

## Being as Being: A Phenomenology of Citizenship Amid the Crisis of Modern Nihilism

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With the support of the Simons Foundation, SFU students were invited by the Institute for the Humanities to submit written research proposals that focused on issues related to citizenship. **Evan Smith**, SFU undergraduate, presented the following selected paper on November 8, 2006, at SFU Harbour Centre.

The question of citizenship is itself the question of a role, our role as we navigate our interactions within the world. As such, it is an issue hardly detachable from the world itself—from both our social linkages to one another, and our placement under certain philosophical precepts. Collectively, these two forces—the sociological and the philosophical—bind us as subjects sharing a common, human experience within this particular period in history; and though the practice and history of citizenship has not always born this linkage in mind, I suggest this is less a symptom of citizenship’s failure *per se*, than it is a failure to properly engage with citizenship in the first place. Indeed, I argue we might view the very actions conducted today under the ostensive rubric of citizenship, not as an indication of its success, but rather as the root cause of its failure—an innately ironic failure, and the true symptom of a citizenship which has increasingly become a symbolic and reified “simulacrum” (Poster, p. 169), as opposed to a substantive and lived reality. The result of such citizenship is manifest both as a sociological “malaise” (Taylor, 1991, p. 1) and as a philosophical propensity for nihilism—an effect achieved not through the vacuity, relativism, or nullity of all belief (as we might first suspect) but rather through the emergence of belief structures and social practices innately detrimental, and profoundly reifying to the practice of human interaction. Today, it is precisely this interaction which has been most ignored. This

is not, then, a question of citizenship’s failure in terms of politics, but rather of its failure in terms of humanity—in terms of our ability to operate in concert with one another rather than opposition.

Indeed, citizenship *qua* citizenship is in many ways not properly a political matter at all, but rather a human one; this is to say, it cannot be considered a matter of mere policy and governance regarding subjects’ adherence within a politically constructed body, but must instead be considered in terms of the need and difficulty of achieving greater human “inter-subjective” (Sartre, 1989, p. 7) involvement. Charles Taylor’s (1991) critique of the “atomi[zed]” (p. 9) state of modernity, which he argues sees subjects placed in a posture of retreat as a result of the isolating social forces of modernity, seems in many ways apt. However, I would further suggest a necessary extension linking atomization to the problem of philosophic nihilism. For as the theorist Nishitani Keiji (1990) states, “nihilism is a sign of the collapse of the social order externally and of spiritual decay internally—and as such signifies a time of great upheaval” (p. 3). That the issue of citizenship has often been addressed with neither the crisis of atomization, nor the philosophic concept of nihilism in mind, epitomizes the difficulty that rests at the heart of the debate as a whole. While, this difficulty does not suggest any necessary, *a priori* failure of human nature, it nonetheless gestures strongly towards a systematic and

damaging approach regarding subjects” interactions within our modern world. We are not, I argue, in a state of human deficiency, as much as we are a deficiency of humanity. Though citizenship is certainly in crisis, this crisis cannot simply be relegated to the political; instead, it must be viewed as a problem comprising the entire quandary of modernity in general, and the problem of the nihilistic effects of reification, encapsulation, and disenchantment of the human profound in particular.

Such issues rest at the very heart of citizenship amid modernity, and it is towards modernity—with all of its tensions, disjunctions, and difficulties—which we must turn to answer the question of humanity’s role today. I therefore suggest that if any progress is to be made, we must reach to the core of the matter in an attempt to characterize and comprehend the present and ongoing state of ontology amid modernity—charting a path towards a modernity, which, unlike its present state, does not exclude the subject from human interaction but instead includes him or her within a world of interdependency and interconnection. Such a shift would seek to form an ontology derived not from *a priori* deduction but rather *a posteriori* induction. It is then not citizenship in the narrow sense which I wish to propound, but citizenship in the broad—a citizenship *as* citizenship in the form of a lived ontology that is itself ideal, in stark opposition to the merely deductive ideals seen presently. Such hegemonic axioms today operate as governing and ordering principles for human interaction, even as the interactions they generate hardly connote the original intent they ostensibly signify—casting instead a dim shadow much removed from the originary thrust of the “ism” involved. I suggest then, that both the crisis of modernity and that of citizenship are uniquely interlinked, both relating to our ability to generate ontology, which is not degraded in its application and practice. This is the meaning of citizenship *as* citizenship: a form of being that fulfills its own idealism. If this is possible, and if the ontology

of nihilism might be upset in favour of an ontology of citizenship, we must ask: first, what is the source of that malfunction at present; and second, what can be done to rectify it?

Following on the work of Charles Taylor, and others, I would begin by postulating a direct relation between the sociological state of our world—a world described by many under the somewhat over-arching term of modernity—and the philosophic status of subjects existing in that world. This is to say, the sociological space inhabited by the subject both constructs and is constructed by his or her ontological and philosophical standing in the world as embodied in ambient theoretical axioms, which underpin modernity as a whole. While sociological structures often encourage hegemony, such authority is not conceivable simply as a social problem but is importantly a philosophical one as well; what begins as a sociological by-product comes eventually to shape the very way we view the world, both in terms of ourselves as individuals, and ourselves as communal entities—citizens. Sociological “malaise” (Taylor, 1991, p. 1) amongst the citizens of modernity is then a social problem on one hand and a philosophical problem on the other. Though we have arrived here through social practice, that practice has and continues still to influence an ontology that threatens to become self-perpetuating—an ontology of nihilism. Here, the sociological feeds the ontological, which in turn re-influences the sociological. The result is a systematization of belief and rigidity surrounding the lived space we might call modernity.

The relation between the social and ontological must therefore be taken as one of mutual, complex, and symbiotic interaction—simultaneously the present effect and residual cause of the modern human experience. As Nishitani (1990) suggests, “what we call nihilism today is an historical concept referring to a particular phenomenon . . . the spiritual situation of the modern era” (p. 3). If we find ourselves operating in a world where citizenship seems in crisis—where individuals appear to drift listlessly

in upon themselves in what Taylor (1991) quite accurately critiques as modernity's "narcissism" (p. 4)—it is a crisis not resultant from any weakness of human nature through a *a priori* failure, but rather a failure of human construction and artificial deduction to properly address our needs in a pluralistic, and diverse manner. If the "simulacrum" (Poster, 2001, p. 169) in which we live is displeasing—if we find citizenship today a kind of "enfram[ing]" (Taylor, 1991, p. 101), performative simulation which posits a "flatter" (p. 107) model of humanity than we would like—we might benefit far more from placing blame upon our practices than upon ourselves. Rather than deride the human condition as innately flawed, we might rather look towards the processes of reification and "instrumental reason" (Mill, 1989, p. 107) which have become so engrained within the quotidian norms of modernity, as to be applied to all experience, all objects and all humans alike. Such flatness is itself not a product of citizenship acting as citizenship, but rather of citizenship performing as dogmatism—as a form of ideological essentialism innately monological in its orchestration and not properly speaking citizenship at all. This fundamentally reductive outlook stands quite out of step with the tension, dichotomy, and paradox that best embodies the human condition, and which all aesthetic activity has sought to reproduce.

Indeed, in an attempt to comprehend citizenship *qua* citizenship, we must inevitably look to art and the arts themselves as forms that actively avoid and critique otherwise dogmatic, reifying practices now in place. It is thus towards these forms of expression—which retain dichotomy as dichotomy—that we must look towards in an attempt to answer the citizenship question.

As the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin suggests regarding human experience and art, only the dialogical, with its "vari-directional" (1998a, p. 540), "interrelationship of voices" (1998a, p. 540), recognizes the necessary diversity, "heteroglossia" (1998, 539), and dialogism that accurately

describes human interaction without suffering alteration or reduction. As such, artistic and dialogical works stand alone within their role of reflection, retaining the innate paradox of the human condition amid a reality that is itself irreducibly complex. Indeed, Bakhtin sees the literary arts in particular as embodying precisely the notion of human reality that citizenship wishes to address—a reality where tensions do exist, but where those tensions lead a greater benefit for the whole, through the juxtaposition and paratactic union of opposites, which are themselves valuable in their difference.

Art, for Bakhtin, is thus a reflection of an innately existential ontology—one that takes existence *a posteriori* from the world around it, not *a priori* before it. The dialogical here is a collection of irreducibilities, interlaced against the reifying hegemony of authoritarian, deductive assessments of the human subject. As he argues, "authoritative discourses permit no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it" (p. 533). Here his almost Derridian emphasis on the benefits of an openness and self-consciously paradoxical play of linguistic signifiers highlights his overall belief in a stylistics of diversity and pluralism, which he sees as better articulating the paradoxical irreducibility of "everyday life" (p. 530) and common speech (p. 530).

By touting a linguistics of dialogism, Bakhtin thus highlights a belief in the positive benefits of linguistic interaction through the arts, which he suggests as a direct alternative to authoritative discourse. Such discourse, he suggests, is ultimately unfulfilling, leading only to a reified destruction of meaning—"the dead, thing-like shell of [a] word" (p. 539). In contrast to the reified hegemony of monologism, dialogism is seen as innately human in its acceptance of dichotomy and polarity as a necessary and desirable reflection of the disparate and conflicted nature of human life itself.

As such, Bakhtin continually argues against a literature that allows one half of the dichoto-

mous, dialogical whole to predominate unnecessarily over the other, instead favouring the natural, multi-voiced qualities of dialogism. It is a view which effectively re-constructs traditional notions of conflict, inconsistency, and discrepancy by viewing “abrupt dialogic turnaround” (1998a, p. 540) as the highest and most desirable form of art—the most realistic depiction to which linguistics can aspire. Thus while this theory begins here as a form of literary criticism, it also reaches importantly beyond, positing a belief in the assertion and recognition of the varying polarities, inconsistencies, and paradoxes of life itself. Thus for Bakhtin, the dialogical is not simply a higher and more successful form of art; it is more adept precisely because it recognizes an innate human drive towards dichotomy and paradox that is utterly ignored in traditional, monological forms of deductive, hegemonic discourse. Here, paradox is more than simply a rhetorical strategy and dialogism more than simply “good art”; rather, it is realism expressed in print. The resulting view of Bakhtin’s world is one where the overlapping irrationalities of life are precisely the most natural—the most human.

Citizenship as citizenship stands as a dialogical entity based on the inclusion of many voices, many individuals, and many others within a discursive union. Such relations are innately multi-voiced in their pluralism—inexpressible but through the reproduction of the experience itself, without losing the essence of the act entirely. In comprehending citizenship then, the dialogic must be continually kept in mind as a form of human interaction, which (properly understood) retains each of its elements in their original form, without alteration and reduction. That this is not the case today—that instead a kind of monologism of human interaction abounds—can be found both in the failure and reification of citizenship and in Taylor’s (1991) characterization of modernity as “malaise” (p. 1). Citizenship, then, is in a state of malaise not because it has failed to live up to the ideals

surrounding it, but because those ideals do not speak to the totality of the human experience. The apathy and disenchantment of the modern subject surrounding such varied ideologies as Nationalism, Capitalism, or Communism stems not from these ideals themselves, but from their status as monologic expressions imposed upon a dialogic reality. Humanity itself is then not properly being engaged at all, its various aspects and nuances barely being understood by a citizenry who are encouraged—indeed *taught*—to fall inwards upon themselves, rather than outwards towards others.

Such crisis, as linked to the problems surrounding modernity, has been noted throughout criticism for some time. It was the sociologist Max Weber (1946) who suggested early in twentieth the century, that modernity might be characterized primarily as an incorrigibly restless malaise—a phenomenon he termed “disenchantment” (p. 139) for the vague distemper and *ennui* it gestured towards. The term hints primarily at the apathy resultant from the dismantling of all formerly-axiomatic principles underpinning the status of meaning-governing narratives. Though these older deductive regimes, such as theological belief, have entered some degree of disfavour, new “metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv) of belief founded on emergent approaches to epistemology arising out of scientific discourse and praxis have been ultimately unsatisfying. Such activity, far from drawing individual subjects into tighter, more beneficial social arrangements based on inclusion, discourse, and understanding have, rather, induced a larger quandary and blockage in thinking—one that affected not only the ostensibly socio-political realm of citizenship, but also the larger ontological standing of subjects within the modern world we inhabit. While Weber lamented the loss of older, more enchanted forms of belief, he ultimately saw the principles then governing the modern world as innately encumbered by a hegemonic dogmatism surrounding scientific reductionism and “instrumental reason” (Mill, 1989, p. 107).

In many ways, Weber's critique was accurate for his modernity, and I suggest is still useful in describing the monologic effects of citizenship today as a form of "disenchantment." Just as Weber argued, modernity continues to abound in processes of reification, as well as in the production of symbolic reality to replace human profundity. Only by overcoming this blockage can we come to view citizenship *as* citizenship—not simply as a socially constructed label, but as the lived interaction of selves amid other selves within the world. To speak of this form of citizenship is not simply to engage in philosophic obscurantism, nor to posit the endpoint of a debate through the originary term itself; rather it is to attempt an ontology that is not simply a projection of an ideal, but instead the ideal itself operating within the world in its original form—a kind of human citizenship on human grounds, and a derivative of the Heideggerian conception of "being-in-the-world" (1962, p. 83).

Yet how has this world come about? If citizenship is today marred by its status as pure ideological construction—as a simulated, reductive and withered shell—in what way does this process function and in what ways may it be curtailed? The answer lies in an ontological process at work within modernity at large that seeks to continually strip profound experience of its otherwise enchanted underpinnings, leaving it nearly lifeless. This inter-personal form of reification, which I term encapsulation, is at once reductive in its assessment of the human subject, and nihilistic in its propensity to strip meaning even as it strives towards the ostensible pursuit of knowledge. Like Sisyphus rolling his rock upwards in eternal striving, the process of encapsulation and reductionism, seeks happiness in the finitude of its reification, but finds only a dissatisfying, minute symbol barely able to describe the original experience at all. Led to dissatisfaction, through the very processes we have sought to institutionalize as moderns, the problem of reification thus becomes self-perpetuating. Nihilism is not found then in the literal belief in the nothingness of the world,

but in *our own* reduction of the world to state which dissatisfies even ourselves.

The simulacrum of Baudrillard's writing, where the real exists "without origin or reality: [as] a hyperreal" (Poster, 2001, p. 169), has ironically arisen out of the very drive towards hegemonic knowledge applied to the arena of human interaction. Though dogmatic, ideological, and essentializing practices would seem to aid the subject by providing a clearly-defined assessment of the normativity of one's social relations, they in fact produce the very opposite effect. It is here that the rigid containment of ideas within seemingly incontestable axioms, works to damage the very foundation of human, subjective involvement.

Yet to understand the ways in which reification functions today, we must understand its originary foundations; we must come to see how symbols have usurped objects and ideas humanity. We will thus chart the progression of this phenomenon through the sociological roots of its origins in Modernization and the rise of technological ideology, through its institutionalization both socially and ontologically within Modernity in the form of a rupture in the relation between the signifier and signified of humanity, finally addressing ways in which it may perhaps be curtailed by aesthetic Modernism, Art, and the Humanities themselves. The issue of citizenship is then to be addressed not simply within the socio-political boundaries in which it currently exists, but as a philosophical question of inter-subjective human involvement—as a question of our existential role in a world of selves and others with which we would like to engage more fully.

First then, we must begin with the origins of Modernization through the rise of the technological world, and the industrial revolution. The portrait Marx paints—of a stark, isolating, reifying modern world—is important to bear in mind. In his view, the reductive effects of modernized technology tend always towards dehumanization—a conversion of world-view from an enchanted, pluralistic one to a disen-

chanted, singular desire for the accumulation of wealth within the capitalistic paradigm. By “continuously revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relation of production and with them, the whole relation of society” (1998, p. 38), Marx sees the bourgeoisie as systematically wresting control from all other classes, most notably the proletariat. Though the exploitation of this class occurs primarily within the rubric of the capitalistic wealth-poverty binary, all wealth, including the non-material becomes similarly disrupted—drawn into a paradigm that occludes all other systems of valuation. In this new epoch, wealth becomes a universal signifier under which all humanity may reduce its differences to a quantitative, calculable binary: an item becoming more or less valuable, or more or less worthless. The drive towards the simulacrum of Baudrillard and the nihilism of reification in many ways begins here, with the eclipse of varied and diverse forms of investiture and activity in favour of one unified, symbolic system of exchange. That this new, capitalistic mode of economic demarcation is at once deductive and artificial, is seen in Marx’s insistence that it rests on a principle of arbitrary “exchange-value” (1978, p. 304), starkly disproportionate from that of the natural “use-value” (p. 317) of the item in question. While the true utility of the item is negated, its symbolic “exchange-value” comes readily to take hold within a system of valuation that quickly forgets its own artificiality. All items gain the importance assigned them, not through their own inductively-assessed utility in the world, but rather through their constructed value as items of sociologic “fetishism” (p. 321).

As Theodore Adorno (1991) would later suggest, this rise in commodification is innately damaging for the utilitarian and objectified view that it projects—a view that begins in the realm of economic production, but extends dangerously outwards, becoming a systematized, institutionalized, and hegemonic mode of viewing the entire world. As Marx writes, “the bourgeoisie [has] stripped of its halo every occupation

hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers” (1998, p. 38). All are reduced to the quantified and stratified role of “labour,” stripped of the honour—the recognition of “inter-subjective” (Sartre, 1989, p. 7) human relations—once afforded such professions. It is then only through this colossal shift, which sees all human experience forced within the reified construct of “callous “cash payment”” (Marx, 1998, p. 37), that Marx sees the bourgeoisie as triumphing at all. Human relations themselves are dispersed, reduced, and contorted until there is “left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest” (p. 37). What begins as an economic imperative, ends as an ontological belief so strong as to verge on a kind of theism—a theism of capitalistic accumulation of wealth. As Adorno (1991) states adeptly, “before the theological caprices of commodities, the consumers become temple slaves” (p. 39), forced to adhere to an economic system which is innately reifying, else risk starvation and death through denunciation of the system altogether. Here, the rise of commodification and reification within the context of Marxist theory does not simply assert the implementation of a system of wealth and poverty which is damaging for its members; it also suggests an entire system of belief, which tends towards religiosity, even as that religiosity tends towards a nihilistic denunciation of pluralistic, dialogical “collectivity” (Marx, p. 60), in favour of the reified, hegemonizing, and monologic hermeneutic of exchange-value.

Indeed, for Marx such self-interest represents a marked reduction of the natural, “sentimental” (p. 38) bonds present between human beings—bonds which we may see as the ordinary form of “inter-subjectivity” (Sartre, 1989, p. 7) *as* inter-subjectivity, humanity *as* humanity, or citizenship *as* citizenship. Here, modernization as social hegemony restricts the totality of human experience within the simplicity of a “money relation” (Marx, 1998, p. 38) by decreas-

ing the emphasis on human-human relations as such, and placing an imperative on the reified sign used to connote capitalistic value. In place of the once-indecribable complexity of human interaction, subjects now view each other as mere “instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use” (p. 44). Though the bourgeoisie has “burst asunder” (p. 39) all previous “fetters” (p. 39) in an attempt to liberate human mechanistic efficiency, he has set in motion mechanisms of production that increasingly rule over the very humans they ought to benefit. What began then as a search for progress has ended in the wide-scale alienation of the human from the world he inhabits.

Modernization’s continual emphasis on the efficiency of machines has thus brought to modernity a cultural imperative of efficiency now enacted within all facets of life. Modernity, informed by these tendencies towards modernization—that is by the increasingly technical, reified, efficient view of humanity as mechanism, instrument, and tool—is thus led towards the adoption of a sociological system that is not strictly-speaking sociological at all, but ontological. Though the commodification principle begins in the realm of the pure-objects, it extends as a mode of thinking to the contemplation and interaction of all objects, all activities, and all individuals. In Marx’s view, it is this shift in belief—from a humanistic, pluralistic, and dialogical view to a mechanistic, singular, and monological one—that has most characterized modernization’s effect on modernity. The influence of mechanistic modes of thought upon the world, has then led humanity to see itself not as itself at all, but as a collection of mechanistically, materially, and reductively productive forces acting towards the reifying and hegemonic ideal of efficiency. Such efficiency, here ceases to benefit the humans involved, instead operating as a deductive axiom of ontological existence—a system of valuation for judging all life by the singular merits of one and only one system: the capitalist system.

As Jean Baudrillard argues repeatedly, the world we live in today—a world etched out in the historical precedent set down during the industrial revolution of Marx’s time—has devolved into a system where all transparency between signifier and signified, or alternately between use and exchange values, has become mired in a kind of perpetual illusion and simulation. This “simulacrum” (Poster, 2001, p. 169) sees the signification and valuation of all items in the world, operates increasingly on a symbolic level, not merely for brevity or succinctness, but as the true endpoint of signification itself. Today, items are not simply *represented* by their symbols as signs, nor people as labels; they literally *are* the labels—entities moved from the actuality of the real, to the virtuality of the “hyperreal” (p. 170). This hyperreality takes the form of reality itself, though its presence in the world remains purely semiotic and symbolic in form. Much as exchange-value represented the signifier, reductively applied to a diverse and pluralistic signified, the hyperreal functions as an ontology of signs, which is wholly self-perpetuating, hegemonizing, and reductive. All objects, subjects, and experiences in the world are quickly subsumed within a process of labeling which codifies reality within a kind of semiotic reductionism.

The development of this phenomenon is both reifying in the way it purports to replace reality with reductive signs, and ontologically self-perpetuating in the way those signs become completely severed from the signifieds they once connoted. This process of encapsulation therefore reduces profound and diverse experience to the level of a semiotic sign, only to then detach that sign from reality itself, masquerading the newly-created capsule of meaning—the signifier *sans* signified—as the total event. The hyperreal in its artificiality represents the ultimate conclusion of deductive reasoning: a world where reality is not simply reduced within *a priori* precepts; it represents rather an entirely new drive towards a semiotic ontology that outstrips and replaces the origi-

nal. The monological is here elevated to the status of a philosophic paradigm, overshadowing and degrading the dialogical that preceded it. Baudrillard writes, “it no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is a hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere” (Poster, 2001, p. 170). Here, the absurdist drive towards reductionism’s final conclusion, has left the subject in a world with many images, but little substance—a world where images themselves now operate as inflated representatives for a reality which is quickly slipping from us. As Baudrillard notes, this extension of the reification principle marks a “decisive turning point” (Poster, 2001, p. 173) towards a system of self-perpetuating illusion, performing as valuation—a process that begins with commodities, but ultimately reaches towards all areas of human relation, establishing itself on the level of a lived ontology acted out by all members, and all citizens of its society. Citizenship here becomes a membership within a system of infinitely regressive dissimulation—a world of play and self-referential signification bearing no solidified foundations but those etched out by the axioms of reification themselves.

Importantly, Baudrillard notes that the drive towards reductionism and reification does not knowingly cause the breakup of the meaning it imparts. Though the two trends effectively encapsulate the subject within a world of localized meaning, reductionism is itself thought to be a viable pathway for discovering meaning—often meaning validated by the traditionally affirmed paradigm of science. In vain then, we seek increased human connectivity through the very conduits which ensure its failure—through the strengthening of our hegemonic beliefs regarding reductionism as a viable pathway to human happiness, human meaning, and human citizenship. Baudrillard writes,

*What society seeks through production and overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it. That is why contemporary “material” production is itself hyperreal. It retains all the features, the whole discourse of traditional production, but it is nothing more than its scaled-down refraction (thus the hyperrealists fasten in a striking resemblance a real from which has fled all meaning and charm, all the profundity and energy of representation).* (Poster, 2001, p. 183).

The labels connoting value, which Marx first postulated as artificial and arbitrary, are here seen to have run amuck through the ontological framework of modernity. The real has not simply been covered over through Modernization’s hermeneutic of empiricism and semiotic detachment, it has literally been replaced by a hegemonic system of reduction and monologism that itself poses as a new and exclusionary form of reality—the hyperreal. Baudrillard continues,

*Unreality no longer resides in the dream or fantasy, or in the beyond, but in the real’s hallucinatory resemblance to itself. To escape the crisis of representation, reality loops around itself in pure repetition . . . to enclose the real in a vacuum, to extirpate all psychology and subjectivity in order to render pristine objectivity. In fact, this objectivity was only that of the pure gaze—an objectivity at last liberated from the object, which is no more the blind relay of the look that scans it”* (Poster, 2001, p. 148).

Though reductionism seeks pure objectivity through its scientific, quantified approach, the result is in effect a kind of purely virtual signification. To render the concept in Marxist terms, it is a type of self-perpetuating exchange-value applied to reality at large. Such artificiality is no longer properly tied to the object at all, but instead floats freely, operating of its own accord with no firm or fixed relation to the signified that it connotes. Baudrillard cautions repeatedly that this “hyperlectic” (Poster, 2001, p. 192)

symbolism can lead to a correspondingly perpetual form of commodity fetishism based on “delusion” (p. 203) and construction around the reductionism which first initiated the problem. Here, the “spectacle” (p. 205) takes the form of the true event, the consumer item that of the experience and the object that of the subject. In this environment of hyper-reductionism a kind of “excess of finality” (p. 207) characterizes the ultimate reduction of reality to the level of symbols *par excellence*. It is a world where reification functions so well as to completely erase the real from existence, positing instead a simplified, symbolic real—the very process of nihilistic encapsulation suggested earlier.

It is precisely this form of “rationalization and intellectualization” (Weber, 1946, p. 155) of the human condition—which disallows all inductive semiotic signs in favour of the solely deductive simulacrum—which first led Max Weber (1946) to posit his notion of “disenchantment” (p. 137). Where Marx describes the adoption of reductive, nihilistic encapsulation from an economic standpoint, and Baudrillard elucidates its continuation and self-perpetuation semiotically, Weber provides a sociological account that describes the detrimental malaise this approach has enacted upon modernity. Closely aligned with the other thinkers discussed, Weber argues that the modern world has engaged in a series of changes, which have disrupted all former belief systems in favour of a rational, scientific *episteme* thought to be the solution to the problem of human relations, though in fact the root of its malfunction. Though scientific thinking was sufficient to dismantle old belief systems, by largely destroying what Lyotard would later term “metanarratives” (Lyotard, p. xxiv), Weber emphasizes how readily the scientific “metanarrative” has largely moved to replace it with even more dissatisfying solutions than the older, theological conceptions. Modernity he then argues, has replaced unfounded faith in religion, with equally unfounded faith in science—both of which are ultimately unsuccessful in answering the necessary and desired ques-

tion of how humanity is to carry itself within the world.

While the once-steadfast theological underpinnings of society have been irrevocably “disenchanted” (Weber, 1946, p. 139) by the hegemonic rationalism of the scientific discourse, science has in many ways functioned as a new theology—one based far more on objects than subjects, and far more on reifying encapsulation than lived humanistic experience. Because of this, “precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life” (p. 155), leaving only a reifying ontology in their place—the ontology of nihilism. While this approach is appropriate in scientific discourse, it is ultimately misapplied elsewhere. In *Science as a Vocation*, Weber (1946) cautions that while such reification explains much of *how* the world is, the question of whether such an approach “could teach us anything about the *meaning* of the world” (p. 142) is ultimately left unquestioned; though science functions well as an explanative model to describe reality, it leaves aside almost entirely our role within this reality. We are thus left to contemplate the world as experimenters falsely external to an experiment involving our own existence—a situation that he believes does not and has never occurred. As he writes,

*Today the routines of everyday life challenge religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another. (p. 149)*

While the old religions and power structures can “ascend from their graves,” their effect is now negligible. Through the reductionism, and reifying aesthetic of scientific discourse they have been stripped of their once-hegemonic power and return to us only as phantoms of past beliefs—replaced by a new systematized *episteme* that fails to take up the same questions as the beliefs, which have been felled. In the wake of their removal, the scientific impetus to

“master life technically” (p. 144), so central to that discipline, has subsumed dominance over all areas of human activity—the primary rubric under which modernity labours.

However, like Baudrillard and Marx, Weber suggests that the increased circulation of reductive thought tends not towards the open critique of all belief in light of truth, but rather the establishment of an ideology so technically grounded and so obscurantist in its discourse as to be nearly beyond criticism. While science purports many claims, such assertions are rarely evaluated in light of the axiomatic presuppositions used to deduce them. Instead, “natural science gives us an answer to the question of what we must do if we wish to master life technically” (p. 144). At the same time, “it leaves quite aside, or assumes for its purposes, whether we should and do wish to master life technically and whether it ultimately makes sense to do so” (p. 144). Though its characteristic reductionism functions perfectly well in scientific inquiry, it does not provide “any meanings that go beyond the purely practical and technical” (p. 139) and indeed functions far less as a form of inductive observation than a trial of deductive belief. Though science operates within a decided set of axioms, it does not have the necessary tools to question these axioms—to question the use and appropriateness of the very reductionism it employs. Weber sees the social sciences as exemplifying this trend towards reductionism, and thus as leading the charge in a discipline ostensibly involved in the accumulation of knowledge, but realistically involved in the solidification of a particularized solution that avoids certain, necessary questions of human reality altogether. As he states,

*They teach us how to understand and interpret political, artistic, literary, and social phenomena in terms of their origins. But they give us no answer to the question, whether the existence of these cultural phenomena have been and are worth while. And they do not answer the further question, whether it is worth the effort*

*required to know them. They presuppose that there is an interest in partaking, through this procedure, of the community of “civilized men.” But they cannot prove “scientifically” that this is the case; and that they presuppose this interest by no means proves that it goes without saying. In fact it is not at all self-evident.”* (p. 145)

Thus, while the sciences and the appropriation of its methodology into the social sciences provides insight into *how* a phenomenon functions, it remains unable to question the appropriate use of the phenomenon itself. Though science models and predicts trends, it is ultimately unable to answer the larger, human impact that those trends entail. As Weber notes, such efforts represent an attempt to enclose life within meaning by wrapping them within a reductive hermeneutic that understands life as a “calculation involving only the cool intellect and not one’s “heart and soul.”” (p. 144)

In place of the theological God figure that has functioned as a Derridian (1998) “center” (1998, p. 878), organizing all aspects of life under a specific and detailed rubric and *telos*, modernity has tended to avoid all axiomatic forms of belief in favour of the presumed empiricism of scientific reductionism. While belief *as* belief has in many ways become discarded, Weber (1946) adeptly points out that scientific discourse itself has become the new and predominant mode of operation, encouraging citizens of modernity to tend towards the Baudrillardian simulacrum by adopting an increasingly reified, sociological standard now elevated to the level of a lived ontology. Thus while Derrida’s conception of “play” (p. 879) would argue for a beneficial, relativism based on the “de-centering” (p. 881), unplanned, and inductive “bricolage” (p. 883) of human experience, Weber would argue that no such openness yet exists. While both would concur that the hegemony of old, “disenchanted” (Weber p. 139) beliefs has been irrevocably disrupted, true openness has yet to arrive. Though some de-centring has occurred, the reign of scientific reductionism creates many

of the same restrictions as previous “meta-narratives” (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Indeed, in Weber’s view such belief is in fact worse. Unlike previous systems of ontological or theological governance, the subject’s pertinent and natural questions regarding the profundity of the human condition remain unanswered. Thus, while older, rigid, and hegemonizing beliefs have been swept away, the resultant space is neither as open nor as liberating as Derrida would suggest.

With this in mind, we might see the sociological phenomenon Marx, Baudrillard, and Weber each indicate as the basis for our formation of a theory regarding modernity as a whole—a theory that for our purposes here will be directed towards citizenship, but which remains by and large an explanation of the ontological foundations of our world today. As stated before, the problem surrounding citizenship is not properly one of the individual’s movement away from the ideal, but rather his or her movement towards an ideal which is in its very application ineffective and nihilistic. The practice of human interaction, by which we might judge citizenship’s success, today exists not as a lived experience, but as a monologic ideal—not as citizenship *qua* citizenship, but as the reified encapsulation of citizenship transposed deductively upon modernity.

What then might we ascertain regarding this pertinent problem of nihilism, reification, and semiotic encapsulation? If citizenship is marred by a destructive ontology based more on deductive capsules of meaning than meaning itself, how might citizenship be effectively rescued from the reductionism under which it labours? How might the narrow citizenships in play at present be replaced by a broader, human citizenship worthy of its own title? One thing is certain: any solution would necessitate the direct empowerment of the subject in opposition of the reifying ideology of encapsulation, atomism, and devaluation. The guiding principle behind citizenship cannot simply be replaced by an equally reifying label. As Weber (1946) points

out, it is not sufficient to merely exchange one form of encapsulation for another; instead we must reach towards a form of citizenship—of human interaction—which avoids the semiotic traps modernity has strewn ahead of it, as it has ahead of all ideologies. As Taylor (1991) states, “what should have died along with communism is the belief that modern societies can be run on a single principle, whether that of planning under the general will or that of free-market allocations” (p. 110). Whether it be Nationalism, Capitalism, or Marxism, the precepts in play matter far less than the fact that they employ precepts at all—deductive axioms, which themselves construct the capsule of meaning that we have so critiqued. It is thus the “ism” of these beliefs that is to be critiqued, a notion that goes back to Derrida’s (1998) concept of “decentering” (p. 881). One center cannot simply be replaced by another, equally-reifying hegemony. If we wish to enter a citizenship which is truly lived, rather than constructed, it seems inconceivable to envision this without the increased primacy of the subjects who are themselves involved.

I suggest that some answer can be found in the ontological work of the two existential philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, and the adaptation of their thought towards the construction of a citizenship *qua* citizenship based on their conceptions of phenomenological inter-subjectivity. In varying and nuanced ways, both theorists suggest a kind of awareness regarding the world that cannot be constructed as easily as citizenships of the past. Though unique in their approaches, each theorist then shares a movement away from the reifying deduction of ideology, towards a phenomenology of pure being, which takes its cue from the world itself, rather than our preconceptions regarding it.

In his essay, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” Sartre (1989) outlines his belief in a philosophy, which overturns the notion of *a priori*, transcendent meaning in favour of a meaning that must be eked out by each individual in his or

her own, unique, existential position. Much like Bakhtin's general skepticism regarding monologic discourse, which he views as a form of containment and constraint, Sartre (1989) suggests a humanity innately subject-centered—indeed an ontology which “begin[s] from the subjective” (p. 2) for the first time. Whereas essence had formerly always been highlighted as *a priori* to one's existence within the world, Sartre and other existentialists invert the equation by suggesting “existence comes before essence” (p. 2). This shift effectively places the subject's worldly, tangible, concrete relations in the world as the determinant factor in his or her creation of selfhood. It is a view that finds meaning, not in any preexistent, deductive assertion of one's state in the world, but rather in the vacancy and openness of meaning—the gap found in the void left by the realization that all transcendent, *a priori* essence is, by nature, illusory, and fabricated.

Though Sartre does not deny the difficulty of such a belief system—which leaves the subject voided save for the meaning he or she applies directly to his or her own life—the resulting panic that inevitably arises is seen as a form of beneficial “anguish” (Sartre, 1989, p. 3) which “confronts man with a possibility of choice” (p. 1) for the first time. In a world in which, “man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself” (p. 2), one is simultaneously struck by the profound responsibility incumbent on the individual to actively create meaning through one's own actions and be filled with agency and free will for the first time. Here, anguish and enlightenment run hand in hand. Sartre does not discount the possibility of existential crisis, but rather envisions it as the pivotal turning point in the subject's beneficial transition out of the illusory world of predefined essences and into the concrete, realistic world of existence occurring for its own sake, on its own terms—being *qua* being. Crisis, discord, and conflagration is here seen as a type of misery pregnant with purpose and imbued with potential. Within the existential model, it is only through the conscious shift from a life

of *a priori* suppositions, to one of *a posteriori* existence that the normal presumptions imposed upon life can be removed and “determinism” (p. 4) extinguished in favour of an ontology which exists as its own lived experience within the world—unmediated and non-reifying in its practice.

Though this “freedom” (p. 4) occurs at the expense of transcendental signifiers such as “God” (p. 4), Sartre sees the removal of such signifiers as nothing more than the destruction of remnants of old belief that need no longer hold weight. Indeed, if we take Weber's (1946) assessment with any seriousness, we must see such concepts already as “disenchanted” (p. 139)—swept away by the encapsulation imposed by reification and semiotic nihilism. Still, for Sartre, much like Bakhtin, on the subject of monologism, the resounding authority of such unyielding belief systems is itself detrimental for the constraint it places on the subject's otherwise emancipated conception of reality. Though “abandonment” (p. 5) into the existentialist vision is necessarily accompanied with “anguish” (p. 5), this is ultimately preferable for Sartre, as it allows for openness and fluidity to prevail—for the subject to engage actively within the self-determination of his own being, which may indeed be discordant and dichotomous at times, but is always innately real, and innately truthful in its closely-indexed relation between the subject and his or her reality. By taking existence as the “departure” (p. 7) of the individual, Sartre then sees life itself as a starting point, an ontology not simply founded as the deductive imposition of a hegemonic monologism, but as the inductive invocation of a dialogical form of human relations that retains its status *as* human relations, through its innately anti-reifying sentiment. As Sartre (1989) writes, “reality alone is reliable” (p. 6).

Importantly, it is only by realizing the anguish and abandonment of the existential position—by removing oneself from the quietude of *a priori* belief and engaging in responsibility for one's own existence, that one is able

to reach an understanding of both the self and other that avoids the disastrous hierarchy of the subject-object dichotomy. In traditional transcendent ontology, the subject, holding accord with the perceived precepts and axioms of the time, is accorded the right of subject while those who do not ascribe become objectified—abject figures operating outside of the framework of perceived reality and thus outside this favoured role. By placing humanity's subjectivity first, Sartre sees existentialism as the only ontology, "which does not make man into an object" (p. 7). Instead, those reaching past the anguish of existential crisis are envisioned as escaping the subject-object dichotomy altogether—destroying the detrimental hierarchy by adopting a belief that views not only oneself, but all others as subjects imbedded within a latticework of "inter-subjectivity" (p. 7). Here, what would ostensibly seem to constitute nihilism, in the sense of vacuity, is instead seen to emancipate the subject's self-determination in a way which places the subject alone as sole arbiter of his or her ontology. As we have seen before, true nihilism rests not in our failure to adhere to the ideologies we ourselves have created, but the failure of those ideologies to effectively garner an ontology that reflects life in the first place.

This concept follows closely on Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic. In the inter-subjective understanding, each subject's actions help to form the world around them, both for themselves and others. Since existence determines one's essence, and since that existence is altered by the actions of all subjects around oneself, the result is a world in which every individual affects every other individual in a busy and frantic interplay of subjective identities that vie, clash, conform, disrupt, and otherwise impact each other continuously. Here, the world is envisioned as an arena of discourse, where one's own identity is necessarily contingent on all others around you, as they are understood to necessarily form the existential experience from which your essence is derived. In this

world, subjectivity is thus skewed—deflected away from the individual subject, towards the collective whole of all subjects, and more properly to those other subjects' interactions with oneself and one another. As Sartre (1989) suggests, "there is a human universality, but it is not something given; it is being perpetually made" (p. 7); "I cannot not will the freedom of others" (p. 9).

Here, for the first time, we see a definition of community that befits our conception of citizenship *as* citizenship. As ontology, Sartre posits a belief which does not restrict human relations to simplified binaries, but instead sees value within the very disjunction and dichotomy inherent in human relations. Here, Bakhtin's (1998) "heteroglossia" (p. 539) directly parallels Sartre's "inter-subjectivity" (Sartre, 1989, p. 7), both of which highlight meaning through interplay, disjunction, dichotomy, and discrepancy rather than conformity and similarity. The drive towards the dialogic is thus in many ways analogous to the larger drive towards a view of reality that favours difference and tension as the true nature of the world—a view that necessarily sees absolutist, transcendental notions (such as the monologic) as contortions, at once both ridiculous and artificial. Sartre urges us to escape the confines of philosophic essentialism—a call tantamount to the denunciation of the very kind of reifying ontology we have now come to see as endemic within modernity.

Heidegger's (1962) emphasis on a philosophy of pure being, that is being *as* being, or alternately "being-in-the-world" (p. 84), also provides the necessary inversion of the reification principle—presenting a possibility for de-capsulation not through the adoption of any newly deductive system of belief, but instead through a return to the origins of our interaction with the world itself. Though highly complex in its development, Heidegger's philosophy might be primarily characterized by one over-arching emphasis: time and again, he urges us as ontologic subjects to envision our role *as* subjects—figures of a kind of pure being, which

he terms “Dasein” (p. 34). The characterizations and nuances of Dasein—though many—centre on Dasein’s presence as a fully-immersed being, who engages its role through its participation within its natural state of “being-in-the-world” (p. 84). This is to say, Dasein is not simply a reification, alteration, or reduction of some particular ideological precept; instead, Dasein *is*, by definition, the ontological state that retains its precepts amid its interaction in the world—a lived ontology of authenticity and pure being that literally *is* itself, unmediated and uncontained. The self reflexivity of such a notion is not mere philosophic illusion on Heidegger’s part, but rather, an attempt to describe a state of being that is not secondary to the world but fully commensurate with it. As he suggests, Dasein is at best described as a kind of “being alongside” the world in the sense of being absorbed in the world” (p. 80).

Here, Dasein stands as the authentic articulation of a state of human presence that remains a pure de-capsulation—a kind of being *as* being that fully realizes its own potential in the world through being “delivered over” (p. 67) into itself. This concept of a kind of self-reflexive autonomy is essential to Heidegger’s placement of Dasein as a “being-in-the-world” (p. 84), which comes into its own, as it were, through retaining its essential nature *as itself* even as it encounters other beings. Described continually, as a type of “being-in-itself” (p. 106), Dasein is in essence the state of being that we have sought—an ideal state that retains its idealism in practice, not through its detachment from or reification of the world, but through its commensurate relation alongside it. As such, Dasein is neither object nor subject, but something more prior; Dasein is potentiality itself—interaction unmediated through actualization, and instead fed back upon itself as pure interaction with the world around it. He writes, “in every case something which we encounter within-the-world . . . may have either readiness-to-hand, presence-at-hand, or Dasein-with as its kind of Being” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 179). This is

to say, the pure being of Dasein is neither an object resting in its potential, nor an object actualized in its use; indeed, it cannot be contained within such boundaries as, by definition, it is that state of human interaction that retains its linkages to the world without reduction. Instead, Dasein exists in a fully commensurate relation with the world, as an ontic-ontological mixture of doing and being, which simultaneously demonstrates and fulfills its own existence as a “thrown project” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 197). This “thrown project” defines the bounds of its existence, and participates in that existence contemporaneously. That is, it creates and actualizes its own possibilities as a human being in a relationship that is fully self-articulated and fully-imbedded within the world of which it is part. Dasein is thus not a property within the world, but rather, a being fully alongside the world, taking part in a kind of “co-disclosedness” (p. 145), reaching not towards one or another form of teleological finitude, but rather towards a kind of all-inclusive presence which fulfills its own role at *every* point along its trajectory of interactions. As he writes, “Dasein brings its “there” along with it” (p. 171), as a kind of “Being-in” (p. 171), which is at every point not only actualized but fully within its own disclosure; “Dasein is its disclosedness” (p. 171), just as it is its own properties—a being *as* Being, and a type of being “in which it is its possibilities as possibilities” (p. 185).

With this concept of pure being in mind, I wish to postulate a kind of citizenship *qua* citizenship built upon the back of Dasein as a form of being *qua* Being—that is a citizenship that is not in opposition to the world, but rather in concert with it. This Dasein of Citizenship would then take its cue from the distinction that differentiates Dasein from other forms of being: its innate rebuke of all forms of reduction, in favour of a lived ontology, which holds the others of its world in a fully commensurate relation of co-disclosure. Dasein’s appeal in terms of the citizenship debate, rests in this rebuff of the encapsulation problem—a quality that it

obtains through its unmediated, and resistant form of self-autonomy. Such autonomy should not be confused with alienation or retreat, since Dasein is by definition a “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 83)—a figure who is, in essence, a perpetual state of engagement and even “care” (p. 65) for the world around it. Dasein is then precisely the figure who epitomizes the inter-subjectivity and involvement that we have sought—a state of being that conceives of itself not as a remote enclosure barricaded against a wall of others, but rather, as a fully-connected latticework of Being, which cannot be meaningfully subdivided. Here, the world is literally inconceivable but through the gaze of Dasein; and similarly, Dasein is inconceivable but for that world.

Yet how are we to comprehend this ontological shift practically? Against the increasing hegemony of encapsulation stands artistic expression and the resultant discourse that surrounds it—a discourse that unlike any other, engages humanity *as* humanity, that is as an irreducible, pluralistic, and dialogical collection of tensions that must be approached not through deductive models, but rather through realizing one’s own existence amid others. Art, and properly “the arts” in general, continuously engage in a sort of de-encapsulation, which shatters all reifying, compartmentalized forms of knowledge, by engaging in a continuous, avant-garde critique—a critique that in every way approximates and encourages the Heideggerian conception of Dasein’s pure Being. Art then, at its very core imparts an awareness—a type of beneficial tension, which shatters the solidifying, deadlock of understanding, normatively applied by modernity’s typically hermeneutic approach to the world. Its project is one of re-order, rediscovery, re-questioning, and reawakening—elements that feed in upon themselves, but which rarely reduce to a single axiomatic precept. In a world where encapsulation threatens to enact an unyielding unity of conception, art represents a continuous rupture—a critique *par excellence*, which constantly rents and tears at

the institution and simulacrum of modernity by de-capsulating the rigid constructions of meaning and encouraging discourse and human interaction in its stead. By questioning the basis on which all belief-systems stand, art takes the role of opposition, both in a political and a philosophic sense—standing as the openness of “*poesis*” (1993, p. 317) as opposed to the constraint of “*techne*” (p. 318). Art is both political in its critique of ambient power structures, and their encapsulating, hegemonic, and monotonal approach to life within “this” or “that” nation; and art is philosophic in its ability to de-capsulate the otherwise reified expressions of everyday experience. As such, it operates as a critique both of hegemonic notions of power and hegemonic ontology at large. Here, art occupies a unique role as criticism, standing against the ambient belief systems that prevail.

Heidegger’s conception of art is extremely useful in understanding its role as uncontained experience—as antidote to the nihilism of encapsulation. Here, art represents the epitome of the drive towards pure being, for the innate irreducibilities it produces. At an elementary level, Heidegger sees art as “truth setting itself into work” (1993, p. 165)—a conduit towards realizing the unmediated world of interconnections Dasein represents, by disrupting our tendency towards reified, encapsulated views of the world. Out of the totality of Being, many different truths can be “revealed” (p. 165) or “concealed” (p. 165) in the world—being brought out of the potentiality of Being “ready-to-hand” (1993, p. 98) towards the actuality of being “present-at-hand” (p. 68). Art is seen as a rupture in the otherwise hegemonic containment of the human condition, and as such, engagement with art and “the arts” encourages one to comprehend Being in its dialogical, irreducible form.

While the realization achieved in this process differs in each individual subject, the resultant collapse of reifying ontology is similarly valuable in each instance. The beings that Art reveals only exist in openness for a brief time,

until they once again recede inward towards concealment. Here, revealing and concealing is understood in a phenomenological sense; the being's essential nature is defined not by any *a priori* essence, but strictly through the manner in which it is revealed—that is by its use (1993, p. 217). Out of the non-changing totality of Being, artwork “reveals” truth by unveiling itself out of concealment and obscurity and into the “world” (p. 170). “World” here refers to our subjective interface with the world—the forefront of our involvement with reality, or alternately, the reality which is “present-at-hand” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 68), not simply “ready-to-hand” (p. 98). In a basic sense, artwork is conceived here as the concealing of the old, and the revealing of the new, in an ever-changing process of upheaval continually upsetting stagnancy and rigidity by literally positing new worlds, less reductive and more dialogical than that of older epochs. Already, the metaphoric language of renewal and critique seems apt, but it becomes still more so.

The process of art's creation is described as a clearing away of past values to create a valuable openness; it is this openness where the truth of Being is revealed *as itself*, that is as the form of pure being unmediated and unrefracted through reductionism. Heidegger writes, “the establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being such as has never before and never will come to be again” (1993, p. 187). Here, art is seen as an essentially unique process, one which “clears the openness of the open region into which it comes forth” (p. 187); truth conceals what existed previously, and reveals what is to come next. This is to say, art demolishes or clears the previous truth present in the world and posits something new—something innately pluralistic and dense in its representation of truth *as truth*. Art is thus a reshaping of the old, but one that reaches more towards the essential truth of the world than was present before either the art work's creation, or the subject's interaction with it.

In Heidegger's view, much as with Sartre, this does not occur without some amount of struggle, tension, and paradox—all qualities present in the world at large and reflected through the essential truth of the work as it becomes set into the world. In the process of clearing, truth creates a kind of “strife between clearing and concealing” (p. 187). This strife is the necessary action of creation, something Heidegger describes as the “thrust” (p. 190) of “createdness” (p. 191), and a concept which places a beneficial interpretation on the dialogical tensions induced in art's contemplation, much as we have seen with Bakhtin and Sartre. We may further envision this as the act of tearing open the capsules of meaning posited by the reifying hermeneutics of modernity. Here, art is formed in an act of creation, which reorders old forms of truth, by establishing a denser, more pluralistic form of truth that avoids reductionism; this form restructures and rearranges the meanings, which would otherwise become stagnant though reaffirming a reality that escapes encapsulation. The truth that the art reveals is “transported into the openness of beings [and] . . . transform[s] our accustomed ties to the world” (p. 191). Here, art is a vehicle for truth, though not in any traditionally essentialist, or monologic sense. Truth is not a singular entity, but rather, the paradox of dialogical tension; it is that which causes (indeed is) the revealing and concealing of Being occurring in the world. Crucial to this description of art, is the notion that it provides a clearing away of old truth, through the positing of this newer, denser form. Rather than enclosing and encapsulating, art bursts old bonds, replacing reified simulation with a glimpse at the irreducibility of being *qua* being.

This description directly counteracts the process of nihilism within modernity as we have described it and as such moves towards the type of citizenship *qua* citizenship by encouraging an ontology of dialogic interaction as opposed to reified monologism. Whereas nihilism involves both encapsulation and disen-

chantment—each acts of enclosure and reduction—art involves both revealing and truth in the dialogic sense—at once a type of unfolding and expanding. In some sense, art may be seen as growth, whereas nihilism may be seen as decay. The continuously unfolding nature of its critique places it as the perfect counter-point to the continuously reductive tendencies of encapsulation. Art is truth, but for Heidegger, that truth rests in the realization of one’s being—in the world—something necessarily revealed on a momentary, incomplete basis rather than a transcendent, reductive one. As such, art is also change—change that remains indexed to the world in which it occurs, and continually renews the efforts of humanity by allowing it to view itself *as itself*. In this sense, art’s existence precedes its essence; its ability to critique encapsulation stems from this close, kinship relation with the world itself.

Heidegger characterizes this distinction in terms of *techne* and *poesis*. Unlike *techne*, which is envisioned as a type of “enframing” (1993, p. 325)—a mere “means to an end” (p. 312)—art as a type of *poesis* is envisioned as a “bringing-forth” (p. 317). Whereas the first sought to maintain rigid control over meaning by drawing models reductively, the latter describes the actualization of something that is already present but concealed. Moreover, it is something far more changeable and far less reified. Modernity’s drive to encapsulate can be seen as a form of *techne*, as its *modus operandi* is derived directly from technological, monologic outlooks as we have seen. In counterpoint, the *poesis* of art represents a continually, inductive critique that takes reality itself as its point of departure—unmediated and uncontained. Therefore, where one view takes the world only within its own deductive model, the other is fully-representative and commensurate with the world, entering it on its own grounds.

Dasein’s connection to the world highlights Heidegger’s basic premise that beings are all interrelated, alterable aspects of the greater, unchanging Being. Here, the world exists as

a place where truth is revealed, but also as a place that transcends the category of subject and object altogether. As such, any attempt to discern the properties of the world *a priori* must necessarily fail. Heidegger’s critique of reification is held in this assertion. Since beings are by their very nature changeable—inseparable from the world, which is itself indefinable—the attempt to enclose meaningful, explanative capsules around beings is necessarily futile. The world, by definition, is a place where all notions of objectivity and containment are meaningless. Because of that, any attempt to place a transcendent meaning—a capsule of reification—upon beings, represents a similarly meaningless, even nihilistic pursuit. Encapsulation seeks to label and explain experience in the same way that objectification defines items in the world, as objects with certain definable properties. Yet for Heidegger, the world transcends the subject/object opposition—as the “the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject” (p. 170)—and thus simply exists; it is neither subject nor object but something more primary.

Any attempt to describe this world in a reductive, reified manner is doomed to failure and to the unending change that the strife of revealing and concealing necessitates. In this ontology, the world cannot be described by reification, since there is nothing *a priori* to reify; the capsule may latch on to one being that is revealed in a particular way, but that state is not necessary but contingent on the way in which that being is revealed at a particular time. Again, the world is simply the horizon of our interactions with those beings that contact us directly—the beings that in turn make up the “being-in” (162, p. 138) of Dasein’s worldly relations. Capsules of meaning *cannot* be transcendental in their significance due to the continuously unfolding nature of the phenomenal world. The world simply will not allow such a restricted view, since it is by definition neither subject nor object. As such, the drive to encapsulate pluralistic experience, results in the deliberate pairing-down of beings for no sake other

than hermeneutic fulfillment. This drive must once again be seen as nihilistic, as it attempts to entrap the world in a way that is negated by the very definition of the world itself. The influence of art leaves open this realization to the subject himself, who is left to contemplate the dialogic nature of reality in its status *as* reality. Art thus acts as an impetus for realizing human relations more fully, and accordingly, for undergoing the ontological shift from reductionism to pure being.

Thus we have seen how the citizenship debate is marred by the very ontology present within modernity today. Citizenship cannot function as citizenship, so long as it remains an adjunct of any number of reifying, deductive, monologic systems of belief that codify the world within a framework of semiotic encapsulation. The problem of citizenship, though manifest within modernity sociologically, is properly speaking a socio-ontological problem, which must be addressed as such. Though our present practices degrade our ability to interact with other human beings, and thus deter our ability to engage with citizenship as we might desire, those practices are themselves an intermixture of the ontological and axiomatic beliefs underpinning our society at present. Any desire to engage with a greater form of citizenship today must then be taken not simply as a matter of policy, but as a matter of humanity—not as a debate in the politics of action within this system, but as a debate on the legitimacy and efficacy of systematization itself. In seeking a citizenship that is thus a reflection of the true human involvement it ought to connote, we must distance ourselves from the presently monologic processes present in modernity that continually ensure the disenchantment, and reification of life processes within a system of encapsulation that is itself damaging.

Instead, we must reach towards citizenship *as* citizenship: a form of being fully actualized and self-articulated, not from a standpoint of deductive ideology, but a standpoint of subjective involvement—the stance of the citizens

themselves. Any outlook that takes citizenship as an *a priori* debate regardless of the individuals involved, must inevitably suffer the reduction and reification we have noted so thoroughly throughout. Citizens cannot be created through deductive precepts; citizens cannot be created at all. Instead, they must create themselves through the adoption of an ontologic shift. Though doubtless difficult to effect, this transition stands as the measure of our ability to interact with other beings in the world, as humans alongside each other. The present state of reductionism, whether economic, sociologic, ontologic, or semiotic, results in nothing more than the “malaise” Taylor and others have critiqued since the time of Marx, on through Weber, continuing with Baudrillard. Opportunities must then exist that encourage one to engage with citizenship, not as a prescribed activity, but as a natural extension of human interaction in its fully dialogical, irreducible, unmediated form. Humanity must not be contained within the reifying hermeneutic present today but must be instead understood *as itself*—a self fraught with dialogic tensions and inconsistencies, but nonetheless the essence of the human condition to which we all bear some common linkage.

Art and “the arts” embody the best attempt today at realizing this ontological shift, as the study, discourse, and contemplation of such aesthetic acts remains one of the few arenas of pluralistic expression that escapes modernity today. In contemplating art, the subject is left to contemplate the world itself not as a signifier of conscripted, reductive meaning, but as a vast plethora of dichotomous and seemingly-incomprehensible interactions. Art embodies the reality that reductionism usurps, and the contemplation of it allows for the subject’s engagement with an ontology, which, unlike most others today, is not readily-consumable, monologically defined, or deductively-imposed within a simplistic reduction.

I began by stating that citizenship itself was the question of a role, our role, and I will end in

turn. As we survey modernity, with all of its tensions, alienation, and apathy, we stand at a juncture. We may choose to continue a deductive and proscriptive approach to citizenship and humanity, by positing ideals to which the subject must aspire, or we may actively encourage the subject's own efforts to live within his or her own sense of selfhood. We may then continue in a role of performativity and emulation, or truly take up citizenship *as* citizenship, through the encouragement of an ontology that places the subject themselves as the seat of human relations. The question of reified ideologues, versus, self-autonomous inter-subjects is thus one of choice. It remains before us whether we prefer to encourage our encounter with subjects *as* subjects, citizenship *as* citizenship, or humanity *as* humanity, or remain relegated to a world where such ideals are preformed but never met. This choice is ours and as simple as the recognition of our own place within a world that does not end beyond our own subjective realities but extends outwards into all worldly relations. We may then take citizenship either in its reductive sense—as being the member of some arbitrary union—or citizenship in its broader, worldly sense, as the realization of our place among other beings.

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