associating, off-the-top-of-the-head,

risk-taking way, postmodernist/poststructuralist discourse probably has the greater potential to break out of that ghetto and do damage to authoritarian structures. I still do not think we have grasped the full significance of this in Anglo-American intellectual life, even though we are very much intertwined in the other discourse's concerns. We are probably bidding for the same audience after all. It may be that we are dealing in this instance with the philosophical equivalent of bricks-in-the-Tate-Gallery: it is *by* a philosopher, agreed, but it is not philosophy ... Perhaps, as with the art world and anti-art, we have to take on board the notion of anti-philosophy.

Lyotard-discourse is by our standards over-individualistic and politically fairly naive. One might also say, however, that it is the lack of these attributes that renders its opposing discourse so culturally sterile: that a bit of Brecht-style 'crude thinking' is a necessary leavening for *all* discourse – even socialist philosophy. We might justifiably question how effective order and theoretical pretension have been in revolutionary terms, and as long as doubts persist as to that effectiveness there probably ought to be a space set aside for Lyotard-discourse, and its ilk, in the English-speaking philosophical world.

Notes

1 All references from the Mark S. Roberts translation. The full text of the original can be found in *Tombeau de l'intellectuel et autres papiers* (Editions Minuit, Paris, 1984).

2 George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle*, London, 1971, p. 63.

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, 1967, p. 12.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

5 Geoffrey Hartmann, *Saving the Text*, Baltimore, 1981, p. xxv.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

7 Cf. the Kuhn-Popper debate, as outlined in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1970).

8 See S. Sim, 'Criticism and Crisis', review of John Fekete (ed.), *The Structural Allegory* (Manchester, 1984), *RP* 43, pp. 36-38.

9 Feyerabend, Rorty, and Derrida have all been described as antitheorists. For the more conservative side of antitheory see W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Against Theory* (Chicago and London, 1985).

10 Jonathan Rée, 'Proletarian Philosophy: A Version of Pastoral?', *RP* 44, pp. 1-7 (p. 6).