

Remote Learning Module for 1 April 2020

Lecture Notes on Ian Hacking's *Rewriting the Soul*, Chapters 13-15

Last time we considered the historical connections between somnambulism and hypnotic trance, wherein a philosophical principle derived from the mediaeval philosophy of Thomas Aquinas helped bring sleep-walking and hypnosis together with questions about who remembers what. Then we saw how, in the course of treating Louis Vivet, medical researchers in the 19th century developed the conceptual framework for multiple personality disorder by maturing *dédoublement* into multiplicity by way of associating a memory clip, a metallic compound, and a somatic malady. Today we'll turn our attention to asking: How was somatic injury (trauma) transformed into psychic hurt, thereby connecting psychological distress with memory? Then we'll examine how the sciences of memory developed in the late 19th century, and we'll explore the theme of Memoro-Politics.

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Chapter 13: Trauma.

(1) We look first to the making of the metaphor, that is, transferring meaning from the body to the soul; then we consider a contrast as regards both theory and therapy in the figures of Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet.

The neurologist, Jean-Martin Charcot died in Nièvre, France in 1893—the year Freud began working up his seduction theory of hysteria. A year earlier, Freud had translated Charcot's lectures on the relation between hypnosis and hysteria; and it was from those lectures that Freud inherited the notion that memory plays a decisive role in the causes of psychological trauma.

Charcot first became interested in the symptomology of head trauma, in the form of railway spine, as a professor of anatomical pathology. His investigations led him to the discovery of male hysterics—just the evidence he needed to wrest the study of hysteria away from the gynecologists, and to subsume it under neurology. Males confirmed Charcot's theory that hysteria is hereditary, and it was in his work that all the ingredients for the very idea of psychological trauma came together: memory, hypnosis, hysteria, and mental suffering.

(2) Both Freud and Janet treated patients fraught with mental suffering. Hacking contrasts the work of these two doctors in order to focus on the putative etiology of hysteria and promise of intervention for alleviating the condition. Freud's overall view was that the causes of hysteria lay in reliving scenes of the onset of a traumatic experience. The content of such memories is what causes hysteria. By using hypnosis, Freud sought to ameliorate the suffering of his patients by disclosing, and thereby confronting, the horror of past experience. Janet, the ever flexible pragmatist took a different course. Skeptical of "mental causes" in the first place, he used hypnosis to implant *false* memories of original events in hopes that happy recall would replace

horrible memories, and thereby relieve suffering. On Hacking's analysis, Janet fooled his patients, while Freud fooled himself.

(3) Our chapter ends with a note from Nietzsche: psychological pain is “a fat word standing in place of a skinny question mark.” In this regard it is quite like the placebo effect (also a fat words standing in for a skinny question), but in both cases, certainly real enough.

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Chapter 14: The Sciences of Memory.

(1) Chapters 14 and 15 flesh out the analytical skeleton of the entire book—derived from Foucault's thematic, power/knowledge; in Hacking's hands, this thematic appears first in the sciences of memory and then in what he calls memoro-politics.

(2) As regards the sciences of memory, Hacking offers four theses.

(i) The sciences of memory emerged in the late 19th century, giving birth to new kinds of facts, truths and falsehoods, and objects of knowledge.

(ii) Memory, at first an index of personal identity, was transformed at this time into the *key to the soul*; spiritual knowledge of the soul was displaced by scientific knowledge of memory.

(iii) The facts established by the sciences of memory are of two kinds: surface knowledge (*connaissance*) and depth knowledge (*savoir*). This distinction is one of the tools Foucault used to show how the relation, knowledge/power, resists separation. It is a form of depth knowledge, of *savoir*, that provides the warrant for expecting there to be facts about memory to discover.

(iv) Political debates that hitherto took place at the moral level were transformed in the late 19th century to the level of factual knowledge.

(3) Foucault's divide between *savoir* and *connaissance* bears a striking resemblance to another divide concerning the nature of science, also developed around 1960, on the other side of the Atlantic: Thomas Kuhn's distinction between a *paradigm* and the *normal science* conducted under it. Like a Kuhnian paradigm, the elements of Foucault's *savoir* are the practices of a scientific discourse—the rules and habits that individuate and classify objects, and assign meaning to concepts. *Connaissance*, like normal science, is the workaday business of forming judgments of fact about the world. The sciences of memory (neurology, experimental psychology, and psychodynamics in the 19th century, and neurobiology and artificial intelligence in the 20th century) are all a form of surface knowledge—a *connaissance* that takes for granted that memory is an object of study. After a brief retrieve of 19th century anthropometry (when, for example, Delannay correlated memory prowess with inferiority), Hacking proceeds to trace the emergence of the special sciences of memory.

(4) From the work of Paul Broca and Carl Wernicke, neurology began to connect brain anatomy with mnemonic ability. Later on Hermann Ebbinghaus developed a statistics of recall, so that memory might be timed. The French wing of the theory of psychodynamics was preoccupied

with the study of forgetting. Here we find Ribot's Law: the progressive destruction of memory from unstable to stable shows that stability is proportional to age (the older the memory, the more stable). Ribot held that there is not one thing called memory, but many memories; he considered the *moi*, the self, to be the sum of a range of conscious states, and that its continuity with the past is formed by memory. All these moves were made as exercises in normal science, as bits of surface knowledge, bits of *connaissance* within the *savoir*, the depth knowledge that says: What has been *forgotten* forms our character, personality, our soul.

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Chapter 15: Memoro-Politics.

(1) The second aspect of knowledge/power that Hacking takes from Foucault comes from one of the latter's later works, the *History of Sexuality*. Foucault found in his historical studies that two forms of politics have shaped the very contours of human experience in the Western tradition: an *Anatomo-politics* of the human body, and a *Bio-politics* of human populations. To these twin forms of knowledge/power, Hacking adds the politics of memory, or *Memoro-politics*, of which there are two flavors: personal and communal.

(2) Communal memoro-politics are found in the manner in which shared memory helps define a group of people. Personal memoro-politics is of more recent vintage; it concerns a power struggle built around claims to knowledge—a struggle that is fought on common ground, a common *savoir*.

(3) For MPD, we look to the *savior* of trauma and recovery. Here, Hacking looks to the work of Judith Herman, whose book, *Trauma and Recovery*, traces three shifts in the power individuals since the 19th century: (i) hysteria (driven by French republicanism); (ii) shell-shock (nowadays, PTSD, and in any case driven by anti-war movements; and (iii) sexual/domestic violence (driven by feminism). All three interest Hacking because in each case the struggle to wrest power was fought on the common ground of the new sciences of memory, whereby moral confrontations could be made scientific, objective, and impersonal. The underlying depth knowledge here is committed to the principle that there are truths about memory and forgetting to be had. By way of further illustration, Hacking adduces the fact that for all their differences, the feminists who sought to recover memories of child abuse and the fundamentalists who sought to recover memories of satanic ritualistic abuse shared the same depth knowledge about memory.

(4) In Foucault's philosophy anatomo-politics is about *discipline* (the subjugation of bodies), while bio-politics is about *control* (the regulation of populations). Foucault saw the two as like the poles of a field of force; Hacking puns on the word pole, seeing three poles arranged like a tripod, forming a cluster of intermediary relations so that to the anatomo-politics of the body, and the bio-politics of society, there is added the memoro-politics of the soul.

(5) The chapter closes with a reflection on the project of biographies, and here again we meet Locke's differentiation between a person and a human being. The human being has a biography

all right; it is the story of that individual's bodily continuity. But a person has a *remembered* biography, a biography fit for Locke's enterprise culture and its populations. And thus we no longer talk about whether incest is evil, Hacking contends, for that would be to reenter spiritual matters about which "we now abjure subjective preference." Rather, we ask *who remembers* incest.

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Next time, we'll continue our tour of *Rewriting the Soul* to its thrilling conclusion. Stay tuned.

Be well everyone, and remember: social distancing saves lives, which is presumably why we are still not in JUB 202 presently.