Remote Learning Module for 23 March 2020

Lecture Notes Ian Hacking's *Rewriting the Soul*, Chapters 1-3

When we were last in the classroom, we finished up our discussion of Damasio's *Descartes' Error*. I imagine some of us have been thinking about that book and about the importance of maintaining our emotional health at the same time we hope to advance our intellectual endeavors. In keeping with the spirit of what we were able to learn from Damasio, here's wishing you are all well medically, emotionally, domestically and, of course, philosophically.

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(1) Now, to the business at hand. Aristotle began his lectures on metaphysics with the now famous line, "Philosophy begins in wonder." A couple thousand years later, in his Introduction, Ian Hacking mentions his three wonders (skeptical, analytical, constructionist); the first of these amounts to one overriding question: Why is there one creature, memory, of which there are so many different kinds (political and social, psychological, pathological, neurological)? This is the skeptical wonder in a nutshell. The analytical wonder brings us to ask: What principles lock us into supposing that *memory* is the key to so many different kinds of problems? Thinking back to Churchland, we might add: What makes us think the term, memory, names but one phenomenon, a phenomenon that remains the same under all its several uses? Hacking's constructionist wonder follows: what sort of theoretical and social constructions underlie the principles that lead us to suppose memory is just one kind of thing.

(2) Hacking borrows his research strategy from Michel Foucault "archeological" methodology: we'll be digging into the ideological ground of history, looking for strata, looking for sharp mutations in the evolution and redistribution of ideas. Why? So that we make plain that the systems of thought that have brought us to suppose that memory is the key to many disparate problems in human experience are just that: systems of thought; they have their time and their place, but they are not inevitable, unquestionable, necessary. Hacking proposes to initiate his own archeology via the microcosm of the psychiatric diagnosis first labeled "multiple personality disorder," and now called "dissociative identity disorder." He'll also be taking a cue from Nietzsche, and trace the route by which the word, *trauma*, came from referring to a physical wound or lesion to a psychological hurt, a spiritual wound.

(3) Hacking will present us with a number of specific theses throughout the book. They are, however, clustered around a single overarching concern: that the sciences of memory have come in our time to serve the function of secularizing the soul; that the human soul—the stuff of love, passion, envy, tedium, fear—is amenable to scientific scrutiny, to naturalized knowledge.

(4) The main result of Hacking's archeology is announced in the Introduction. He'll hope to show that there are two dynamics (and, yes, these are relations of power) at work in what he calls the business of "Making up People." The first concerns the *public* dynamics of the social relations among people who are known, the knowers, and what the knowers know; this will

explain how various *kinds* of people come into being. The second concerns the *private* dynamics of self-knowledge: how new meanings can change the past if we come to rethink the actions, intentions and events that caused us to be as we find ourselves to be as a result of the public dynamics that have shaped our self-creation.

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Chapter 1: Is it Real?

I'll have a short audio clip posted for your listening pleasure on each of our chapters for today. However, for your notes, the important thing to keep in mind is the following hermeneutical key (it comes from J. L. Austin): when we say that something is "real," we must be careful to note that by itself the word is pretty much meaningless. Why is that? Because this word will only do semantic work provided that (a) it is attached to a noun (it's noun-hungry), and (b) we can specify its complement (it's a contrast-word). Consider the differences in meaning involved when someone says: Holmes is not a real detective (contrast: he's fictional); what's in your coffee is not real cream (is it synthetic, or has low butter fat content?); this is not real beer (does it lack alcohol, or good taste or both?). In short, we need to know how specifically a given person, place, thing, etc. might or might not be real.

Chapter 2: What is it Like?

It is in this chapter that we encounter the two dynamics involved in making up people: this is what Hacking calls the "looping effect of human kinds." When we ask "what is multiplicity like," we need to understand that various answers to this question may be given, depending on the kinds or types of people we suppose multiples to be.

The looping effect of social kinds is a feedback loop: people conform to how they are classified, and in turn revise the classifications that are open to them. Note well, on analogy, that throughout most of the history of Western culture there were no such things as A-students or B-students, or C-students; these classifications only came into being with the advent of certain forms of institutional education. For that matter, it would have been exceedingly odd in the 17th century to call someone a "bad speller," because the very idea of standardized spelling hadn't yet made its way into what we nowadays call literacy.

Much of this chapter focuses on classification, on taxonomy. While we often think of kinds, classes, types, etc. as ways of collecting individuals under terms subject to necessary and sufficient conditions, this habit of thought is actually rather limited: it works well for things like copper or coronavirus, but it's not very helpful for many ordinary things like games or clocks. The term, "disorder," is of the latter sort: instead of precise necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being a disorder or not, we find a cluster of symptoms. Just this sort of observation brought Wittgenstein early in the last century to advocate what we've come to call *family resemblance* semantics: a series of overlapping similarities unite things udder terms like "game" or "mousetrap"—not necessary and sufficient conditions. To Wittgenstein's account, Hacking adds the newer notion of *radial concepts."* The idea here is that we begin with a central

prototype (of, say, a bird, or a dog, or a game or a clock) and then we open the concept to include more things as they radiate away from the central prototype on the strength of various similarity relations. For birds, Hacking adduces, robins and sparrows are close to the center; pelicans and ostriches lie farther out.

Chapter 3: The Movement.

The gist of this relatively short chapter is this: successful movements (and he'll call "multiple personality" a movement as well as a diagnosis) involve three critical elements: accidents, essentials, and institutions. The figures of Wilbur, Ellenberger, and Allison provide the accidents; child abuse provides the essentials; the institution he has in mind is the ISSMP &D. I'll discuss each of these in the audio lecture.

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Tomorrow, we'll continue our tour of *Rewriting the Soul*. Be well everyone, and remember: social distancing saves lives, which is presumably why we are not in JUB 202 presently.

If you haven't submitted a Theoretical Analysis yet, now would probably be a good time to hit the old keyboard. Also note that we've set April 24th as the due date for submitting your Applied Analyses.