

Dialogue with Julia Kristeva

Professor Griselda Pollock (Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Leeds).

The aim of this session was to open the conference with what is typically left to the end: a conversation between participants and the major speaker. All participants were invited to prepare questions; some sent them in advance. The intention was to allow an overview, an assessment and a critical engagement with Julia Kristeva's sustained theoretical, political and analytical project that has spanned thirty years of this century – the period from the uprisings of the 1960s with its new social movements, through the retrenchment of the new right and the decline of Eurocommunism, as well as the end of the Eastern Bloc's isolation within totalitarian regimes. The period also covers the cultural shifts marked by the terms postmodernity and postmodernism while equally involving major realignments through postcoloniality in which issues of racism, difference, migration and diaspora have become major foci. Throughout this same period, the question of women and the questions posed by women, questions of sex, sexuality and the epochs of reproduction have been addressed with varying degrees of political activism and theoretical complexity.

Throughout this period Julia Kristeva has produced a series of major contributions to these debates, while her work has both set and interrogated the very terms of our enquiries. How do we acknowledge the role of intellectual work on politics, ethics and aesthetics in the postmodern moment? What is it to be a woman intellectual – given the terms of Julia Kristeva's own views on phallic identification and the lost maternal? What are the relations between polis and psyche, Marxism and psychoanalysis? What are the legacies of the structuralisms in our work on texts, images, sounds in cultural forms and aesthetic practices? Can art be part of the ethical or is it revolutionary? What is revolution and revolt?

Julia Kristeva's work has been an often shocking questioning of social assumptions, philosophical *données*, and theoretical shibboleths. This opening dialogue will open the spaces of that huge but coherent project to discussion, marking the thirty years since Julia Kristeva arrived in Paris as a graduate student in linguistics by inviting current graduate students to pose questions.

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Professor Susan Siegfried (Department of Fine Art, University of Leeds)

In the 1970s there was a project to bring together semiotic and psychological theories of the subject within a materialist analysis of history, coming out of the Marxist tradition. You produced a number of essays informed by that project, including several which addressed the visual arts. In 'Giotto's Joy', for example, you talked about the 'fundamental problem [...] of including a subjective signifying economy within a social context' and argued for the importance of integrating a theory of the subject

with an analysis of the economic and ideological foundations of artistic production. Would you agree that that particular configuration is no longer viable today and, if so, how do you think it should be rethought?

Julia Kristeva

I would first like to thank Griselda Pollock who is responsible for this event and to thank all those who are present despite this lovely day when you have chosen to come and have a dialogue with me. I am very moved – as you can imagine. The fact of being an intellectual and more especially a woman intellectual is a form of monstrosity that creates a certain kind of isolation and solitariness. To realize that there are sympathetic people, who enjoy the sunshine, but still chose to enter a dialogue about my work gives me the desire to continue. I thank you.

I would like to add one other general remark by way of opening. I spoke of intellectual women. In reviewing my own intellectual trajectory thanks to the occasion of this conference, I discerned that there was a common factor that unified my different interventions. I identified life with thought, or perhaps with thinking [*la pensée*]. One cannot live without thought. I consider thought not just as calculation or logical argument. As I argue in my recent seminar and book on *La Révolte*, I understand the term revolt etymologically. It means not only political revolution, for we also speak of the earth's revolution around the sun, which implies a sense of return, a sense of displacement. In the etymological analysis of the root of the word itself there is also the dimension of unveiling. The root of this word revolt is to be found daily before our eyes: in the logo of the VOLVO car – meaning something which goes around. But it is also, like the omelette which is flipped over, to be found in the unexpected term *vaudeville*, which sends us back to the errors one can commit in revolting [*se revoltant*].

I understand it also in the Proustian sense of a search for the past – time, anamnesis, a moment when thought is that language which returns to the past, in order to displace us towards progress. It is the past which prepares a renaissance, a rebirth.

Thought as revolt will necessarily drive us towards theory, towards theories of language and semiology, with which I began my intellectual work. But it will also direct us inevitably towards psychoanalysis, as the return of memory and as a practice of subjective rebirth. But above all it leads us to writing, and I do not just mean writing as an object: I have myself focussed on writers as different as Mallarmé, Lautréamont and Céline. In addition, I also mean writing as a personal practice, as in novel writing. That is why I have recently become interested in a kind of novel writing that might surprise you, but one which participates in this idea of revolt: detective fiction. This is because, just as Lacan said the unconscious may perhaps be structured like a language, I think that it is above all structured as a *carnage*. We have possibilities of violence and aggressivity – the famous death drive of Freud – which find themselves in our technological media universe of the image, more and more repressed and not thought through. They erupt in brutality and vandalism, localised warfare, crime. It is to be found at the political level, in the compromises of our politicians. Thus I wanted to maintain this zero degree of questioning, of thought as a mode of inquiry

to be found in the story as investigation for which the detective forms a current example. This model keeps open the possibilities of posing questions and producing some kind of understanding.

Griselda Pollock quoted my comments about our society witnessing a period of depression. Detective fiction is a way of remaining optimistic within this depressive moment for it keeps open the possibility of knowledge. There is carnage; there is crime. Yet we can understand it. I think it is one of the aims of the intellectual who thinks to maintain curiosity as a critical value. Perhaps this is the only value of the intellectual at the moment. The values of good and evil are no longer the focus since these values have been so fundamentally questioned. What remains is curiosity as our current intellectual value.

To return now to Professor Siegfried's question. In one of my first areas of research I was concerned with the plastic arts and especially in the masters of the early Italian Renaissance, like Giotto. It was there that I formulated as a fundamental question the possibility of linking the psychic economy of the subject with a social context. I think this is a continuing necessity, and even more important in the contemporary era which is more and more a world of the image; it is, in a well known phrase, a society of the spectacle. We must go on examining both the psychic economy of the subject – for example what are its pleasures, especially in the society of the image – and interrogating the nature of the social and economic determinations.

Let us take the example of detective fiction. It is a *mis-en-scène* of violence. Violence is projected onto our screens. In the society of the spectacle we have violence in varying forms. Either violence is extremely sanitised, for instance on the governmental stage of the European community, or in dress design, or it explodes across our media in the news reports of murders, accidents and violent movies. We should then ask if what is shown, which the public seems to enjoy and uses to unwind after a hard day's work, is not carnage made visible. We no longer speak of or about it; it is shown to us, rather as in Marx's phrase, as the opium of the people. Aggressive and perverse drives are cathartically exhausted in entertainment. But we are not encouraged to question them, or to think them through. Here lies one of the vocations of the intellectual, critic or artist, to introduce a disquiet into our consumption of the image, and especially the image of violence.

Let me say this in another way. The question I continue to pose to myself is this: what are the subjective benefits which accrue to the spectator or the artist in descending into hell, and making visible in the image the most dramatic drives towards the dissolution of identity which burst forth in an image of the corpse, or the images of mutilation so widely visible both on our screens and in contemporary art?

Here are a few more observations on this vast question which I cannot fully answer. In the contemporary image, whether it is on television or in a museum of contemporary art, we witness an exposure of a phenomenon that is both psychological and political: the pulverisation of identity. This occurs through violence and carnage, as I have just suggested. But it is also evident in the kinds of objects we find in our

museums of current art. Instead of the images of a kind which produce totality, created by art practices aspiring to a kind of completion, as we find in the art of the nineteenth century, for example, in our times, we notice a cult of the fetish, of kitsch, of ugliness, of installation. These all function as forms of fragmentation which belong to a logic of non-identity which concerns us all when we see it. When we encounter such things in the museum, they are not mere provocation. They touch parts of our personalities which are themselves already pulverised and dissolving. This work of dis-identification, and pulverisation of identity is not without risks. What happens – which is the situation of the individual in the twentieth century – is that there is a counterforce to this pulverisation that longs for some kind of anchorage and stable connection. Where will this anchorage be found? Against the dissolution of being, arises the desire to belong. As Proust remarked, instead of being, one tries to belong. This shift from being as the foundation of identity to belonging forces a desire to adhere to a group, to an ideology, to a sect – because religions are in crisis.

In this situation, analytic thought – in its largest sense – as interrogation can become a form of vigilance, or protection. Instead of seeking to achieve dogmatic certainties or to become dogmatically attached to beliefs or groups, belonging itself must be questioned.

A final sentence to conclude my remarks about the problem of the image. I was recently rereading St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*, which includes a book titled 'On Images'. In this section on images, that is very central to Western thought about the image, St. Augustine quotes a verse from a psalm which roughly says: although man walks in the image, he makes himself anxious in vain. Augustine inverts this to read: although man makes himself anxious in vain, he walks in the image. He means thereby to argue that in relation to anxiety or anguish, the image can solace and reassure us. We have, I suggest, come to a point in our civilisation where we use images to solace ourselves. Thus when I am tired, I turn on the television and fall asleep. Here is the role of criticism and contemporary art. We would then rephrase Augustine: although we walk in the image, we walk no more. We ask questions about the image. We have a critical attitude towards the image, and that is what a museum of contemporary art should show us, or what art criticism should reveal.

Kathleen O'Grady (Trinity College, Cambridge)

1. Though your work has included linguistic and semiotic studies, literature and psychoanalytic analyses, your writings have been consistently framed by the Johanne quotation, 'In the beginning was the Word'. You adopted C line's revision in Powers of Horror: 'No! In the beginning was emotion. The Word came next to replace emotion as the trot replaces the gallop'. In Tales of Love you sum up your understanding of Freud with the statement: 'In the beginning was hatred'. Your text on the relation of psychoanalysis and faith is titled, In the Beginning Was Love. And more recently your work on Proust has reformulated this statement once again: 'In the beginning was suffering'. This continual transformation of the New Testament invocation ('In the beginning...') begs the question: which of your semiotic, psychoanalytic, or Catholic proclivities generates this perpetual revisionism, this persistent desire for tracking and tracing a beginning?

You are all posing some very searching questions and not treating me gently here. I will answer the question in two parts: one is the interest in origins, and the other the place of Christian tradition. Origins are one of the fundamental questions of metaphysics that cannot be entirely avoided in linguistics or psychoanalysis. Let me take the psychoanalytical point of view. In anamnesis we have the possibility of entering as far as possible into the investigation of infantile memory to discover the most distant memories of our childhood. These are so often traumatic memories. In this journey, a strange transmutation occurs in our language. In speaking, in traversing the universe of signs, we arrive at emotions, at sensations, at drives, at affects and even at what Freud named the 'umbilicus of the dream'. This is something unnameable, which becomes, none the less, the source of our investigation. The heteronomy of our psyche has always preoccupied my investigations. I am interested in language [*langage*], and in the other side of language which is filtered inevitably by language and yet is not language. I have named this heterogeneity variously. I have sought it out in the experience of love, of abjection, of horror. I have called it the semiotic in relation to the symbolic. But it is the doubling of language [*la langue*] that seems, at the moment, to be of more interest to women than to men.

What the other side of language as metaphysics thinks of as origin, is not an origin. Rather it is heterogeneity vis-à-vis language. I suggest that this is a fundamental point of psychoanalytical theory. Freud frequently reclaimed what he called his dualism: the death drive versus the life instincts. For Freud the psychic apparatus is composed of two distinct economies or logics – the logic of the drives and the logic of language. These logics are interdependent but not identical. By this we can see that the intervention made by Jacques Lacan, which was very significant and sane, was, none the less, reductive because he appeared to reduce everything to the logic of language. He thus simplified this fundamental dichotomy and repressed the heterogeneity on the side of the drives. English analysts like Bion, an analyst who followed Melanie Klein, talked of *alpha* and *beta* functions. Bion was perhaps closer to what I name the heteronomy of the psychic apparatus conceived by Freud which I have tried to translate by talking of the semiotic, or by stressing that body of sensation and feeling irreducible to language.

Then there is the second aspect of the question that mentioned that my supposed 'Catholic proclivity' generates perpetual revisionism. People are puzzled by my interest in religious traditions and especially those of Catholicism. There is much to be said on this matter. Firstly, to continue with the thread of memory: we do not have a choice but to put into practice a history of religion as a demystification. We have to rid ourselves of the history of religion. We have to say what it spoke of, otherwise. The return to the theological texts or the texts of art that precede us is indispensable. With Freud as well as other theoreticians and philosophers, we find such an appropriation of traditions as a part of their revolution, their revolt. We must, therefore, not allow ourselves to remain ignorant of this heritage. Instead, as before, we have to *question* it; as it were, to extract the rational kernels from the mystical shell, as Marx suggested vis-à-vis Hegel. The phrase, 'In the beginning was love', used in my book *Tales of Love*, returns us to the fact that the speaking being speaks in relation to another. What is this relation? Is it from that point that we can begin to interrogate?

Is it a relation of love? Is it also a relation of hatred? Freud discerns in the relation to the other a rejection of the other.

But we are still within the frame of the Bible and Gospels which poses the necessity of thinking of the Other as indispensable to the horizon of language. Thus a tradition, stretching back two thousand years since its founding texts is still in debt to these texts and as such it cannot be abandoned or dissolved before we have interrogated it, lucidly and without complacency.

Kathleen O'Grady

2. Your psychoanalytical writings have exhibited a preoccupation with religious texts and writers, as well as a detailed investigation of Jewish and Christian concepts and religious figures. What brought about this interest? And can analysis supplant religion? Become our 'modern religion' as you call it in 'Psychoanalysis and the Polis'?

Kristeva

I will try and give a more concrete response to this question. I am interested, both for practical analytical reasons as well as for easily comprehended social ones, in two questions: the question of the stranger, and the question of narcissism. I was struck by the two facts that in religious traditions and the major texts of the past, like the Bible and, in a different way in the Gospels, that these two questions are addressed. The Bible and the Gospels represent a line of thought about alterity and the place of the other, the stranger. In relation to other religious traditions these questions are considered in the most intense and radical ways. Buddhism and Daoism are refined bodies of thought about the relation of the man to the cosmos, concerning his polyvalence, his polymorphism, his hypersexuality, his femininity. But the question of alterity and of the stranger are most clearly and most radically considered in the Bible and the Gospels. We have to take up these traditions, as we find in Freud, and in our times, in the writings of Levinas, whose ideas resonate with them. There are significant dimensions which rational, secular thought owes to these traditions. In my book *Strangers to Ourselves*, I use the example of Ruth the Moabite. The book of Ruth is a magisterial reflection on the alterity and strangeness of woman which one finds nowhere else. Ruth is a foreigner and yet she is the ancestor of the royal house of David. Thus, at the heart of sovereignty there is an inscription of a foreign femininity. Institutionalised Judaism does not recognize this, yet it is part of a tradition of generosity towards the other that is at the heart of Jewish monotheism. In the *Song of Songs* the amorous relation is figured as a relation between a man and a woman who are strangers, travellers, destined to lose each other. Separation is thus placed at the heart of the relation of one to the other in the Bible.

With regards to my interest in narcissism, you will recall the Biblical and Gospel verse on which Thomas Aquinas comments: Love your neighbour as yourself. It can be interpreted narrowly as the legitimation of egotism and individualism. But in my book, *Tales of Love*, I interpreted it as the necessity of structuring narcissism. To become capable of loving our neighbour as ourself, we have first of all to heal a wounded narcissism. We must reconstitute narcissistic identity to be able to extend a hand to the other. Thus what is needed is a reassurance or reconstruction of both narcissism, personality and, of course, the subject for there to be a relation to the

other. To put this into its practical social context, let me recall the enthusiasm with which many of us of the generation of '68 launched ourselves into social activism, and put our selves and our comforts at risk. We struggled to find some meaning in the destruction. We occupied factories; I myself took part in this to find meaning in life. But while reading as usual, and in particular at that moment, these texts, the Bible, the Gospels and Thomas Aquinas, I began to argue that it was important to act on this social plane by moving into the factories, but perhaps it was necessary to be installed within ourselves first of all. This seems to be the primary message of Thomas Aquinas: love the other as oneself, but by being settled within oneself, by delighting in oneself. Thus: heal your inner wounds which, as a result will render you then capable of effective social action, or intervention in the social plane with the other. Therefore, I would argue that we must heal our shattered narcissism before formulating higher objectives.

Professor Jonathan Freedberg (University of Michigan)

To what extent are the particular twists you give your argument in the chapter of the Proust book devoted to Jews, i.e. the warning against particularisms, nationalities, group formulations of identity, and, in particular, the specific mechanisms of exclusion constitutive of the French literary canon, caught up in a kind of othering, a reification of Jewish difference as a stable and unified project that has historically been a part of anti-semitism? In other words, to what extent are you ignoring the highly contested and charged debates within European Jewish thought about precisely these questions of group identity and its use, particularly under signs of, or at the moment of Emancipation, and the ways in which these debates were shaped by and responded to pressures within and without the Jewish community, compromises, accommodations and hybridities, and the quite justified – in many cases – fears that such accommodations would lead not only to the extinction of Judaism and Jewishness, but at moments of resurgent anti-semitism, to the extinction of Jews? I don't quarrel with your reading of Proust's Jewishness, which is excellent and extraordinary, just with the weight it is made to carry.

Kristeva

I shall have to say a few words about my book on Proust. The question concerns a work devoted to Proust which commenced with a series of lectures that I gave at the University of Kent, under the aegis of Stephen Bann. Part of the course was dedicated to Proust and the question of identity, national identity, religious identity, sexual identity. The book was published in two versions: *Proust and the Sense of Time* (Faber & Faber, 1995) and *Time and Sense* (Columbia University Press, 1996) and the question of identity appeared in the second volume.

The question of the Judaicity of Proust is a very complex issue and I cannot go into it in detail here. I looked at it from a particular angle, provided by the work of Hannah Arendt, the German philosopher, friend of Heidegger and of the State of Israel. Arendt wrote several things on this topic of which the most relevant was her excellent book, which is a major contribution to contemporary thought, her book on Anti-Semitism. A very important element of that book relies on Proust. It may be a surprise to realize that Arendt was a Proustian. In her archives there are to be found her copious notes on her reading of Proust, more extensive than those which appear in her book. She uses Proust to situate the Jews in the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth century European society. In substance she argues this: The

Jews have transformed the question of their identity of being – [*de l'être*] – into a question of belonging – [*en l'être*]. Thus instead of interrogating themselves about religious identity, of maintaining it or questioning it, that is to say remaining within Judaism, they transformed it into the secular question of Judaicity – Jewishness, thus a psychological particularity. Working with this particularity, they hoped to de-religionise themselves and thus be integrated either into aristocratic or bourgeois society, as we see in the character of Swann and his Salon, or with Bloch – both from Proust's book. This continues until some dramatic affair like the Panama affair, or business scandals demands a scapegoat. At that moment, the society that appears to accept them, while their Jewishness is regarded as their virtue or their vice, now uses it against them and rejects them as a scapegoat, and that was the Dreyfus Affair.

In her text, even though in later work her ideas follow a different and more complex trajectory, Hannah Arendt here argues that one must return to origins. Jewishness is an error and leads consciously and unconsciously to the Holocaust. Thus, what must one do? One must return to a pure identity – religious – and found a state on the basis of that religious identity. This is just one answer to the problem. There are other responses that she provides which include finding other political responses – that is where her book on Rachel Varharnegan provides some food for thought – to the question of identity. The political solution may be the formation of a state; but there are other political answers that are more open and do not yet have a conclusion. That represents the position of Hannah Arendt, as it appears to me, and I suggest that it is a position that appears reasonable, comprehending the impossibility of living in history, containing the untenable elements of history. In relation to the history of persecution, Hannah Arendt is correct. The solution, on the other hand, of the aesthetic, the position adopted by Proust, is completely different. I want to make clear that the case for Judaism against Jewishness in the arguments of Hannah Arendt, that is to say arguing for belonging, seems to be entirely justified on the political plane. Proust, however, never chose this route. He chose the road of Jewishness and went further into the dissolution of identity. Why?

For Proust, the character of the Jew in the context of Western culture is comparable to others. The character of the writer, the artist, and the homosexual are identical with that of 'the Jew': they are all marginal. This is a position of witnessing. To what do the writer, the artist, the homosexual and the 'Jew' bear witness: to the impossibility of identity itself. Identity is constituted in moments of passion, for instance love or jealousy. Society, however, makes identity untenable because it excludes the impassioned individual, the passionately engaged individual whether engaged politically or personally. In society there is a kind of constitution of sado-masochistic bonds where the marginal, the individual, the impassioned become a scapegoat in relation to which the others tie the bonds of fascination and hatred. Thus the position of the 'Jew', the writer, the homosexual and the artist are allowed to act as witnesses to the violence of the group, since the group is formed to exclude the singular and the particular. As a result of this position, the writer dons the role not of constituting a viable and calm society, the objective that a philosopher like Hannah Arendt rightly pursues, but the writers speak the horror of all society. Beauty must pay this price. This presupposes both marginality and the possibility of entering into the sado-

masochistic logic of society to unveil its violence. The logic of aesthetic creation is not necessarily the logic of choosing identity. It is rather the logic of the borderline.

In his book, Proust not only reveals that every society is excluding and rejecting. He also shows how each and every identity is derisory. Anyone who takes him/herself as being someone, assuming an identity and putting him/herself on a pedestal, invites ridicule. If I, for instance, deluded myself that 'I am Julia Kristeva', I would make myself ridiculous. Thus, for Proust, a Jewish person who declares him/herself to *be* a Jew, is ridiculous. A homosexual who claims this identity is to be derided. It is the pulverisation and shattering of all pretensions to given or fixed identity that forms the irony characteristic of Proust's position, a position that shares something with what we now call postmodernism while also being linked to the tradition of word-play and irony we find in Madame de Sévigny and Saint-Simon. The fact that beauty is allied with irony marks this project's difference from the logic of the group and identity.

I know that what I am saying, and I am convinced by my reading of his work that this is Proust's position, may shock those who suffer from exclusion and want to claim identity as a means of counteracting it. Perhaps the questioner is interested in those strategies adopted by the culturally and socially marginal who feel the need to forge a strategic ideal of identity within the conditions of social resistance. This is well within the logic of the social game. None the less, it is necessary to remain vigilant about the assumption of identity in order not to allow ourselves to be ensnared by a new form of dogmatism.

Omayra Cruz (Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Leeds)

1. Both Richard Rorty and Jean Baudrillard appear heavily influenced by your work. For example, both locate responsible action within the realm of poetic production. Both maintain the vitality of irony. Do you feel in turn any affinity with their work, or has this shared pseudo-existential emphasis on the contingency and commitment integral to intellectual/ artistic production developed independently on all counts?

2. Various theorists, particularly Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, and Deleuze and Guattari, have recently maintained that psychoanalysis creates the pathologies its purports to soothe by insisting on the requisite segregation of otherness within an 'individual'. Must the pathology of non-difference be upheld? Or to what extent might one negotiate subjectivities which escape the dichotomy of madness and sanity by allowing the strategic play of the psychically indistinct (e.g. Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial border-crossing, Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages) without sacrificing the social and psychological benefits of individuals? In short, need we preserve the long-standing bias of Western thought which insists on the subject-as-one and no other?

Kristeva

In reply to the first question, there is certainly a relation of sympathy and complicity but there is no question of influence.

There are many aspects to the second question. The first is the idea that psychoanalysis generates pathology. This appears to put psychoanalysis on trial. But I think that such an accusation is indefensible. Yet I take it seriously because psychoanalysis

no longer seems 'à la mode'. Indeed it is widely attacked. For instance, an exhibition about Freud which was being planned by the New York Public Library was rescinded after pressure from a variety of anti-psychoanalytic groups who attacked Freud as a seducer of his patients, or for not having been sufficiently seductive. Thus we witness a conjunction of conflicting positions which lead as it were to a 'deconsideration' of psychoanalysis.

Thus I take this question very seriously in order to defend psychoanalysis. Within the psychoanalytical process there is something happening which we no longer find in the modern world. I return to the question of memory that we discussed earlier. Our civilisation has revealed something significant under the term 'retour retrospective'. What does this mean? Since the era of Socrates and Plato, and through to the theology of Augustine in the Christian period, it has been argued that 'man' can learn to know the truth of 'himself', his being, by turning inward upon himself, by turning a gaze upon himself, by looking back into himself. This return, anamnesis and self-interrogation, takes the form of two practices: Prayer and Reading, the latter being the secular form of the former. Meditation with the self, concentration upon the self takes place through the book. In my experience, many patients enter analysis with a completely modern and singular pathology. They can no longer read. It is not a matter of illiteracy or a neurological dysfunction. It is because their interior dwelling, the *camera obscura* of their inner life, has been destroyed. Depression, anxiety, stress can destroy it. They say they can no longer concentrate on themselves, or that they cannot recall what they have just read. Nothing writes itself within. The psychic domain of the inner world is destroyed.

In our tradition, by subjective self-interrogation through prayer or reading, we have managed to build an extraordinary dimension in Western culture, a strong interior, a psychic life. Now this psychic life is threatened by violence, by drugs, by neuroleptics. There is certainly a case for drug treatments of depression. But it functions to allow you precisely to function, to return to work and continue your daily life, robotically. The price you pay is that you cease to ask questions, to question yourself. It seems to make you better, but are you really OK? You can be re-established as a functioning social member by anti-depressants, but you evacuate the interrogation of the psychic spaces.

Psychoanalysis does not follow this route. It takes the path of the 'retour retrospective' and thus favours a permanent interrogation of the subject. This is not easy. Certainly in the process it may come about that the patient becomes depressed. It is not the analysis that causes the depression. Rather the process reactivates the past within the frame of the psychoanalytic session and in the return to that past, uncovers repressed materials that appear in the form of symptoms that the analysis has not caused, but provoked into a re-appearance in a space where they can be worked through. Of course there are failed analyses where the patient has left the process before the symptoms are fully worked through and continues to exhibit the symptoms. But the aim of analysis is to reactivate and then work through the material that appears as symptom.

Thus I have tried to establish a correspondence between psychoanalysis and an older tradition of retrospective introspection. Now I must indicate important differences.

The aim of the traditional modes was a form of reconciliation – in religious terms, with God. The result or aim was grace and a sense of happiness. This is not the aim or end in analysis. Such states, where they occur, in the form of idealisation of the analyst or the Other, are transitional states. In contrast to the tradition I have outlined, analysis reveals that reconciliation is not possible because the permanent condition is that of conflict. Reconciliation is provisional. To use a metaphor, analysis is intellectual Trotskyism: the revolution is permanent. So what is the solution to this permanent condition of conflict? Creativity.

In analysis, a certain element of conflict will be relieved, soothed, pacified. But there is always a remnant. The best outcome of analysis is not the adaptive normalization which does occur in some schools of analysis, in the United States and France, for instance. The best outcome is a recognition of permanent conflictuality. For me, even while having been in analysis, there is a remaining area of conflictedness that comes out in my writing detective fiction, taking place outside the frame of analysis. Thus the ideal result is that you are enabled to transform what cannot be analysed into some form of creativity. It could be maternity, friendship, teaching. It could be writing.

Aaron Koerner (Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Leeds)

In your text, 'A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident', you suggest that the intellectual has inherited the unproductive discourses, formerly the Humanities. The intellectual's task is then to assert their political value. Given this, would it be accurate to suggest that the intellectual must also attain a moral position which imperatively rejects political indifference?

Kristeva

I can hardly do other than agree completely. Yet at this moment it is hard to discern the lines of demarcation within political differences which are so blurred in our bi-partisan Western system. The vocation of the intellectual is certainly to adopt an ethical position. In France, in recent years, we have seen intellectuals engaged with questions of immigration and foreigners. This is indeed a political question, but it is also a moral matter. There has also been the important question of feminism and the situation of women, which deals with a social issue that is indirectly political.

I would like, however, to interrogate the word 'unproductive'. Perhaps we need to revalorize this dimension of intellectual work. In my book *Sens et Non-Sens de la Révolte*, I underline the fact that the Surrealists understood, long before consumer society, that *homo sapiens* is not only *homo faber*. Value does not only reside in production. Of course, we must all be fed, clothed and kept warm and material considerations are vital. But there is an unproductive but important dimension: the intellectual. The Surrealists mocked productive society, ridiculing the bourgeois for his preoccupation with work and advancement. We have become unaware of the unreasonable nature of this demand for productivism. Of course, we must work for social justice for those excluded from it. We must not neglect the project of integration. Neither must we abandon the values of the mind. Thus the intellectual's function is also to promote in addition less easily discerned values: questions. In the past, the intellectual acquired a kind of leadership or mastery through condemning the evils of the bourgeoisie and championing the good of the proletariat. But we can no longer indulge in such simple

certainties. The moral value of the intellectual lies in disturbing them: in a persistent disquietude.

I am reminded of a comment by Georges Bataille, who tried to legitimate the poet as a minor voice as opposed to a master figure. Perhaps we should think the intellectual in such a minor role, trying to think through the absence of certainty. Indeed our role may be less than minor; it may be minuscule. The point of departure is giving value to what is most fragile in humanity.

David Bate (West Sussex Institute and University of Leeds)

How far is your work on melancholia derived from clinical experience? What could we learn from that work on melancholia about 'avant-garde' art practices?

Kristeva

Depression and melancholia have been at the centre of my clinical practice for some time during which I have worked at the hospital of the Cité Universitaire and at the Salpêtrière, in fact with pharmacologists. There are structures of melancholia and depressive conditions which respond to a double treatment in which one has recourse to both some form of drug therapy and analysis or psychotherapy. It was as a result of these mixed cures that I wrote my book *Black Sun*.

My major disagreement with Freud in this field lies in the attention that I pay to language. In certain cases, the discourse of the melancholic is so impoverished that one wonders on what could one base an analysis. The depressive feels that it is not worth talking for the connection between the subject and the other has been virtually severed. The depressive feels that one can only weep or fall silent. The first task of the cure, therefore, is to reestablish the bond with language. This takes me back to what I said earlier, quoting Thomas Aquinas, about healing the narcissistic wound in order to restore confidence in the self and in the other sufficiently to reinvest in language.

The language of the depressed person is not psychotic. But it rests upon a denial of the signifier which results from the dissociation of the affect from language. It speaks, but it does not touch me. Affect remains in suffering, so all I can do is weep. The work of the analysis is to reconnect language and affect.

This is where the work of art takes its place. As Walter Benjamin has argued in relation to German Tragedy, a point that could be generalised to cover aesthetic processes in general, at the base of art is a depression which manifests itself in a devalorization of the self and/or the ordinary signs of everyday language. This can be countered in a resurrectionary move that finds itself in a supplementary signification, which seeks to renew the relations between signs and affects that have been formerly severed through a play, a modification or transformation of signs. The poet does not use everyday expressions but invents elaborate metaphors, *mots-valise*, glosso-lalia. The plastic and visual arts work by a kind of violent reforming of signs; by trying to reopen the cavern of suffering.